



# The Holy See

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## ***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ON THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN FORMATION***

1. I had originally chosen to give this Letter a title referring to priestly formation. On further reflection, however, this subject also applies to the formation of all those engaged in pastoral work, indeed of all Christians. What I would like to address here is the value of reading novels and poems as part of one's path to personal maturity.

2. Often during periods of boredom on holiday, in the heat and quiet of some deserted neighbourhood, finding a good book to read can provide an oasis that keeps us from other choices that are less wholesome. Likewise, in moments of weariness, anger, disappointment or failure, when prayer itself does not help us find inner serenity, a good book can help us weather the storm until we find peace of mind. Time spent reading may well open up new interior spaces that help us to avoid becoming trapped by a few obsessive thoughts that can stand in the way of our personal growth. Indeed, before our present unremitting exposure to social media, mobile phones and other devices, reading was a common experience, and those who went through it know what I mean. It is not something completely outdated.

3. Unlike audio-visual media, where the product is more self-contained and the time allowed for "enriching" the narrative or exploring its significance is usually quite restricted, a book demands greater personal engagement on the part of its reader. Readers in some sense rewrite a text, enlarging its scope through their imagination, creating a whole world by bringing into play their skills, their memory, their dreams and their personal history, with all its drama and symbolism. In this way, what emerges is a text quite different from the one the author intended to write. A literary work is thus a living and ever-fruitful text, always capable of speaking in different ways and producing an original synthesis on the part of each of its readers. In our reading, we are enriched by what we receive from the author and this allows us in turn to grow inwardly, so that each new work we read will renew and expand our worldview.

4. For this reason, I very much appreciate the fact that at least some seminaries have reacted to the obsession with "screens" and with toxic, superficial and violent fake news, by devoting time and attention to literature. They have done this by setting aside time for tranquil reading and for

discussing books, new and old, that continue to have much to say to us. Regrettably, however, a sufficient grounding in literature is not generally part of programmes of formation for the ordained ministry. Literature is often considered merely a form of entertainment, a “minor art” that need not belong to the education of future priests and their preparation for pastoral ministry. With few exceptions, literature is considered non-essential. I consider it important to insist that such an approach is unhealthy. It can lead to the serious intellectual and spiritual impoverishment of future priests, who will be deprived of that privileged access which literature grants to the very heart of human culture and, more specifically, to the heart of every individual.

5. With this Letter, I would like to propose a radical change of course. In this regard, I would agree with the observation of one theologian that, “literature... originates in the most irreducible core of the person, that mysterious level [of their being]... Literature is life, conscious of itself, that reaches its full self-expression through the use of all the conceptual resources of language”. [\[1\]](#)

6. Literature thus has to do, in one way or another, with our deepest desires in this life, for on a profound level literature engages our concrete existence, with its innate tensions, desires and meaningful experiences.

7. As a young teacher, I discovered this with my students. Between 1964 and 1965, at the age of 28, I taught literature at a Jesuit school in Santa Fe. I taught the last two years of high school and had to ensure that my pupils studied *El Cid*. The students were not happy; they used to ask if they could read García Lorca instead. So I decided that they could read *El Cid* at home, and during the lessons I would discuss the authors the students liked best. Of course, they wanted to read contemporary literary works. Yet, as they read those works that interested them at that moment, they developed a more general taste for literature and poetry, and thus they moved on to other authors. In the end, our hearts always seek something greater, and individuals will find their own way in literature. [\[2\]](#) I, for my part, love the tragedians, because we can all embrace their works as our own, as expressions of our own personal drama. In weeping for the fate of their characters, we are essentially weeping for ourselves, for our own emptiness, shortcomings and loneliness. Naturally, I am not asking you to read the same things that I did. Everyone will find books that speak to their own lives and become authentic companions for their journey. There is nothing more counterproductive than reading something out of a sense of duty, making considerable effort simply because others have said it is essential. On the contrary, while always being open to guidance, we should select our reading with an open mind, a willingness to be surprised, a certain flexibility and readiness to learn, trying to discover what we need at every point of our lives.

