Challenges to Religious Education in Contemporary Society

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Challenges to Religious Education in Contemporary Society

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Preface

According to His Eminence Franjo Cardinal Kuharić, the Archbishop of Zagreb, "the purpose of education is to develop in a man the ability to use his freedom responsibly so that he may voluntarily embrace the true human good; to have a well-formed conscience as the light for his moral choices and decisions; to attain a pure heart for relations with other people and for doing good; to be an assistant, a guardian".[1] Cardinal's thoughts are to be fulfilled if both the educator and the student comprehend that "the first step in education is learning to recognize the Creator's image in man, and consequently learning to have a profound respect for every human being and helping others to live a life consonant with this supreme dignity."[2]

Faith formation in modern society is a great challenge, because the task of a Christian educator is to spread the Gospel message that can bring regeneration and spiritual transformation in the human heart. As the fruit of God's grace and the mystery of human freedom, the process of faith formation corresponds to a lifelong spiritual pilgrimage. It is the way marked by hope, earnest expectation, trusting and self-giving to the Other, Who has shown His faithfulness and omnipotence. Jesus Christ Himself "is the source of our faith, the model of Christian conduct and the Teacher of our prayer."[3] Thus spiritual formation is the lifelong, faith-filled process that affects the whole person, i.e. his/her cognitive, volitional, emotional and spiritual dimensions as well as self-perception and self-determination.

The attitudes towards faith have changed throughout history due to the impact of socio-cultural and political trends that often hindered the spread of Christian message. Faith formation is increasingly difficult in the contemporary society due to the widespread influence of pragmatism, secularism, rationalism or irrationalism, but also to erroneous interpretation and misuse of the fundamental concepts such as upbringing, religion, marriage, and family.

Being aware of the aforementioned challenges, the Catholic Faculty of Theology, the Department of Religious Pedagogy and Catechetics and the Department of Pastoral Theology would like to contribute to the scientific and research work by publishing of this book.

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[1]   Card. F. Kuharić, *Meditacija* (10. studenoga 1999.). Dokumentarni film u produkciji Hrvatske radiotelevizije i Glasa Koncila, 2002.

[2]   Benedict XVI, *Message for the celebration of the World day of peace. Educating young people in justice and peace* (1 January 2012), 3.

[3]   John Paul II, Apostolic constitution *Fidei depositum on the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, III.

The Proceedings presented in the book are the fruit of international cooperation with the faculties of Theology in Ljubljana, Krakow, Passau and Vienna. The international scientific conference on the *Challenges for Religious Education in Contemporary Society*, organized by the Catholic Faculty of Theology, took place in Split on May 26, 2017.

The book is divided into four parts: Part one discusses different dimensions of religious upbringing and education in the biblical, philosophical and literary context, referring to the teaching and guidelines of the Church on religious education. The second part focuses on a holistic approach to faith formation, emphasizing experiential teaching, the beauty of sights as a pathway to God, biographical learning and the social engagement of religious education teachers. Since the theological-pastoral thoughts are context-related, the third part provides insight into the social context of pastoral care, the transmission of Christian faith at the time of the Great Migration of peoples, religious education in post-modern times challenged by plurality, heterogeneity and migration, and the role of ecclesial movements and new communities in the process of Evangelization. The fourth part focuses on the challenges for the family and marriage faith formation, which are the following: changes in the family, children behaviour and discipline, children understanding of religious messages; the role of parenthood and post-divorce experience, the effects of traumatic experiences in childhood on faith maturity, and violent upbringing, spirituality and existential issues.

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to our colleagues and co-workers for their support and encouragement in organizing the Conference and publishing the Proceedings.

We hope that the pedagogical value of the researches presented here would stimulate further studies in faith formation, since "the flowers do not flourish in the fridge"[4] and "the faith growth of young people and children is only possible in a religious atmosphere within the family, in the form of family prayer and in an atmosphere of love."[5]

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[4]   Card. F. Kuharić, *Cvijeće ne cvate u hladnjaku*, Obnovljeni život, 40 (1985) 6, p. 459.

[5]   *Ibidem*, p. 460.

I. Differet dimensions of religious education

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PARENTS AND CHILDREN ON THE FIRST PAGES OF THE BIBLE (GEN 1 - 12)

Abstract

The first pages of the Bible provide no example of children's upbringing since the first people, Adam and Eve, are presented as young but adult people. However, the first human couple is predestined for procreation and rearing of offspring. This paper examines the relationships between parents and children, starting from Adam and Eve and their sons up to Abraham and his children. The analysis of their relationships is based on the early chapters of Genesis 1 - 22.

Key words: *parents, children, upbringing, God, faith, Gospel Books, biblical narratives.*

Introduction

This paper aims to analyse biblical literary figures in: Adam and Eve's family and Abraham's family as well as their interrelated family relationships. However, it is still unknown know how many sons and daughters Adam and Eve had (cf. Gen 5:4), but according to the biblical narrative only three of their sons are mentioned: Cain, Abel, and Seth. Also, in the following genealogies, some brothers and sisters are highlighted due to their importance and role in biblical history, thus requiring an extended text description. Also, concerning Abraham's children, Isaac is mentioned more often than Ismael. These data indicate to a lack of systematic upbringing of children in this part of the Bible. Since this issue requires further analysis, some thoughts and views on relationship between parents and children on the first pages of the Bible are provided.

