

GENESIS AND MEANING OF THE TITLE OF “DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH” FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

Rev. Prof. Dr. habil. Tomasz Rozkrut

Faculty of Canon Law, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow, Poland

e-mail: tomasz.rozkrut@upjp2.edu.pl; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6189-5552>

Abstract. Title of the Doctor of the Church is, unquestionably, very significant, but the method used by the bishop of Rome to grant the title is almost unknown, nowadays. Most of all, this is true due to its specific and special procedure. Formal and legal issues regarding granting this very significant and meaningful ecclesiastical dignity of universal character has returned lately together with numerous suggestions to grant the title of the Doctor of the Church to Saint John Paul II. It is worth to mention that until present the title of the Doctor of the Church has been granted to 36 people, who, obviously, were previously canonized by the Church. Among these there are 32 men and 4 women. Popes who were heads of the Church after the Second Vatican Council, namely St. Paul VI, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, as well as current Pope Francis had a habit of granting this ecclesiastical title in a systematic but sporadic manner. They did it in a special apostolic letter. It must also be pointed out that there is not any Pole on the list of the Doctors. However, there are 2 bishops of Rome, 3 cardinals, 15 bishops, 11 presbyters, 1 deacon, 2 nuns, 1 tertiary, and 1 abbess. As the above list indicates, this honourable title of the universal Church can be granted even to the lay faithful. It can be said synthetically that Doctors of the Church are important and prominent teachers of the universal Church. It is also worth to add that in 1687 the Krakow Academy expressed a wish that John Cantius was pronounced a Doctor of the Church at the time of his canonization. However, the Roman Curia questioned the authorship of his writings. This, without any doubt, caused that the issue could not have been further proceeded. The St. John Paul II apostolic constitution *Pastor bonus*, about the Roman Curia of 28 June 1988 states in Article 73 that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints is competent to “examine what is necessary for the granting of the title of doctor to saints, after having received the recommendation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning outstanding teaching.”

Keywords: bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, teacher, saint, outstanding doctrine

INTRODUCTION

The title of Doctor of the Church is, admittedly, very meaningful, yet the method of granting this title by the Bishop of Rome is commonly little-known due to its specific and distinctive procedure. Also the problematic aspects regarding the conditions and methods of granting this exceptional title of the

Church were not subject to rich specialist studies. Nevertheless, there exist specific positions in this substance written in various languages. Some of them are synthetic encyclopaedic statements that include the most important information concerning this, undoubtedly, meaningful and exceptional dignity of the Church granted to individuals who outstandingly rendered their services for the development of the Church [Bar 2019, 569–74; Danielski 1985, 34–36; Rubio 2012, 448–51].

1. VALIDITY OF THE PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS

Formal and legal problematic aspects in regards to granting this very meaningful and distinctive dignity of the Church, that has a universal nature, has returned lately with a number of propositions for granting the title of Doctor of the Church to St. John Paul II. Without any doubts, among solemn and meaningful gestures advocating this initiative, such as, e.g. Resolution no. 25/2020 of the Senate of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków of 17 February 2020 and adopted by acclamation by the University senators, that concerned advocacy of the initiative to declare St. John Paul II a Doctor of the Church and co-patron of Europe, there also appeared such statements, the authors of which will, assuredly, be ashamed of in the future [Obirek and Nowak 2020, 16].

That is the world as we know it, where evil fights against good, similarly to the gospel parable of the weeds, in which we can read prophetically: “Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn” [Paciorek 2009, 288].¹ Hence, the obligation of many entities of social life is to constantly indicate these social and evangelic values that shaped and are shaping the history of mankind.