## Faith and culture

8. Literature also proves essential for believers who sincerely seek to enter into dialogue with the culture of their time, or simply with the lives and experiences of other people. With good reason, the Second Vatican Council observed that, “literature and art... seek to penetrate our nature” and

“throw light on our suffering and joy, our needs and potentialities”. [3] Indeed, literature takes its cue from the realities of our daily life, its passions and events, our “actions, work, love, death and all the poor things that fill life”. [4]

9. How can we reach the core of cultures ancient and new if we are unfamiliar with, disregard or dismiss their symbols, messages, artistic expressions and the stories with which they have captured and evoked their loftiest ideals and aspirations, as well as their deepest sufferings, fears and passions? How can we speak to the hearts of men and women if we ignore, set aside or fail to appreciate the “stories” by which they sought to express and lay bare the drama of their lived experience in novels and poems?

10. The Church, in her missionary experience, has learned how to display all her beauty, freshness and novelty in her encounter – often through literature – with the different cultures in which her faith has taken root, without hesitating to engage with and draw upon the best of what she has found in each culture. This approach has freed her from the temptation to a blinkered, fundamentalist self-referentiality that would consider a particular cultural-historical “grammar” as capable of expressing the entire richness and depth of the Gospel. [5] Many of the doomsday prophecies that presently seek to sow despair are rooted precisely in such a belief. Contact with different literary and grammatical styles will always allow us to explore more deeply the polyphony of divine revelation without impoverishing it or reducing it to our own needs or ways of thinking.

11. It was thus no coincidence that Christian antiquity, for example, clearly realized the need for a serious engagement with the classical culture of the time. Basil of Caesarea, one of the Eastern Church Fathers, in his *Discourse to the Young*, composed between 370 and 375, and most likely addressed to his nieces and nephews, extolled the richness of classical literature produced by *hoi éxotheren* (“those outside”), as he called the pagan authors. He saw this both in terms of its argumentation, that is, its *lógoi* (discourses), useful for theology and exegesis, and its ethical content, namely the *práxeis* (acts, conduct) helpful for the ascetic and moral life. Basil concluded this work by urging young Christians to consider the classics as an *ephódion* (“viaticum”) for their education and training, a means of “profit for the soul” (IV, 8-9). It was precisely from that encounter between Christianity and the culture of the time that a fresh presentation of the Gospel message emerged.

12. Thanks to an evangelical discernment of culture, we can recognize the presence of the Spirit in the variety of human experiences, seeing the seeds of the Spirit’s presence *already* planted in the events, sensibilities, desires and profound yearnings present within hearts and in social, cultural and spiritual settings. We can see this, for example, in the approach taken by Paul before the Areopagus, as related in the Acts of the Apostles (17:16-34). In his address, Paul says of God: “In him we live and move and have our being”; and as some of your own poets have said, ‘We too are his offspring.’” ( Acts 17:28). This verse contains two quotations: one indirect, from the poet Epimenides (sixth century B.C.E.), and the other direct, from the *Phaenomena* of the poet Aratus

of Soli (third century B.C.E.), who wrote of the constellations and the signs of good and bad weather. Here, “Paul reveals that he is a ‘reader’ while also demonstrating his method of approaching the literary text, which is an evangelical discernment of culture. The Athenians dismiss him as a *spermologos*, a ‘babbler’, but literally ‘a gatherer of seeds’. What was surely meant to be an insult proved, ironically, to be profoundly true. Paul gathered the seeds of pagan poetry and, overcoming his first impressions (cf. *Acts 17:16*), acknowledges the Athenians to be ‘extremely religious’ and sees in the pages of their classical literature a veritable *praeparatio evangelica*” [6].

13. What did Paul do? He understood that “literature brings to light the abysses within the human person, while revelation and then theology take over to show how Christ enters these depths and illumines them”. [7] In the face of these depths, literature is thus a “path” [8] to helping shepherds of souls enter into a fruitful dialogue with the culture of their time.

### Never a disembodied Christ

14. Before exploring the specific reasons why the study of literature should be encouraged in the training of future priests, I would first like to say something about the contemporary religious landscape. “The return to the sacred and the quest for spirituality which mark our own time are ambiguous phenomena. Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus”. [9] The urgent task of proclaiming the Gospel in our time demands that believers, and priests in particular, ensure that everyone be able to encounter *Jesus Christ made flesh, made man, made history*. We must always take care never to lose sight of the “flesh” of Jesus Christ: that flesh made of passions, emotions and feelings, words that challenge and console, hands that touch and heal, looks that liberate and encourage, flesh made of hospitality, forgiveness, indignation, courage, fearlessness; in a word, love.