1. Adam and Eve

The first people in the Bible, Adam and Eve, are presented as young but adult, so the first pages of the Book of Genesis provide no explicit record on the upbringing of children. However, as soon as they were created, Adam and Eve were given the commandments from God concerning the children. Having created them, God blessed them, and command-

ed them: "*Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it*" (Gen 1:28). This command refers to man's openness to life, to the procreation which includes child care. Thus, the first task of man and women is pedagogical and is followed by the task of subduing the earth, which implies human development in other areas: ecological, technical, economic, cultural, etc. Moreover, all of these tasks are based on man's relationship with God. It is unquestionable for the writer of biblical narrative that all areas of human life have a religious ground. God is therefore the first educator as well as educator of all people. In this context, we can notice some specific features of the day-to-day interactions between parents and children.

The very purpose of God to create man in his own image can be seen as a source of man's natural desire to have a similar offspring. After all, it is explicitly said, "*When Adam was a hundred and thirty years old he fathered a son, in his likeness, after his image, and he called him Seth* (Gen 5:3). Seth is the third son of Adam, as quoted in Gen 5:3, and then his offspring is listed. But it is important that Seth was born to the image and likeness of his father, as it is the case with the first two Adam's sons, Cain and Abel.

Through His blessing, God demonstrated His love for the created being. This love is expressed by the commandments and prohibitions whose purpose is to protect life. As parents of little children, taking into account their maturity level, prohibit all that would be harmful for them without specific explanation, so God forbids Adam and Eve eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, without any explanation what the tree of knowledge of good and evil is, but warning them about the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit. God's action as such is respected in the Jewish tradition according to which the children start to read the Bible from the Book of Leviticus. This book, unlike the Book of Genesis, lacks any narrative that would be of interest to children, and contains rules concerning everyday life and relationships. It offers God's law on clean and unclean; the law on allowance and prohibitions, etc. According to this logic, children should be taught the correct behaviour first, and then, when they are able to ask questions it is appropriate time to discuss about everything with their parents. A similar example is the Feast of Passover, which commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites are obliged to celebrate the Feast of Passover, and according to ritual regulations, to eat the Paschal dinner. But the explanation concerning the ritual comes only "*when your children ask you, "What does this ritual mean?*" (Ex 12:26). In the context of salvation history, this dialogue between parents and children is an integral part of a memorial act that reflects God's work of liberating his people from slavery and preserves it from oblivion. From the point of view of pedagogy and psychology, children's ability to ask questions indicate to their readiness to receive the answer.

The other specific feature of the relationship between God and Adam and Eve, concerning the issue of children upbringing, is the influence of external factors which can be positive and negative. In this case we can speak of the negative ones. In the same way as the relationship between parents and children is affected by negative external factors that undermine their mutual trust, so the relationship between God and the first people is affected by the cunning snake that questions the goodwill of God's ban against eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. According to the narrative about the snake, it seems that God who created the man in his own image did not really wish man to be in his likeness as he would likely occupy his place. It is a matter of so-called divine *hybris*. It is a mythological fear of God that man would occupy his place, so God wanted to prevent any man's progress that would likely lead to the attainment of divine power. In the context of family relationships, this idea specific for ancient religions may reflect envy of older people or parents towards their children, and sometimes it can be hidden in an overly protective relationship that hampers the integral human growth. The Bible presents this phenomenon through the character of the cunning snake. As an external and opposing force, the snake interferes into the mutual and trustful relationship between God and people, i.e. parents and children, but it turns as if the snake cares for man's happiness more than God, His Creator. Therefore, the Bible (Gen 3) clearly warns about the dangers of those external factors that threaten man's trustful relationship with God.

Concerning Adam and Eve's relationship with their children, it should be noted that, despite their pedagogical task, the Bible provides no record on their upbringing. Their first two sons, Cain and Abel as well as their parents, are mentioned in the biblical narrative only in their adulthood, when they could offer sacrifice to God, the fruit of the work of their hands. The fact that Cain became a farmer and Abel a cattle-breeder implies that they had to be shown the work they were dealing with by someone. And since both of them offered the sacrifice to God from the fruit of their work, that instruction ought to have had a religious character as well. Someone had to teach them about God, the Creator of everything and how to offer Him a sacrifice.

Biblical narrative identifies the beginning of the history of mankind with the beginning of the history of a family, therefore a pronoun 'someone' can only refer to parents. The fact that the parents of Cain and Abel gave them religious instruction is confirmed through the names they were given at birth. When Eve gave birth to her first son Cain, she said, "*I have acquired a man with the help of Yahweh*" (Gen 4:1) and the name Cain comes from the Hebrew verb *kanah* which means 'to obtain'. The etymology of Abel's name is unclear. However, the name Abel comes from the Hebrew verb *hebel* which means *breath*. It also refers to God as the

Life-giver. In any case, the first children born in this world were in direct relationship with God.

A brotherhood of Cain and Abel is described in the Bible only when they are already adults. The story of their offering sacrifices ends tragically. Cain killed his younger brother Abel because God was more pleased with his sacrifice. The relationship between the two brothers and God is described in a way that their parents are not explicitly involved in this event. Abel and Cain are grown-ups who can decide on their own and regulate, rightly or wrongly, their mutual relationship as well as their relationships with God. The narrative suggests that Cain and Abel, though born of the same parents and raised in the same environment, have developed into two quite different persons. It means that their behaviour is not result of parental or family upbringing, but rather a matter of their own free choice. It is especially evident in the negative example of Cain who disregards God who, anticipating his intention to kill his brother out of envy, says: "… *Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you. You can still master him*" (Gen 4:7).