It can be, *inter alia*, read in the cited resolution of the Church University in Krakow that: “Without any doubt, both the person and the entire lifetime achievement of St. John Paul II meets the requirements followed by the Church when granting the title of *Doctor Ecclesiae*. These are: holiness of

¹ “The parable indicates contrast between the present time, when wheat and weed grow next to each other and the harvest time, when good will be separated from evil. It does not mean that Matthew fails to distinguish good from evil already. A good disciple can be distinguished already by fulfilling the will of the Father (7,21) and gives fruits (7,16–20).” Despite eschatological nature in line 30, the central idea of pericope is expressed in the following statement: “Let both grow together until the harvest [...]” This indicates awareness of delaying parousia. Then, it indicates that those who accepted the word of Jesus cannot be separated from those who did not accept it, at present. Thirdly, the Church should be characterized by patience, as the time of separation has not come, yet. Judgement belongs to the Lord and is not a competence of the Church.”

life, outstanding teaching and attitude of the educator that had influence on the development of the Church's preaching and theological thought, as well as an input into the mission of evangelization that Jesus Christ entrusted to His Church. First and foremost, during his long pontiff in the Holy See and even earlier, being a professor and a bishop, Karol Wojtyła transferred to the universal Church a rich and multithreaded teaching, accurately assessing the «signs of the time» in the light of Revelation and Tradition, at the same time being inspired by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in which he himself participated and was co-author of compilation of the published documents. Furthermore, he himself gave an example of life fully devoted to fulfilment of the mission of a preacher and shepherd that was commissioned to him, and a witness of God who showed a man his dignity in Jesus Christ.²²

Successively, in view of accusations that cannot be justified by any means and that are directed towards St. John Paul II, the Senate of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków in Resolution no. 177/2020 on the defence of good name of St. John Paul II of 30 November 2020 stated: "Referring to its resolution of 17 February of this year, supporting the initiative to proclaim St. John Paul II Doctor of the Church and co-patron of Europe, the Senate of PUJPII wishes to remind that our Patron, as an active participant of historic drama of people and nations in the 20th century accurately identified both the symptoms of evil, that he opposed, and signs of goodness, in which he saw symptoms of hope."²³

When we look on the rich, universal and everlasting Magisterium of St. John Paul II, that undoubtedly has also a prophetic character, from the perspective of this day, then in this place of reflection on the validity of importance of the title of Doctor of the Church, especially in today's very complicated reality of the Church and the entire world that is marked by the coronavirus pandemic, it is worth to cite a piece of his homily delivered in Kraków, at Błonie, during his last pilgrimage to the Homeland on 18 August 2002: "From the beginning of its existence, referring to the mystery of the Cross and resurrection, the Church preaches Divine Mercy that is a guarantee and source of salvation for man. However, it seems that today the Church is specifically called to preach this message to the world. It cannot neglect this mission, since the God Himself calls it to it by testimony of St. Faustina. And He chose our times for this. The reason might be that the twentieth century, despite unquestionable achievements in many fields, was specifically marked by the «mystery of iniquity». With this legacy of good, but also evil, we entered a new millennium. New, unprecedented perspectives of development and at the same

²² See https://fs.siteor.com/upjp2/article_attachments/attachments/217293/original/Uchwa%C5%82a_25-2020.pdf?1582281038 [accessed: 18.07.2020].

²³ See https://fs.siteor.com/upjp2/article_attachments/attachments/242906/original/Uchwa%C5%82a_177-2020_-_JPPII_%281%29.pdf?1606946042 [accessed: 04.03.2021].

time new, unprecedented risks come into view of mankind. Not infrequently human lives as if the God did not exist and even puts himself in His position. He usurps the Creator's right to tamper with the mystery of human life. We try to decide about its materialization, determine its shape by manipulating genes and, finally, define the boundary of death. By rejecting the God's laws and moral rules, one steps against family. The voice of God in human hearts is tried to be silenced in many ways and it is attempted that He is made «the great absentee» in the culture and social consciousness of the nations. «The mystery of iniquity» is constantly fitted in the world's reality. Experiencing this mystery a man is afraid of the future, emptiness, suffering, annihilation. Maybe it is for this reason that through the testimony of a humble nun Christ, so to say, enters our times to explicitly indicate this source of consolation and hope that lies in the eternal mercy of God. It is a must that His message of merciful love resounds with a new power. The world needs this love. The time has come for the message of Christ to reach all, especially those whose humanity and dignity seem to fall into *mysterium iniquitatis*. The time has come for the message of the Divine Mercy to pour hope into human hearts and become a tinder for new civilization – civilization of love.”⁴