15. It is precisely at this level that familiarity with literature can make future priests and all pastoral workers all the more sensitive to the full humanity of the Lord Jesus, in which his divinity is wholly present. In this way, they can proclaim the Gospel in a way that enables everyone to experience the truth of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching that, “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear”. [10] This is not the mystery of some abstract humanity, but that of all men and women, with their hurts, desires, memories and hopes that are a concrete part of their lives.

### A great good

16. From a practical point of view, many scientists argue that the habit of reading has numerous positive effects on people’s lives, helping them to acquire a wider vocabulary and thus develop broader intellectual abilities. It also stimulates their imagination and creativity, enabling them to

learn to tell their stories in richer and more expressive ways. It also improves their ability to concentrate, reduces levels of cognitive decline, and calms stress and anxiety.

17. Even more, reading prepares us to understand and thus deal with various situations that arise in life. In reading, we immerse ourselves in the thoughts, concerns, tragedies, dangers and fears of characters who in the end overcome life's challenges. Perhaps too, in following a story to the end, we gain insights that will later prove helpful in our own lives.

18. In this effort to encourage reading, I would mention two texts by well-known authors, who, in a few words, have much to teach us:

Novels unleash "in us, in the space of an hour, all the possible joys and misfortunes that, in life, it would take us entire years to know even slightly, and of which the most intense would never be revealed to us because the slowness with which they occur prevents us from perceiving them".

[11]

"In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do". [12]

19. However, it is not my intention to focus solely on the personal advantages to be drawn from reading, but to reflect on the most important reasons for encouraging a renewed love for reading.

### **Listening to another person's voice**

20. When I think of literature, I am reminded of what the great Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges [13] used to tell his students, namely that the most important thing is simply to read, to enter into direct contact with literature, to immerse oneself in the living text in front of us, rather than to fixate on ideas and critical comments. Borges explained this idea to his students by saying that at first they may understand very little of what they are reading, but in any case they are hearing "another person's voice". This is a definition of literature that I like very much: *listening to another person's voice*. We must never forget how dangerous it is to stop listening to the voice of other people when they challenge us! We immediately fall into self-isolation; we enter into a kind of "spiritual deafness", which has a negative effect on our relationship with ourselves and our relationship with God, no matter how much theology or psychology we may have studied.

21. This approach to literature, which makes us sensitive to the mystery of other persons, teaches us how to touch their hearts. Here, I think of the courageous plea that Saint Paul VI made to artists and thus also to writers on 7 May 1964: "We need you. Our ministry needs your cooperation. For as you know, our ministry is to preach, and to ensure that the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of the ineffable, of God, is accessible and intelligible, indeed moving. And you are masters in this

work of rendering the invisible world in accessible and intelligible ways". [14] This is the point: the task of believers, and of priests in particular, is precisely to "touch" the hearts of others, so that they may be opened to the message of the Lord Jesus. In this great task, the contribution that literature and poetry can offer is of incomparable value.

22. T.S. Eliot, the poet whose poetry and essays, reflecting his Christian faith, have an outstanding place in modern literature, perceptively described today's religious crisis as that of a widespread emotional incapacity. [15] If we are to believe this diagnosis, the problem for faith today is not primarily that of believing more or believing less with regard to particular doctrines. Rather, it is the inability of so many of our contemporaries to be profoundly moved in the face of God, his creation and other human beings. Here we see the importance of working to healing and enrich our responsiveness. On returning from my Apostolic Journey to Japan, I was asked what I thought the West has to learn from the East. My response was, "I think that the West lacks a bit of poetry". [16]

### A "training in discernment"

23. What profit, then, does a priest gain from contact with literature? Why is it necessary to consider and promote the reading of great novels as an important element in priestly *paideia*? Why is it important for us, in the training of candidates for the priesthood, to recover Karl Rahner's insight that there is a profound spiritual affinity between the priest and the poet? [17]

24. Let us try to answer these questions by listening to what the German theologian has to tell us. [18] For Rahner, the words of the poet are full of nostalgia, as it were, they are like "gates into infinity, gates into the incomprehensible. They call upon that which has no name. They stretch out to what cannot be grasped". Poetry "does not itself give the infinite, it does not bring and contain *the* infinite". That is the task of the word of God and, as Rahner goes on to say, "the poetic word calls upon the word of God". [19] For Christians, the Word is God, and all our human words bear traces of an intrinsic longing for God, a tending towards that Word. It can be said that the truly poetic word participates analogically in the Word of God, as the Letter to the Hebrews clearly states (cf. *Heb* 4:12-13).