After Cain killed Abel and finished his dialogue with God, the biblical narrative brings the reaction of their parents who are mentioned in the sentence: "*Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she gave birth to a son whom she named Seth, 'because God has granted me other offspring', she said, 'in place of Abel, since Cain has killed him*"(Gen 4:25). At the birth of the third son whom she named Seth, Eve claims again that the child whom she gave birth is the gift of God, but she also feels pain because of Cain's killing of Abel. Gen 5:3 tells us that Adam gave name to Seth and not Eve as in Gen 4:25, so we can conclude that his reaction to Cain's murder of Abel is the same. Furthermore, it means that, by killing his brother, Cain not only violated God's command, but also betrayed his parents i.e. the upbringing he had received from them.

Gen 5:3 tells us that many sons and daughters were born to Adam and Eve besides Seth. Their number is not mentioned nor any detail of their lives. A short passage describing several generations of Cain's children is presented and followed by the biblical narrative describing Seth and his offspring (Noah is to come after him).

2. Cain's children

After murdering his brother, Cain was exiled from the fertile land and sentenced to wandering. He settled in the Land of Nod, east of Eden, and there he founded his family. The name of his wife is not mentioned in Gen 1:17, but the name of his son Enoch after whom he named a city that he built. We can conclude from this fact that Cain is attached to his son Enoch, but no other detail about their life is mentioned.

Certainly, it is interesting that in the whole chapter of Gen 4:17-24, referring to Cain's descendants, the name of God is not mentioned even once. However, in a certain way, God is implicitly present in the sequence of generations of the descendants of Cain. Namely, in listing the descendants of Cain, the biblical text terminates in the generation of Lamech. It seems as if Cain's murder of Abel brought so much evil, which has been lately passed on from generation to generation of Cain's offspring. Lamech had two wives, contrary to the marriage ideal and principle of "*the two will be one body*" (Gen 2:24). In addition to this, he treated them harshly, threatening and warning them about his revengeful intentions: "*I killed a man for wounding me, a boy for striking me*" (Gen 4:23). The murder of a child, who is not shown as an innocent being, indicate to distorted relationships between *the old and the young*, and therefore between *parents and children*. We can even wonder who the boy that stroke Lamech was and whether he was killed by his own father. In any case, violent relationship with the child which ended in murder is explicitly characterized as godless, in Gen 4:17-24.

Although, the name of God is not mentioned even once, the voice of God echoes in Lamech's words. He concludes his brief talk with two women saying: "*Sevenfold vengeance for Cain, but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech*" (Gen 4:24). These words are based on God's response to Cain's complaint for the sentence passed upon him as hard and severe. Cain was obviously afraid that one would be capable of seeking revenge in order to repay evil for evil, so he said to God "*... whoever comes across me will kill me!*" (Gen 4:14). God replied: "*'Very well, then, whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance*" (Gen 4:15). These words of God warn him about the danger of revenge, which is nothing but a continuous evil and violence. If Lamech, in addition to his commentary, mentions God's words, and he is a descendant of Cain in the fifth generation, then it means that God's words said to Cain became part of a family heritage that were passed from generation to generation. Thus, the religious upbringing of Cain's descendants was marked by an idea of God's protection of their forefather. The purpose of Cain's experience was to warn about the wrath of revenge for the next generations, and to prevent the others seeking revenge among Cain's offspring, while Cain himself was not prevented to commit evil. We can say that the religious upbringing from generation to generation of Cain's descendants transmitted a false view of God that will be clarified in the Great Flood.

3. Seth's offspring

The genealogy for Adam's son, Seth, begins with these words: "*This is the roll of Adam's descendants: On the day that God created Adam he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them. He blessed them and gave them the name Man, when they were created. When*

Adam was a hundred and thirty years old he fathered a son, in his likeness, after his image, and he called him Seth" (Gen 5:1-3).

The record that God created Adam in his own image was transmitted until the birth of his third son, Seth. Although other Adam's children were born in his likeness, the highlighting of Seth's resemblance to his father Adam, and thus to God, the Creator, suggests a proper analogue for understanding of the God-man relationship and man's likeness to the Creator. Seth's character is not described or supported by any particular record, but his descendants are described as righteous people who have an intense relationship with God.

The first Seth's son is Enoch. Gen 5 tells us nothing about it, but the previous paragraph 4:26 points out: "*A son was also born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. This man was the first to invoke the name Yahweh* "(Gen 4:26). It is difficult to explain why the name of Yahweh began to be invoked exactly *then*, but obviously this sentence provides at least two records. The first relates to the way of worshiping the Lord, and the other to the worshipers. The verb "invoke" (Hebrew *kara*) denotes the worship expressed through prayer and offering of sacrifices, and the passive form of the verb "began" (Hebrew *hohal*, passive conjugation / *hofal* / of the verb *halal*) denotes a common worship of Yahweh, not individual. Thus the beginning of the common worship of Yahweh is associated with the generation of Seth's son Enoch, contrary to the individualist Lamech's attitude towards God, which he inherited from his forefather Cain.

In the context of religious education, it means that the generation of Seth's descendants introduced religious upbringing and practiced it within the community of believers that transmit it to the future generations as a common form of worship of God. Such upbringing prevents one to doubt whether one's sacrifice would please God more than that of the other.