St. John Paul II said the above cited words on the day after consecration of the Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Łagiewniki, in Kraków, where he synthetically indicated: “It is for this reason that today, on this day, I want to make a solemn act of entrusting the world to the Divine Mercy. I do it with a warm desire that the message of the Divine Mercy, that was announced here through St. Faustina, reached all citizens of the Earth and filled their hearts with hope. Let this message spread from this place to our entire, beloved Homeland and the entire world. Let the binding promise of the Lord Jesus come true that «a spark that will prepare the world for His final coming» is to come forth from here (cf. *Diary*, 1732). This spark of Divine Mercy must be inflamed. The fire of Divine Mercy must be passed to the world. The world will find peace in the Divine Mercy, and a man will find happiness! This task I entrust with you my dear brothers and sisters, the Church in Kraków and in Poland, and all who worship the Divine Mercy and who will come here from Poland and the whole world. Be witnesses of the Divine Mercy!”⁵

In the context of the cited utterances and moving to the contemplation of general nature, it is worth to cite the Archbishop of Vienna, card. Christoph Schönborn, who in a preface to one of the latest and important publication regarding the title of Doctor of the Church indicates: “The title of Doctor of the Universal Church is granted to these saints who by their outstanding teaching

⁴ See http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020818_beatification-krakow.html [accessed: 17.07.2020].

⁵ See http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020817_shrine-divine-mercy.html [accessed: 18.07.2020].

contributed to the deepening of familiarity with the God’s Revelation, at the same time enriching the theological legacy of the Church and increasing faith in love in the faithful. From the theological point of view they explain unknown aspects of the evangelic truth. Whereas, from the pastoral point of view they ignite a call for the holiness of life in the faithful” [Schönborn 2019, 6].

It is worth to indicate that until present the title of Doctor of the Church has been granted to 36 individuals, obviously prior to this canonized by the Church, among whom there are 32 men and 4 women, but only since the year 1970. These are: St. Teresa of Avila (1970), St. Catherine of Siena (1970), St. Therese of Lisieux (1997), and St. Hildegarda of Bingen (2012) [Wodrazka 2019, 20–23].⁶

The post-council popes, i.e. St. Paul VI, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, as well as Pope Francis had and have a custom of granting this exceptional title of the Church in a systematic, yet sporadic manner. They do it in a special apostolic letter.

And so, St. Paul VI granted the title of Doctor of the Church to St. Teresa of Avila⁷ and St. Catherine of Siena in 1970,⁸ St. John Paul II granted the title of Doctor of the Church to St. Therese of Lisieux in 1997,⁹ Benedict XVI granted the title of Doctor of the Church to St. John of Avila¹⁰ and St. Hildegarda of Bingen in 2012;¹¹ whereas, Pope Francis granted this title to St. Gregory of Narek¹² who died around 1005, on 12 April 2015, it means more than a thousand years after his death [Wodrazka 2019, 22–23].

It must also be indicated that there is not any Pole on the list of Doctors of the Church, whereas there are: 2 Bishops of Rome, 3 cardinals, 15 bishops, 11 presbyters, 1 deacon, 2 nuns, 1 tertiary, and 1 prioress [ibid.]. As the above list provides, this honourable title of the Universal Church can also be granted to lay faithful. It can be said synthetically that Doctors of the Church are influential and preeminent teachers of the Universal Church [Danielski 1985, 34].

⁶ Table with the list of Doctors of the Church that provides, i.a. date of their deaths and the pope, date and source of proclamation of the title.

⁷ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *S. Teresia a Iesu, Virgo Abulensis, Doctor Ecclesiae universalis renuntiatur*, AAS 63 (1971), p. 185–92.

⁸ Cf. Idem, Apostolic Letter *Sanctae Catharinae Senensi titulus Doctoris Ecclesiae universalis defertur*, AAS 63 (1971), p. 674–82.

⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Sancta Teresia a Iesu Infante et a Sacro Vultu Doctor Ecclesiae universalis renuntiatur*, AAS 90 (1998), p. 930–44.

¹⁰ See http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20121007_giovanni-avila.html [accessed: 22.07.2020].

¹¹ See http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20121007_ildegarda-bingen.html [accessed: 22.07.2020].

¹² Cf. Francis, Apostolic Letter *Sanctus Gregorius Narecensis Doctor Ecclesiae Universalis renuntiatur*, AAS 107 (2015), p. 421–26.

It is also worth to add that in 1687 the Krakow University expressed a wish that Jan Kanty is also proclaimed Doctor of the Church at the moment of his canonization. However, the Sacred Congregation of Rites that at that time was appropriate for these types of issues questioned the authorship of his letter, which inevitably caused that the case could not have been proceeded any further [ibid., 35].

2. GENESIS AND GRANTING THE TITLE OF “DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH”

The history of granting first titles of Doctor of the Church is relatively distant. Generally, it can be said that the concept of the Doctor of the Church itself corresponds to the concept of the Father of the Church, with the exception that unlike in the case of the Fathers of the Church it is not preconditioned by ancient times – *antiquitas*. The ancient times teachers of the Church had to possess the following three elements: *doctrina orthodoxa, sanctitas vitae, approbatio Ecclesiae* [Wodrazka 2019, 13].

As W. Bar indicates, granting the title of Doctor of the Church was initiated in the Western Church by St. Venerable Bede (lifetime: 673–735, who was granted the title of Doctor of the Church by Leo XIII on 13 November 1899¹³) referring to four saints: Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory I the Great, applying in this regard an analogy to four evangelists [Bar 2019, 570; Wodrazka 2019, 19]. Officially, they were jointly proclaimed Doctors of the Church by Boniface VIII on 20 September 1295 [Wodrazka 2019, 20–21]. Therefore, some assume that the official establishment of the institution of Doctor of the Church should be assigned to Pope Boniface VIII, who further indicated that the four Fathers of the Western Church mentioned hereinabove gave glory to the Church by their exceptional example of life and through their teaching explain doubts arising out of the reading of the Holy Bible [Betti 1988, 279]. Their remembrances were celebrated in Kraków, in Poland on the basis of a decision made by bishop Nanker since 1320 [Danielski 1985, 35].

Whereas, since the 9th century, in the Eastern Church this title was assigned to the following three saints: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom, in this case applying the trinity scheme [Bar 2019, 570; Wodrazka 2019, 19]. Influence of their thought and respect for the thought was ubiquitous in the ecclesial commune. Therefore, Pope Pius V granted them and St. Athanasius the Great the title of Doctor of the Church by virtue of the office, however, it was not granted by way of some kind of special act, but by including these saints in breviary reformed after the Council of Trent,

¹³ Cf. S. C. Ritus, URBIS ET ORBIS. *Extenditur ad universam Ecclesiam, addita Doctoris qualitate, officium et Missa s. Bedae Venerabilis*, AAS 32 (1899–1900), p. 338–39.

that was printed in 1568 following the decision of this pope and containing a proper form of liturgy [Bar 2019, 570].

Earlier, the same Pope Pius V granted the title of Doctor of the Church to St. Thomas Aquinas by the power of bull *Mirabilis Deus* dated 11 April 1567 [Bar 2019, 570–71].

Synthetically, it must be noted that Bishops of Rome began granting the title of Doctor of the Church in a formally structured manner to the saint father figures of the doctrine since the Council of Trent. Specifically, it must be underlined that establishing the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the *Triumphantis Hierusalem* bull of 14 March 1588 Pope Sixtus V ordered it to, e.g. study issues relating to granting the title of Doctor of the Church to a specified person [ibid., 571]. This decision, without any doubt, strongly influenced the formation of granting this title of the Church in an organized and institutional manner.