25. In light of this, Karl Rahner can draw a striking parallel between the priest and the poet: the word "alone can redeem that which constitutes the ultimate imprisonment of all realities which are not expressed in word: the dumbness of their reference to God". [20]

26. Literature, then, sensitizes us to the relationship between *forms of expression* and *meaning*. It offers *a training in discernment*, honing the capacity of the future priest to gain insight into his own interiority and into the world around him. Reading thus becomes the "path" leading him to the truth of his own being and the occasion for a process of spiritual discernment that will not be without its moments of anxiety and even crisis. Indeed, numerous pages of literature correspond to what Saint Ignatius calls spiritual "desolation".



27. This is how Ignatius explains it: “I call desolation darkness of the soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love. The soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad, and separated, as it were, from its Creator and Lord”. [21]

28. The difficulty or tedium that we feel in reading certain texts is not necessarily bad or useless. Ignatius himself observed that in “those who are going from bad to worse”, the good spirit works by provoking restlessness, agitation and dissatisfaction. [22] This would be the literal application of the first Ignatian rule for the discernment of spirits, which deals with those who “go from one mortal sin to another”. In such persons the good spirit, by “making use of the light of reason will rouse the sting of conscience and fill them with remorse”, [23] and in this way will lead them to goodness and beauty.

29. It is clear, then, that the reader is not simply the recipient of an edifying message, but a person challenged to press forward on a shifting terrain where the boundaries between salvation and perdition are not *a priori* obvious and distinct. Reading, as an act of “discernment”, directly involves the reader as both the “subject” who reads and as the “object” of what is being read. In reading a novel or a work of poetry, the reader actually experiences “being read” by the words that he or she is reading. [24] Readers can thus be compared to players on a field: they play the game, but the game is also played through them, in the sense that they are totally caught up in the action. [25]

### Attention and digestion

30. As far as content is concerned, we should realize that literature is like “a telescope”, to use a well-known image of Marcel Proust. [26] As such, it is pointed at beings and things, and enables us to realize “the immense distance” that separates the totality of human experience from our perception of it. “Literature can also be compared to a photo lab, where pictures of life can be processed in order to bring out their contours and nuances. This is what literature is ‘for’: it helps us to ‘develop’ the picture of life” [27], to challenge us about its meaning, and, in a word, to *experience life* as it is.

31. Our usual view of the world, however, tends to be “telescoped” and narrowed by the pressure exerted on us by our many practical and short-term objectives. Even our commitment to service – liturgical, pastoral and charitable – can become focused only on goals to be achieved. Yet, as Jesus reminds us in the parable of the sower, the seed needs to fall on deep soil to ripen fruitfully over time, without being choked by rocky soil or thorns (*Mt* 13:18-23). There is always the risk that an excessive concern for efficiency will dull discernment, weaken sensitivity and ignore complexity. We desperately need to counterbalance this inevitable temptation to a frenetic and uncritical lifestyle by stepping back, slowing down, taking time to look and listen. This can happen when a person simply stops to read a book.

32. We need to rediscover ways of relating to reality that are more welcoming, not merely strategic and aimed purely at results, ways that allow us to experience the infinite grandeur of being. A sense of perspective, leisure and freedom are the marks of an approach to reality that finds in literature a privileged, albeit not exclusive, form of expression. Literature thus teaches us how to look and see, to discern and explore the reality of individuals and situations as a mystery charged with a surplus of meaning that can only be partially understood through categories, explanatory schemes, linear dynamics of causes and effects, means and ends.

33. Another striking image for the role of literature comes from the activity of the human body, and specifically the act of digestion. The eleventh-century monk William of Saint-Thierry and the seventeenth-century Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin developed the image of a cow chewing her cud – *ruminatio* – as an image of contemplative reading. Surin referred to the “stomach of the soul”, while the Jesuit Michel De Certeau has spoken of an authentic “physiology of digestive reading”.