The other Seth's descendant who had a special relationship with God is Enoch. He is the seventh generation of descendants from Adam, and there is presumably some symbolism in it. Almost a perfect figure of Enoch comes in the line of Adam and is simply described as: "*Enoch walked with God, then was no more, because God took him*" (Gen 5:24). A rich apocalyptic literature based on these few records developed. However, we are primarily interested in the religious environment in which Seth's sons were born and raised, among whom the righteous figures appeared and were to become responsible for the salvation of the whole human race. The mystery of Enoch's disappearance from the earth and his entrance into the divine sphere are less important than the sentence: "*Enoch walked with God*". The Hebrew text contains verb *halak* in the form of *yithalek*. This is the conjugated form of *hitpael*, which denotes the reciprocal relationship between two subjects. So, more accurate translation of the sentence "*Enoch walked with God*", would be *Enoch walked side by side with God.* In his earthy walk with God, Enoch lived 365 years, which is

undoubtedly an allusion to the solar year consisting of 365 days. In comparison to the other Patriarchs in Gen 5, this is the shortest life time, but, since God *took* him, Enoch just moved to another form of life with God. On the other hand, Enoch is the father of the longest-living descendant of Seth, Methuselah who lived 969 years. According to the Apocrypha, i.e. the Dead Sea Scrolls, Methuselah as well as his father Enoch dwell in the celestial sphere and know many secrets.

However, Enoch is not the most important righteous man in Seth's, or Adam's genealogy, Gen 5. That figure is Noah, Enoch's great grandson, the grandson of Methuselah, and son of Lamech.

The name of Lamech is already mentioned in Cain's offspring, so we can make a comparison. While Cain's Lamech speaks in a threatening voice of his killing a man that wounded him and a child who stroke him, expressing his willingness to revenge to anyone who would harm him in any way, even if it is a child, Seth's Lamech is quite different person. The vision of the future seen through his son, is full of good hopes despite the distorted relationships on earth: "*When Lamech was a hundred and eighty-two years old he fathered a son. He gave him the name Noah because, he said, 'Here is one who will give us, in the midst of our toil and the labouring of our hands, a consolation out of the very soil that Yahweh cursed*" (Gen 5:28-29).

As in many other cases, the Bible does not provide any detail about the family lives of Lamech and Noah. But the basic positive experience of the birth of Lamech's son Noah expresses a favourable family environment in which a young Noah grew up, despite the unfavourable social conditions. In such context, Noah became a figure similar to that of his great-grandfather Enoch, "*Noah was a good man, an upright man among his contemporaries, and he walked with God*" (Gen6:9).

4. Children of the Sons of God and the Daughters of men

Before storytelling narration of the Great Flood, the mysterious passage Gen 6:1-4 tells us about the Sons of God who had intercourse with the daughters of men and they gave birth to children. These children are called the *Nephilim,* the offspring of giants. It is hard to explain the primordial meaning of this text, but since it precedes the narrative of the Great Flood, it suggests that the intercourse of the Sons of God with the daughters of men fits into the massive corruption of the earth, so the children born out of their relationships are perceived as 'hybrids'. They are large and powerful and their identities are twofold. They are neither gods, nor angels, nor humans. They cannot be identified with their fathers or mothers.

The term *Nephilim* itself is mentioned in the Bible only once, in the Book of Numbers, and in the negative report of the spies who explored

the Promised Land: "*We saw giants there too (the Anakim, descended from the Giants). We felt like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them*" (Num 13:33).

These scary-looking creatures are mentioned as the reason for not entering the Promised Land.

5. Noah's sons

Noah had three sons who were called Shem, Ham, and Japheth. In the biblical narrative they have an active role only at an adult age, after the storytelling of the Great Flood in which Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their women were saved. The narrative of flood corresponds to the narrative of creation, and the text that follows can be compared with the narrative of the first sin in Gen 3. So, as Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree and realized that they were naked, so one of Noah's sons violates the prohibition against copulation that is associated with nakedness. After the Flood and God's covenant with Noah, there is the episode of Noah's drunkenness. He planted a vineyard; and drank of the wine and became drunk. In that state he was lying in the middle of the tent *uncovered.* One of his sons, Ham, who is mentioned here intentionally as the forefather of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and reacted inappropriately. He spoke with his brothers about his father's nakedness and did not try to cover him discreetly, as Shem and Japheth did, lately.

When Noah realized what had happened, he cursed his youngest son and blessed Shem and Japheth. At first sight, the narrative seems to reveal confusing data, which actually clarify the matter. In the listing of Noah's sons, Ham is always mentioned as the second one, and Gen 9:24 tells us he is the youngest son whose name is Canaan and not Ham. From a historical point of view, it is clear that the cursing of Ham is not directed to him personally but to his descendants who were to settle the Promised Land and were known for their corruption and sexual immorality. That was one of the reasons why they were expelled from the country they had lived in (cf. Lev 18:24-25). Since Kanaan is Ham's son, and Noah's grandson, it means that the curse directed to Ham came to pass to his son and his descendants.

In this complex situation, the text does not explicitly mention Noah's wife, the mother of his sons or their wives. However, if we understand the term "*father's nakedness*" properly, as it is cited in Lev 18:8 "*You will not have intercourse with your father's wife; it is your father's sexual prerogative*", then it seems to refer to Noah's wife, and the term "*uncovered in the middle of the tent*" would indicate to a marital intercourse in a drunken condition. Of course, this text can be interpreted in other ways. It is possible that this narrative discloses not only a hidden sexual taboo regarding the genitals, but also the problem of homosexual or heterosexual incest.