Exactly from the Council of Trent there have already been granted 32 titles of Doctor of the Church – a few in every century, except for the seventeenth century, when such title was not granted at all.

Doctors of the Church also found an important place in the church art. And so the iconography presents a group of four western Doctors of the Church as an analogy to four evangelists; whereas, in 1667 G.L. Bernini ordered by pope Alexander VII placed the four saint Doctors of the Church in the apse of the Vatican basilica. These were: Athanasius the Great, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine who support the Peter’s throne [Danielski 1985, 35].

In this short historic *iter* one must also recall the teaching of card. Prospero Lambertini, later Benedict XIV, who in his work “De servorum Dei beatificazione et beatorum canonizatione” gave three conditions necessary to grant an indicated candidate the title of Doctor of the Church. These are the following: a) outstanding teaching: “eminens doctrina;” b) exceptional holiness of life: “insignis vitae sanctitas;” c) clear approval by the Church, i.e. granting the title of Doctor of the Church by the Bishop of Rome or the Council – “Summi Pontificis aut Concilii Generalis legitime congregati declaratio” [Castellano Cervera 1995, 8].

As to the criteria indicating exceptional nature of teaching presented by the candidate for the title of Doctor of the Church, Benedict XIV believed that it should protect from mistakes, enlighten darkness, solve doubts, and advise a method to solve obstacles arising when reading incomprehensible fragments of the Holy Bible [Wodrazka 2019, 15].

Furthermore, as the reading of the instruction of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints of 1981 (*Istruzione della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi sul conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa* approved by Pope

John Paul II on 4 May 1981¹⁴) indicates, the three requisites determined by Benedict XIV lost nothing from their validity [Wodrazka 2019, 15].¹⁵ Moreover, successive popes referred to the above teaching in the past, e.g. St. John XXIII in his Apostolic Letter titled *Celsitudo ex humilitate* of 19 March 1959, in which he proclaimed St. Lawrence of Brindisi a Doctor of the Church pointed out that: “Benedictum PP. XIV in Ecclesiae universalis Doctore enumerari solent, requisitis, insigni nempe vitae sanctitate, eminenti caelesti doctrina et Summi Pontificis declaration.”¹⁶

Therefore, it must be assumed that both teaching of the Bishops of Rome and position of the teaching in regards to conditions necessary for obtaining the title of Doctor of the Church indicated by Pope Benedict XVI are obvious and one must state that it has not been changed for centuries [Castellano Cervera 1995, 20]. Due to this it should not be changed. Naturally, there will appear interpretations of creative and innovative character as to the even better understanding or a broader understanding and explanation what the exceptional quality of the teaching presented by the candidate to the title of Doctor of the Church should be. Beyond doubts, this is an element that will be a subject of progressive development and appraisal of the authority of the Church, as the Second Vatican Council teaches in para. 8 of its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: “For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her.”¹⁷ Therefore, it is beyond any doubt that the teaching of a Doctor of the Church should remain in service of the Divine Revelation and Tradition of the Church. It should also have a glance into the future and contribute to the development of the deposit of faith [Castellano Cervera 1995, 14].

¹⁴ Cf. *Istruzione della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi sul conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa*, in: Congregatio De Causis Sanctorum, *Le cause dei Santi*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2018, p. 629–37.

¹⁵ “I requisiti, fissati da Benedetto XIV, conservano tuttora la loro validità. [...] Tali requisiti sono: la *eminens doctrina*, la *insignis vitae sanctitatis*, la *Summi Pontificis aut Concilii generalis legitime congregati declaratio*. Ognuno di questi tre punti richiede opportune precisazioni,” *Istruzione della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi sul conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa*, p. 631.

¹⁶ John XXIII, Apostolic Letter *S. Laurentius Brundisius Doctor Ecclesiae Universalis declaratur*, AAS 51 (1959), p. 460.

¹⁷ Cf. Paul VI, *Sanctae Catharinae Senensi titulus Doctoris Ecclesiae universalis defertur*, p. 675.