[28] Literature helps us to reflect on the meaning of our presence in this world, to “digest” and assimilate it, and to grasp what lies beneath the surface of our experience. Literature, in a word, serves to interpret life, to discern its deeper meaning and its essential tensions. [29]

### Seeing through the eyes of others

34. In terms of the use of language, reading a literary text places us in the position of “seeing through the eyes of others”, [30] thus gaining a breadth of perspective that broadens our humanity. We develop an imaginative empathy that enables us to identify with how others see, experience and respond to reality. Without such empathy, there can be no solidarity, sharing, compassion, mercy. In reading we discover that our feelings are not simply our own, they are universal, and so even the most destitute person does not feel alone.

35. The marvellous diversity of humanity, and the diachronic and synchronic plurality of cultures and fields of learning, become, in literature, a language capable of respecting and expressing all their variety. At the same time, they translate into a symbolic grammar that makes them meaningful to us, not foreign but shared. The uniqueness of literature lies in the fact that it conveys the richness of experience not by objectifying it as in the descriptive models of the sciences or the judgements of literary criticism, but by expressing and interpreting its deeper meaning.

36. When we read a story, thanks to the descriptive powers of the author, each of us can see before our eyes the weeping of an abandoned girl, an elderly woman pulling the covers over her sleeping grandson, the struggles of a shopkeeper trying to eke out a living, the shame of one who bears the brunt of constant criticism, the boy who takes refuge in dreams as his only escape from a wretched and violent life. As these stories awaken faint echoes of our own inner experiences, we become more sensitive to the experiences of others. We step out of ourselves to enter into their lives, we sympathize with their struggles and desires, we see things through their eyes and



eventually we become companions on their journey. We are caught up in the lives of the fruit seller, the prostitute, the orphaned child, the bricklayer's wife, the old crone who still believes she will someday find her prince charming. We can do this with empathy and at times with tenderness and understanding.

37. As Jean Cocteau wrote to Jacques Maritain: "Literature is impossible. We must get out of it. No use trying to get out through literature; only love and faith enable us to go out of ourselves".

[31] Yet can we ever really go out of ourselves if the sufferings and joys of others do not burn in our hearts? Here, I would say that, for us as Christians, nothing that is human is indifferent to us.

38. Literature is not relativistic; it does not strip us of values. The symbolic representation of good and evil, of truth and falsehood, as realities that in literature take the form of individuals and collective historical events, does not dispense from moral judgement but prevents us from blind or superficial condemnation. As Jesus tells us, "Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" (*Mt 7:3*).

39. In reading about violence, narrowness or frailty on the part of others, we have an opportunity to reflect on our own experiences of these realities. By opening up to the reader a broader view of the grandeur and misery of human experience, literature teaches us patience in trying to understand others, humility in approaching complex situations, meekness in our judgement of individuals and sensitivity to our human condition. Judgement is certainly needed, but we must never forget its limited scope. Judgement must never issue in a death sentence, eliminating persons or suppressing our humanity for the sake of a soulless absolutizing of the law.

40. The wisdom born of literature instils in the reader greater perspective, a sense of limits, the ability to value experience over cognitive and critical thinking, and to embrace a poverty that brings extraordinary riches. By acknowledging the futility and perhaps even the impossibility of reducing the mystery of the world and humanity to a dualistic polarity of true vs false or right vs wrong, the reader accepts the responsibility of passing judgement, not as a means of domination, but rather as an impetus towards greater listening. And at the same time, a readiness to partake in the extraordinary richness of a history which is due to the presence of the Spirit, but is also given as a grace, an unpredictable and incomprehensible event that does not depend on human activity, but redefines our humanity in terms of hope for salvation.

### **The spiritual power of literature**

41. I trust that, with these brief reflections, I have emphasized the role that literature can play in educating the hearts and minds of pastors and future pastors. Literature can greatly stimulate the free and humble exercise of our use of reason, a fruitful recognition of the variety of human languages, a broadening of our human sensibilities, and finally, a great spiritual openness to hearing the Voice that speaks through many voices.