In any case, the narrative suggests an inappropriate behaviour concerning sexual, marital and family morality, which resulted in the cursing of Ham and his offspring.

The question arises: What is known about Noah's children upbringing before this event? Obviously, three brothers have different characters and they behave accordingly, as in the case of Cain and Abel. Shem and Japheth's behaviour suggests that they were taught how to deal with their father's nakedness, unlike Ham whose behaviour reveals that it is possible to act contrary to the parent's upbringing of the child.

There is no single difference between the case of Cain and Abel and that of Noah's sons. While Abel, and especially Cain, directly communicate with God who warns, punishes and protects them, his father Noah blesses and curses them. God is present in the third person and the image of God is mediated through parenting. This is an important record in the Bible history whether it refers to upholding of the image of God in man, or destroying it.

6. Terah and Abraham

Terah was born from the offspring of Shem, Noah's son, and was the father of Abram whose name God later changed to Abraham. Terah had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. They lived in Ur of Chaldees, but after the death of Haran, Terah with Abram, his wife Sarai and Haran's son Lot moved to the city of Haran, in northern Mesopotamia. When Abraham was 75 years old, God commanded him to leave his father's house and to go to the land he would show him. He promised him land and offspring, though Abraham's wife was barren. Abraham left his home and obeyed God's commandment. In Islam, this event is also interpreted as a breakdown with his father's polytheistic religion, and thus he is presented as the first true believer. The Bible does not explicitly state a break with the father's religion, but Abraham's response to God's call, i.e. leaving of his father's house can be understood as acting contrary to his religious upbringing.

7. Abraham's children

Abraham's wife Sarah was barren and it was painful for both of them. Since they did not have children, Abraham seemed to direct his fatherly needs on Lot, the son of his late brother Haran. Abraham took him when he left his father's house. However, God assured him the promised seed would come from his own body. The first Abraham's descendant was Ishmael. He was born out of the union of Abraham and Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of his wife Sarah. Ishmael was the fruit of Abraham and Sarah's desire *to have* a child and their efforts, but Ishmael was not

the son of the promised seed. However, God blessed him. Abraham loved him, but before he was born, Ishmael became a problem because of the disgraceful behaviour of his mother Hagar. Sarah encouraged Abraham to sleep with her handmaid Hagar in order to have descendant, so Hagar and her child were expelled into the desert. But God protected Hagar twice. In these tense and complex family relationships, God cares for the future of Hagar and her son. In the context of education, this biblical narrative shows that God keeps his promises and takes care of rejected human lives. Although Ishmael is not the son of the promise seed, God took care of him, so he had many descendants (Gen 21:12-13). Further-ly, the Bible lists the names of Abraham's six sons that he had with his third wife Keturah (Gen 25:1-4), but they are not described in the events of Abraham's life. Abraham made them grants (cf. Gen 25:5-6), but send-ing them away from his son Isaac, who was born of his wife Sarah and was the son of God's promise. The claim that Isaac's birth is the gift of God, the biblical narrative supports with the record that Isaac was born to them when they were too old and it was physically impossible for them to have a child. It is to conclude that an approach to the child as the gift of God and not the property of his parents is promoted throughout the biblical narrative consistently. This is particularly highlighted in one of the greatest biblical dramas: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22:1-18. This narrative begins with the record that God put Abraham to the trial. The reader is informed in advance that the outcome of the event will not be as dramatic as it is at the beginning. There are different approaches to this event, but we approach to it from the point of view of religious upbringing of children.

The narrative suggests that Isaac is unaware what is happening and that his father Abraham, according to the commandment of God, is to sacrifice him. However, this issue has to be clarified. The Hebrew word *na'ar* denotes a *child*, but this word also means a male young person, an unmarried young man, but a servant too. Thus, Gen 22:5 tells us that the same word is used for Isaac and for the servants who went with him. According to the Jewish tradition, Isaac was 37 years old at the time of event, since Sarah died at the age of 127 and gave birth to Isaac at the age of ninety. This tradition is based on the record of Sarah's death described in the next chapter 23. By linking these two events, it is to conclude that Sarah died because she was shocked when she heard what had hap-pened. Of course, there are no evidences to support this claim, but at the time of the sacrifice, Isaac was likely an adult aware of everything. It also means that he accepted the trial of his father Abraham.

This event marked Isaac's upbringing, and the role of his father in it. Their relationship is really great. Isaac trusts his father and obeys him and Abraham loves his son. However, "*Isaac spoke to his father Abraham. 'Father?' he said. 'Yes, my son,' he replied. 'Look,' he said, 'here are the*

fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? 'Abraham replied, 'My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering.' And the two of them went on together" (Gen 22:7-8).

This short dialogue reveals the deepest relationship between father and son, which resembles to the relationship between the child and the mother while still in her womb. So, as Sarah had to deliver his son and cut the umbilical cord to give him life, so Abraham had to cut the umbilical cord with his son. Abraham's relationship with God empowered him to cut the ties that bound him to his son; this pattern occurred at the very beginning of the history of mankind. God created Adam and Eve, so their children are the gift of God and they are free human beings whose choices make them happy or unhappy. This would be a brief conclusion about the upbringing of children in the biblical history of mankind and God's chosen people, the Israelites.