Furthermore, relating to the above presented conditions indicated by Pope Benedict XIV, although the analysed title could have been granted by the Council, the history shows and teaches that the title of Doctor of the Church was granted exclusively by the Bishop of Rome. This exceptional and sole competence of pope was discussed in 1874 by, i.a. St. John Henry Newman in a letter to his friend, rev. James Spencer Northcote [Schönborn 2019, 5]. Hence, undoubtedly this is a custom solidified by a centuries-old practice that, assuredly, will not change, the more that the councils are convened very rarely and for quite a different purpose [Rozkrut 2010, 37]. Their relatively small number throughout the history of the Church is an evidence of their unique nature and gives an impression that we deal with a rather extraordinary institution; as in reality councils were convened in the most important and difficult moments for the Church. And so, the first four councils – sometimes compared to four Gospels – consolidated and strengthened faith of the developing Church; successive middle ages councils were engaged in defining “*societas christiana*” in the West; the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council were engaged in defending Roman Catholicism against theses of the Reformation and the destructive secular culture; whereas, the Second Vatican Council is characterized by the pastoral dimension and openness to wide social problems of the present world in which the Church lives [Alberigo 1991, XIII]. Therefore, it seems that the Church should remain with this centuries-old practice.

It is also worth to indicate that until the Second Vatican Council the title of Doctor of the Church was granted only to men. However, on 27 January 1966 St. Pope Paul VI entrusted prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, card. A.M. Larraona, with a task to examine whether this title can be granted to a holy woman, as well, and in particular, whether this is not in contradiction with the teaching of the Apostle of Nations, the St. Paul’s teaching, that “women should remain silent in the church” (1 Corinthians 14,34) and his concrete recommendation: “I do not permit a woman to teach” (1 Timothy 2,12).

Having heard four positive opinions of theologians in this issue, the Sacred Congregation of Rites gave the Pope a positive opinion that resulted in successive proclamation of a first saint women a Doctor of the Church by St. Paul VI in 1970 [Wodrazka 2019, 16–17]. The above decision of the post-council Bishop of Rome must also be obeyed in full concordance with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and in particular with the teaching of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, where in para. 12 we can read that the Holy Spirit leading the God’s People “distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church.” Therefore, St. Paul VI proclaiming St. Teresa of Avila

a Doctor of the Church referred at the very beginning of his Apostolic Letter to the cited fragment of the Council Constitution *Lumen gentium*, thus solving all previous doubts.¹⁸

3. HOLINESS OF LIFE AND OUTSTANDING TEACHING

The St. John Paul II Apostolic Constitution on Roman Curia *Pastor bonus*, dated 28 June 1988, states in Article 73 that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has competence to “examine what is necessary for the granting of the title of Doctor to saints, after having received the recommendation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning outstanding teaching.”

When giving his comments on the cited article of the *Pastor bonus* constitution card, José Saraiva Martins practically indicated that before the title of Doctor of the Church is granted to a saint by the pope, it is necessary that apart from the holiness of life confirmed by canonization, his teaching did not only have a feature of orthodoxy, but was *eminens*, i.e. was distinguished by its high scientific qualification and deepness of content obtained by informed synthesis of wisdom, as well as through its positive influence, so that its author can be recognized as a qualified witness of the vivid tradition of the Church. Moreover, it must be verified whether pieces of writing of a candidate for the title of Doctor of the Church had and have a universal notability, and whether they have a feature of special influence on the God’s people, so that they create a certain and firm message that is able to influence the consolidation and deepening of the deposit of faith, also enlightening new directions of science and life. Such teaching should also be characterized by validity and its influence on the present times [Saraiva Martins 2003, 104].

Also the Rules of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints of 2000 in its Article 2 repeats notation from *Pastor bonus* that the congregation considers the granting of the title of Doctor of the Church to already canonized individuals, after obtaining a positive vote in regards to the outstanding character of the teaching from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [Rubio 2012, 449].