42. Literature helps readers to topple the idols of a self-referential, falsely self-sufficient and statically conventional language that at times also risks polluting our ecclesial discourse, imprisoning the freedom of the Word. The literary word is a word that sets language in motion, liberates and purifies it. Ultimately, it opens that word to even greater expressive and expansive vistas. It opens our human words to welcome the Word that is already present in human speech, not when it sees itself as knowledge that is already full, definitive and complete, but when it becomes a listening and expectation of the One who comes *to make all things new* (cf. *Rev 21:5*).

43. Finally, the spiritual power of literature brings us back to the primordial task entrusted by God to our human family: the task of “naming” other beings and things (cf. *Gen 2:19-20*). The mission of being the steward of creation, assigned by God to Adam, entailed before all else the recognition of his own dignity and the meaning of the existence of other beings. Priests are likewise entrusted with this primordial task of “naming”, of bestowing meaning, of becoming instruments of communion between creation and the Word made flesh and his power to shed light on every dimension of our human condition.

44. The affinity between priest and poet thus shines forth in the mysterious and indissoluble sacramental union between the divine Word and our human words, giving rise to a ministry that becomes a service born of listening and compassion, a charism that becomes responsibility, a vision of the true and the good that discloses itself as beauty. How can we fail to reflect on the words left us by the poet Paul Celan: “Those who truly learn to see, draw close to what is unseen”.

[32]

Given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran, on 17 July in the year 2024, the twelfth of my Pontificate.

FRANCIS

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[1] R. LATOURELLE, ‘Literature’, in R. LATOURELLE & R. FISICHELLA, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, New York 2000, 604.

[2] Cf. A. SPADARO, “J. M. Bergoglio, il ‘maestrillo’ creativo. Intervista all’alunno Jorge Milia”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 2014 I 523-534.

[3] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.

[4] K. Rahner, "Il futuro del libro religioso", in *Nuovi saggi II*, Roma 1968, 647.

[5] Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 117.

[6] A. SPADARO, *Svolta di respiro. Spiritualità della vita contemporanea*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 101.

[7] R. LATOURELLE, 'Literature', in R. LATOURELLE & R. FISICHELLA, *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, New York 2000, 603.

[8] SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Artists*, 4 April 1999, 6.

[9] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 89.

[10] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

[11] M. PROUST, *À la recherche du temps perdu - Du côté de chez Swann*, B. Grasset, Paris 1914, 104-105.

[12] C.S. LEWIS, *An Experiment in Criticism*, 89.

[13] Cf. J.L. BORGES, *Borges, Oral*, Buenos Aires 1979, 22.

[14] SAINT PAUL VI, *Homily*, Mass with Artists, Sistine Chapel, 7 May 1964.

[15] Cf. T.S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*, London 1946, 30.

[16] *Press Conference on the Return Flight to Rome, Apostolic Journey to Thailand and Japan*, 26 November 2019.

[17] Cf. A. SPADARO, *La grazia della parola. Karl Rahner e la poesia*, Milano, Jaca Book, 2006.

[18] Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. III, London 1967, 294-317.

[19] *Ibid.* 316-317.

[20] *Ibid.* 302.

[21] SAINT IGNATIUS LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 317.

[22] Cf. *ibid.*, n. 335.

[23] *Ibid.*, n. 314

[24] Cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. III, London 1967, 299.

[25] Cf. A SPADARO, *La pagina che illumina. Scrittura creativa come esercizio spirituale*, Milano, Ares, 2023, 46-47.

[26] M. PROUST, *À la recherche du temps perdu. Le temps retrouvé*, Vol. III, Paris 1954, 1041.

[27] A SPADARO, *La pagina che illumina. Scrittura creativa come esercizio spirituale*, Milano, Ares, 2023, 14.

[28] M. DE CERTEAU, *Il parlare angelico. Figure per una poetica della lingua (Secoli XVI e XVII)*, Firenze 1989, 139 ff.

[29] A SPADARO, *La pagina che illumina. Scrittura creativa come esercizio spirituale*, Milano, Ares, 2023, 16.

[30] Cf. C.S. LEWIS, *An Experiment in Criticism*.

[31] J. COCTEAU – J. MARITAIN, *Dialogo sulla fede*, Firenze, Passigli, 1988, 56; Cf. A SPADARO, *La pagina che illumina. Scrittura creativa come esercizio spirituale*, Milano, Ares, 2023, 11-12.

[32] P. CELAN, *Microliti*, Milano 2020, 101.