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Juan Jose Perez-Soba: *Amore: introduzione a un mistero*
Amore umano, 13. Cantagalli Siena 2012, 430 pp.

The author of the discussed extensive monograph is Juan Jose Perez-Soba, who, first of all, is a priest in the diocese of Madrid. As a theologian, Perez-Soba specializes in moral fundamental theology at the Theological Department of the Ecclesiastical University San Damaso in Madrid, which is an academic institution existing within the structure of the Papal Institute of John Paul II in Rome and Valencia. The author is already renowned for publishing several monumental works on the subject of love, for instance *Estudio de la interpersonalidad en el amor en San Tome de Aquine* (PUI Mursia 2001), as well as a volume entitled *L'amore principio di vita sociale. "Caritas aedificat"* (Cantagalli 2011). The book we are about to review has been pronounced The Book of the Year 2013 by the experts and media.

Discussing the content of Perez-Soba's monograph, we have to start with a general outline of its topic area, which boils down to the "dialogue" about love with a contemporary human. Both the "Death of God" philosophical-theological movement and "liberation theology" of the 1960s addressed love in an inappropriate way. Only Jürgen Moltmann's "theology of hope" established a comprehensive way of developing the more holistically understood "theology of love."

The work is composed of six parts, each of them very extensive. First two comprise "a general view" on the issue of love in philosophy, theology and everyday life. The author derives all his conclusions from the theology of creation because "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Therefore, it is also a departurepoint of understanding "the theology of marriage and family." The last part — according to the author — includes important "distinctions"

and “differences” resulting from the emotional sense of love, “love for the truth” and “love for good life choices” (p. 56).

Additionally, the third part, speaking content-wise, is devoted to specific problems conditioning understanding of love in life. What is at stake here is the “experience of the beginnings of love” (p. 75). These are the decisive factors when it comes to a proper or deformed vision of God’s love (or lack thereof) and different forms of “loving thy neighbour.”

For us, it is the fourth part that is crucial (pp. 137—196), since the author presents therein the integral anthropology of love in marriage and family by developing the truths already known from John Paul II’s *“Man and woman he created them”* (*Genesis 1:27*) John Paul II. The author, however, reinterprets the Pope’s message by referring to many interesting, and often already forgotten, thinkers such as Dionysius the Areopagite, Richard of St. Victor, Maurice Necdouelle and Livio Melina. The most interesting and novel way of presentation refers to the spousal love, described as “friendship with sustainable presence” (p. 174). The chapter ends with a meticulous analysis of “the need to develop the everyday language of love” (182ff.).

The fifth and the sixth parts are devoted to the basics of the theology of love. These parts are quite lengthy, too. Starting from “the necessary love for the truth,” the author concludes with the descriptions of the exemplary Christocentric love. Here is the excerpt from one of such descriptions: “Love is fascinating. No one can escape it. If one deforms it, one, at the same time, loses a sense of one’s own identity, hope, sense of life and true happiness.”

Moreover, the book deserves our attention for two more reasons. Firstly, because of its systematic rendition of the basic and forgotten, in a great cultural chaos, concepts related to love.

Secondly, the author is rightly faithful to the assumption that “love is a mystery.” And when, in the fourth part, he talks about the spousal love, his arguments are of a particular type. Marriage is a true and proper vocation. “Two Christians are married, constantly noticing in their history of love the call from the Lord, and hence recognize the vocation to create out of the two elements, masculine and feminine, one — the unity of body and life. The sacrament of marriage strengthens this love by the grace of God, by embedding it in God, and thanks to this gift, with the certainty of the vocation, one can be sure and fearless to cope with everything together!

The conclusion of this very comprehensive monograph may be as follows: Also young people need today this moral and spiritual basis in order to build well, but unfortunately this basis is no longer provided by families or social tradition. What is even worse, the nowadays soci-

ety puts individual rights in the first place rather than family and interpersonal ties which last until difficulties are encountered. This is why one often speaks about spousal and family relations in a superficial and incorrect way. This is why *Love: Introduction to the Mystery* is so much needed. It is definitely indispensable in the way offered by Juan Jose Perez-Soba.

Alojzy Drożdż