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EDUCATION BASED ON THE DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND PEOPLE: BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MARTIN BUBER'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Abstract

The philosophical thought of Martin Buber especially focuses on the topic of education. He is not a mere educational theorist but a true and the most dedicated educator who gave priority to the fundamental values of human life that flow from the original relationship with God, which is an integral part of personal identity. The first part of the article deals with the traditional Jewish thought, Hasidism, about a man and his role in the world, his hiding from God and turning back to Him and the man lost in the chaos of egoism. The second part refers to the basic principles of Buber's philosophy of dialogue. The encounter with the other is structural need of personal existence, because the other complements what the man's state lacks as a final being. The third part focuses on dialogical education that aims at forming the person's character thus capable of overcoming the alienation of the contemporary world. The last part of the article outlines the religious education. Namely, everyone in one's own most intimate sense of self is called to religiosity. We can experience God in every encounter. It is not good to impose religion as well as a rule-based system to young people, but rather to revive their faith; awake their readiness to meet with the reality of the Unconditioned. One should be raised for dialogue with oneself, with others, and with God.

Key words: *education, walk, turning back, dialogue, relationship, creative abilities, character, religious education, Hasidism, philosophy of dialogue, God.*

Introduction

Our society is facing the globalization processes in the contemporary world. Globalization affects almost all areas of life threatening to make the traditional lifestyles of people more universal and uniform, which ultimately weaken the ancient concept of upbringing and education. A

competency-based learning system disregards the humanistic approach to upbringing and education thus neglecting traditional values. Buber's thought is structurally marked by Jewishness and the Jewish legacy, so his concept of education leads us to phenomenological and ontological paradigms which guide man to his human self-realization through relationships. Taking into consideration the etymology of the German noun "*Erziehung*", which comes from the verb "*ziehen*" and means to 'drag', 'draw', we can conclude that the noun refers to the very essence of education, which means to bring out the best in man. This thought is central to Buber's theory of education. Buber is not a mere educational theorist but a genuine educator who, from the very beginning, directs man to the true values of life that flow from his relationship with God. As every man strives for the "I-the eternal Thou" relationship, so the aim of education process is to revive that divine dimension within him. From the very beginning, the man's life is basically religious, 'Thou- man' is transcendental. God is Transcendence for the faithful if it is not the object of thinking or the burden of fear and ignorance, if the part of the world is not "It" but a person. However, a growing secularization characterized by materialism and relativism weakens the influence and role of religion in shaping Christian worldviews in Western civilization, so young people are becoming less interested in faith and its values. Deeply rooted in his philosophical thought, Buber's main purpose of education is the education for genuine dialogue, the development of the creative capacities people we are born with; in autonomy and independence, and in education for responsibility, i.e. the purpose of education is to develop the character of person that would be able to respond and accomplish a task entrusted to him/her by God.

1. A Way of man – the way back to true self and God

The teaching of Hasidism[1] and dialogical-based perception of the essence of human being determined Martin Buber's philosophical thought. Buber often refers to the Hasidic tradition emphasizing the value of the community, interpersonal relationships, a dialogical way of life, and the meaning of common activities. Hasidism promoted a positive attitude toward the world as well as the importance of worship and God's plan. The limiting factors of every religion, the cleavages between religious and worldly in man, between "life in God" and "life in the world" have been overcome in Hasidism. According to it, the worldly life has divine roots, so the relationship between God and man means not serving God, but

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[1] Hasidism was the 18th century Jewish movement of pietists founded in Poland. The founder of this social and religious movement was Baal Šem Tov (his real name is Jisrael ben Eliezer). Based on mystical tradition, the movement rejected asceticism and mesianism, and taught about a man's true redemption through his inner religious spirit.

a true encounter between God and man, man and man. Applying the Socratic Method in his approach to Hasidism, Buber claims that Jewish culture has a deep prophetic dimension that significantly influenced it. Thus, the old mystical Jewish tradition[2] becomes the key to reading and understanding of Buber's thought which is obviously associated with fideism as well as existentialism, aestheticism and idealization of Eastern Jewish culture. Applying such approach to the legacy of the Jews, he rejects an attempt of medieval thought to harmonize religious truths and the truths of faith as well as the views of the Enlightenment and Idealism on mind and revelation.[3]

At the Woodbrook Congress in in Bentweld, in April 1947, Buber presented an article on "The Path of Man", which was published one year later. His work "*Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*" is more a pedagogical booklet, dealing with the man and the way of his life, than a manual for pious instruction. Man's true walking with God starts in Eden Garden. The man does not answer to God's question. Adam hides himself to avoid rendering accounts, to escape responsibility for his way of living. To escape responsibility for his life, he turns existence into a system of hideouts. In trying to hide from God, man is hiding from himself. God does not give up on a man, but asks him a question designed to awaken him and to destroy his system of hideouts that helps him to overcome this emotion. God wants to show man to what pass he has come and to awake in him the great will to get out of it.[4]

So long as *man does not face the question asked by God, his life will not become a way, walk with God.*[5] Whatever success and enjoyment he may achieve, whatever power he may attain and whatever deeds he may do, his life will remain way-less, so long as he does not face the Voice. When Adam faces the Voice he perceives his enmeshment, and avows: "I hid myself"[6]; this is the beginning of man's way. The decisive heart-searching is the beginning of the way in man's life; it is the beginning of a human way, the way to God. For there is the wrong kind of heart-searching, which does not prompt man to turn, and put him on the way,

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[2] "Tradition constitutes the noblest freedom for a generation that lives it meningfully, however, it is the most miserable slavery for the habitual inheritors who merely accept it tenaciously and complacently." M. Buber, *Discorso sull'Ebraismo*, Milano, 1996, 11.