Naturally, as one could figure out based on the statements of *Pastor bonus*, the granting of the title of Doctor of the Church to a selected saint carries with itself a special proceedings both in Congregation for the Causes of Saints and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [Saraiva Martins 2003, 105; Wodrazka 2019, 24–75]. Whereas, for it to be initiated an approval of the bishop of Rome is required [Wodrazka 2019, 38–39]. Its absence results in inability to initiate such a proceedings. The above practice shows that it is the Bishop of Rome that always decides about initiation of special proceedings *in casu* in the Vatican congregations and that a request for granting the title of

¹⁸ Cf. Idem, *S. Teresia a Iesu, Virgo Abulensis, Doctor Ecclesiae universalis renuntiat*, p. 185.

Doctor of the Church to a canonized person should be directed to him at all times.

It is also worth to mention that the above congregations of Rome perform only a preliminary task for a successive decision that will be personally made by the Bishop of Rome, who by no means is bound by previous opinions of the two Congregations; as a decision in regards to granting the title of Doctor of the Church to an already canonized person is a sole competence of the Pope [ibid., 25]. Therefore, it is worth to mention that many decades have passed since the proceedings aimed at granting the title of Doctor of the Church to St. Bernardine of Siena ended on the level of Congregations; there is only a solemn proclamation for the title of Doctor of the Church missing that must be done by the Bishop of Rome [ibid., 34]. It can be said that the mentioned saint still remains on the list of individuals who are candidates for the title of Doctor of the Church [Castellano Cervera 1995, 8].

Problematic aspects undertaken by Doctors of the Church in their pieces of writing differed. They included, e.g. a systematic theology in the case of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Albert the Great; mystical experiences in the case of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila; or historical studies in the case of St. Venerable Bede [Rubio 2012, 450]. Thus, it can generally be seen that it is very broad and is not formally limited only to a narrow subject of studies.

Paragraph 19 of the Decree on the ministry and life of priests of the Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum ordinis* states: "The knowledge of the sacred minister ought to be sacred because it is drawn from the sacred source and directed to a sacred goal. Especially is it drawn from reading and meditating on the Sacred Scriptures, and it is equally nourished by the study of the Holy Fathers and other Doctors and monuments or tradition."

Whereas, in its para. 16 the Council Decree on priestly training, *Optatam totius* directly points on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas that is to shape seminarians: "Next, in order that they may illumine the mysteries of salvation as completely as possible, the students should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the help of speculation, under the guidance of St. Thomas, and to perceive their interconnections."

Therefore, a Doctor of the Church is a saint who had significant influence on the development of the holy science and perfecting the ecclesiastical life [Wodrazka 2019, 27]. Particularly, one should underline his significant influence not only on the successive Catholic teaching, but also development of piety in consecutive historical periods. Hence, first and foremost, one must perceive a dynamic and creative element in the teaching of every Doctor of the Church, and do not stop solely on these elements that consolidated the deposit of faith in a specific historical moment. Granting of the title of Doctor of the Church means acknowledgement by its highest authority of the significance of an appraised teaching from the perspective of centuries [Betti 1988, 291].

CONCLUSION

Primarily, when making a summary it is worth to point out that an outstanding teaching of a Doctor of the Church must be timeless and has to shape faith of the faithful in not only a specific region, but it has to have a universal dimension [Rubio 2012, 449]. Hence without any doubt, it significantly contributes to the development of the Catholic faith, as well as piety practiced by the faithful. This, undeniably, can also be seen both in Magisterium and the method of directing the Universal Church by St. John Paul II, especially through prophetic entrustment of the world to the Divine Mercy on 17 August 2002.¹⁹

Without any doubt, this fact must be perceived together with a mission that was received by St Faustina Kowalska to prepare the world for the final coming of the Saviour, that was made by St. John Paul II an integral part of his pontiff.²⁰ Certainly, in such a delineated context it is not surprising that also St. Sister Faustina Kowalska is perceived as a candidate for the title of Doctor of the Church.²¹ The above actions remain in full concordance with the mission of the canonical law, the aim of which is to contribute and, in the end, serve the salvation of souls – “that should be the utmost law in the Church” – through its norms and concrete orders and procedures (can. 1752 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law).