[3] Cf. A. Akrap, *Fenomenologija prisutnosti. Apsolutno, religija i filozofija u Misli Martina Bubera*, Bogoslovska smotra, 85 (2015) 4, p. 985-987. Martin Buber "In his numerous works he praises the whole Hasidic movement, but refers not to the actual teaching of Hasidism when it comes to the non-Jews…" I. Shahak, *Židovska povijest, židovska religija. Tri bremenita tisućljeća*, Zagreb, 2006, 54.

[4] Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, Verlag Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg, 1977, 10-11.

[5] Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 12.

[6] Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 12.

but by representing his turning as hopeless. It is a sterile kind of heart-searching which leads to nothing but self-torture, despair and still deeper enmeshment. It drives man to a point where he can go on living only by demonic pride, the pride of perversity.[7]

In order to empower himself for turning to God, it is important for man to recognize his role and task in the world. Since the persons are naturally unequal we should not strive for their equality. There is no general way to the service of God; walking with God means a personal relationship with Him.[8] Men are essentially unlike one another, and which therefore does not aim at making them alike. All men have access to God, but each man has a different access. "Each man has his role and task in a manner determined by his particular nature, ... so each one of us in his own way shall devise something new in the light of teachings and of service, not the repetition of something that another has already achieved, but what has not yet been done."[9] So, man's returning to God is the glorification and celebration of his own dignity and awareness of his own values. "It is the duty of every person in Israel to know and consider that he is unique in the world in his particular character and that there has never been anyone like him in the world, for if there had been someone like him, there would have been no need for him to be in the world. Every single man is a new thing in the world, and is called upon to fulfill his particularity in this world."[10] Every man's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never recurring potentialities, and not the

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[7] When the Rabbi of Ger (Góra Kalwarya near Warsaw), in expounding the Scriptures, came to the words which Jacob addresses to his servant: "When Esau my brother meets thee, and asks thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goes thou? and whose are these before thee?," (Genesis 32, 18) he would say to: "Mark well how similar Esau's questions are to the saying of our sages: 'Consider three things. Know whence you came, whither you are going, and to whom you will have to render accounts.' Be very careful, for great caution should be exercised by him who considers these three things: lest Esau ask in him. For Esau, too, may ask these questions and bring man into a state of gloom." There is a demonic question, a spurious question, which apes God's question, the question of Truth. Its characteristic is that it does not stop at: "Where art thou?," but continues: "From where you have got to, there is no way out." This is the wrong kind of heart-searching, which does not prompt man to turn, and put him on the way, but, by representing turning as hopeless, drives him to a point where it appears to have become entirely impossible and man can go on living only by demonic pride, the pride of perversity. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 12-13.

[8] Rabbi Baer of Radoshitz once said to his teacher, the "Seer" of Lublin: "Show me one general way to the service of God." The zaddik replied: "It is impossible to tell men what way they should take. For one way to serve God is through learning, another through prayer, another through fasting, and still another through eating. Everyone should carefully observe what way his heart draws him to, and then choose this way with all his strength." M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 14.

[9] M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 15.

[10] M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 15.

repetition of something that another, has already achieved."[11] Mankind's great chance lies precisely in the unlikeness of men, in the unlikeness of their qualities and inclinations. God's all-inclusiveness manifests itself in the infinite multiplicity of the ways[12] that lead to him, each of which is open to one man.[13]

The way that leads man to God can be shown in a unique way through the knowledge of one's own existence, one's own values or lifestyle aspirations. "In every man is something precious that is not in anyone else".[14] Thus, to realize his true task in the world, man cannot turn away from the things and beings he encounters, but by hallowing his relationship with them, with what manifests itself in them as beauty, pleasure, enjoyment. Therefore asceticism should never gain mastery over a man's life. Certainly, nature needs man for what no angel can perform on it, namely, its hallowing.[15]

However, the basic foundations of Hasidic teaching, as presented by Buber, i.e. man's beginning with himself, the unity of his being,[16] choosing his particular way and forgetting self, seem to contradict. The questions than arise: How come 'forgetting oneself 'is consistent with the others and fits into the whole as a necessary link, as a necessary stage of man's growth? What is man to begin with himself for, to choose his particular way for, to unify his being for? The reply is that to begin with oneself means only to start from oneself, but not to end with oneself.[17]

'Turning' stands in the center of the Jewish conception of the way of man and means here something much greater than repentance and acts of penance; it means that by a reversal of his whole being, a man who had

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[11]   The wise Rabbi Bunam once said in old age, when he had already grown blind: "I should not like to change places with our father Abraham! What good would it do God if Abraham became like blind Bunam, and blind Bunam became like Abraham? In the same spirit, Rabbi Zusya, a short while before his death, "In the world to come I shall not be asked: 'Why were you not Moses?' I shall be asked:'Why were you not Zusya?'" M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 16.

[12]   God does not say: "This way leads to me and that does not," but he says: "Whatever you do may be a way to me, provided you do it in such a manner that it leads you to me." M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 17.

[13]   Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 17.

[14]   M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 18.

[15]   Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 20.

[16]   The unity of man's being is one of the fundamental postulates of the teaching of Hasidism. Life has taught us to observe ourselves through mind-body dualism, and so we are prone to having delusion that the body is superior to the soul and that it is or overriding concern in life. This attitude leads us to detachment, indecision, and denial of any change in life.