More particularly, the doctrine of Doctor of the Church is not only free from mistakes, but it also enlightens darkness, solves doubts and makes fragments of the Holy Bible that appeared enigmatic understandable [Schönborn 2019, 6–7]. Synthetically, the title of Doctor of the Church is granted to an already canonized person by the Bishop of Rome to honour the teaching that was elaborated by the saint based on the theological plane [Wodrazka 2019, 12].

Naturally, the best method of showing this would be through analysis and influence of the teaching of individual Doctors of the Church on the development of the Christian thought. Admittedly, this is a very broad problematic aspect that can constitute a special subject of a number of precise scientific researches, the more that granting of the title of Doctor of the Church is alone a very complex procedure and generally speaking combines elements of theology and law of the Church.

It is also worth to underline that the presented title was granted spontaneously in the first millennium. It has been granted institutionally and successively

¹⁹ See http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020817_shrine-divine-mercy.html [accessed: 18.07.2020].

²⁰ “You will prepare the world for my final coming.” See Św. Siostra Faustyna Kowalska ZMBM, *Dzienniczek. Miłosierdzie Boże w duszy mojej*, Kraków 2001, no. 429, p. 254.

²¹ See https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dottore_della_Chiesa [accessed: 20.07.2020].

only precisely from 13th century. However, it has always been granted only and solely on the way of a personal decision of the Bishop of Rome.

A consequence of the great role and importance of the Doctors of the Church in its life is also the fact that they have an important place in the liturgy of the Church, which makes their holy lives even more current and fruitful, and in particular makes the conveyed teaching still current in the life and prayer of the Church.

“Doctors of the Church are not paintings in museums or ancient abandoned sarcophaguses, but they are real characters that even today inspire the universal Church to avoid paralysis of good and preserve the optimism of faith, love of life and hope. The vessel of the Church finds dependable guides in the saints of all Times. Those saints who have their anchors in Heaven support it, so that it wouldn’t draw in the sea of history, but reached a safe harbour – heavenly Jerusalem” [Schönborn 2019, 6–7].

REFERENCES

- Alberigo, Giuseppe, et al. 1991. *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*. Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniana Bologna.
- Bar, Wiesław. 2019. “Doktor Kościoła.” In *Leksykon Prawa Kanonicznego*, edited by Mirosław Sitarz, 569–74. Lublin: Stowarzyszenie Absolwentów i Przyjaciół Wydziału Prawa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.
- Betti, Umberto. 1988. “A proposito del conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa.” *Antoniano* 43, no. 1:278–91.
- Castellano, Cervera J. 1995. “«Eminens doctrina» un requisito necesario para ser Doctor de la Iglesia.” *Teresianum* 46, no. 1:3–21.
- Danielski, Wojciech. 1985. “Doktor Kościoła.” In *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, edited by Ludomir Bieńkowski, Feliks Gryglewicz, and Romuald Łukaszyk, vol. 4, 34–36. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.
- Obirek, Stanisław, and Adam Nowak. 2020. “Jan Paweł II doktorem Kościoła?” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (20.02.2020): 16.
- Paciorek, Antoni. 2009. *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza rozdziały 1-13*. Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos.
- Rozkrut, Tomasz. 2010. *Instytucja Synodu Biskupów w Kościele posoborowym*. Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos.
- Rubio, Diego A. 2012. “Doctor de la Iglesia.” In *Diccionario general de derecho canónico*, edited by Javier Otaduy, Antonio Viana, and Joaquín Sedano, vol. 3, 448–51. Pamplona: Instituto Martín Azpilcueta.
- Saraiva, Martins J. 2003. “Art. 73.” In *Commento alla Pastor Bonus e alle norme sussidiarie della Curia Romana*, edited by Pio Vito Pinto, 104–105. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Wodrzak, Paul B. 2019. *Eminente dottrina. La procedura per il conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa*. Prefazione di Card. Christoph Schönborn. Verona: Fede & Cultura.