[17]   Here's the answer: "Not the goal in itself". So, there is saying: beginning with oneself should not be taken as the goal itself (in the sense of adopting an elevated self-importance), but searching for the center of the self should become one's starting point. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 37.

been lost in the maze of selfishness, where he had always set himself as his goal, finds a way to God, that is, a way to the fulfillment of the particular task for which he, this particular man, has been destined by God. Repentance can only be an incentive to such active reversal; he who goes on fretting himself with repentance, he who tortures himself with the idea that his acts of penance are not sufficient, withholds his best energies from the work of reversal.[18] Christianity is essentially concerned with the salvation of man's soul making each man's salvation his highest aim. This is the one of the essential doctrines of Christianity. Judaism regards each man's soul merely as the most sublime form of self-intending. Thus, self-intending is what Hasidism rejects most emphatically.[19] Judaism regards each man's soul as a serving member of God's Creation which, by men's work, is to become the Kingdom of God; thus no soul has its object in itself, in its own salvation. True, each is to know itself, purify itself, perfect itself, but not for its own sake — neither for the sake of its temporal happiness nor for that of its eternal bliss — but for the sake of the work which it is destined to perform upon the world of God. Thus, one should forget himself and think of the world.

The environment which man feels to be the natural one, the situation which has been assigned to him as his fate, the things that happen to him day after day, the things that claim him day after day — these contain his essential task and such fulfillment of existence as is open to him.[20]

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[18] "In a sermon on the Day of Atonement, the Rabbi of Ger warned against self-torture: "He who has done ill and talks about it and thinks about it all the time does not cast the base thing he did out of his thoughts, and whatever one thinks, therein one is, one's soul is wholly and utterly in what one thinks, and so he dwells in baseness. He will certainly not be able to turn, for his spirit will grow coarse and his heart stubborn, and in addition to this he may be overcome by gloom. What would you? Rake the muck this way, rake the muck that way — it will always be muck. Have I sinned, or have I not sinned — what does Heaven get out of it? In the time I am brooding over it I could be stringing pearls for the delight of Heaven. That is why it is written: 'Depart from evil and do good' (Psalm, 37,27) — turn wholly away from evil, do not dwell upon it, and do good. You have done wrong? Then counteract it by doing right." M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 38-39.

[19] Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, 40.

[20] "Rabbi Bunam used to tell young men who came to him for the first time the story of Rabbi Eizik, son of Rabbi Yekel of Cracow. After many years of great poverty which had never shaken his faith in God, he dreamed someone bade him look for a treasure in Prague, under the bridge which leads to the king's palace. When the dream recurred a third time, Rabbi Eizik prepared for the journey and set out for Prague. But the bridge was guarded day and night and he did not dare to start digging. Nevertheless he went to the bridge every morning and kept walking around it until evening. Finally the captain of the guards, who had been watching him, asked in a kindly way whether he was looking for something or waiting for somebody. Rabbi Eizik told him of the dream which had brought him here from a faraway country. The captain laughed: "And so to please the dream, you poor fellow wore out your shoes to come here! As for having faith in dreams, if I had had it, I should have had to get going when a dream once told me to go to Cracow and dig for treasure under the stove in the room of a Jew — Eizik, son of

For Baal-Shem, the founder of Hasidism, no encounter with a being or a thing in the course of our life lacks a hidden significance. The people we live with or meet with, the animals that help us with our farm work, the soil we till, the materials we shape, the tools we use, they all contain a mysterious spiritual substance which depends on us for helping it towards its pure form, its perfection. If we neglect this spiritual substance sent across our path, if we think only in terms of momentary purposes, without developing a genuine relationship to the beings and things in whose life we ought to take part, as they in ours, then we ourselves shall be debarred from true, fulfilled existence.[21] If we maintain holy intercourse with the little world entrusted to us, if we help the holy spiritual substance to accomplish itself in that section of Creation in which we are living, then we are establishing, in this our place, a dwelling for the Divine Presence.[22] God wants to come to his world, but he wants to come to it through men: this is the mystery of our existence, the superhuman chance of mankind.

2. The basic ontological structure of the 'I-Thou' relation

Buber grounds his philosophy of dialogue on the underlying principle "In the beginning was the relationship"[23] and each relationship is reciprocity, the primordial category of human reality. By insisting on the relationship, Buber challenges the central position of the subject and thus the metaphysical foundation of the modern epoch. In a speculative endeavor to determine the essence of man, modern philosophy has closed the subject within the province of his subjectivity.[24] For Buber, the man is not

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Yekel, that was the name! Eizik, son of Yekel! I can just imagine what it would be like, how I should have to try every house over there, where one half of the Jews are named Eizik and the other Yekel!" And he laughed again. Rabbi Eizik bowed, trabbi elled home, dug up the treasure from under the stove, and built the House of Prayer which is called "Reb Eizik Reb Yekel's Shul". "Take this story to heart", Rabbi Bunam used to add, "and make what it says your own: There is something you cannot find anywhere in the world, not even at the zaddik's, and there is, nevertheless, a place where you can find it." M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, p. 43.

[21] Cf. M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, p. 46-47.

[22] "Where is the dwelling of God?" This was the question with which the Rabbi of Kotzk surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting him. They laughed at him: "What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of his glory?" Then he answered his own question: "God dwells wherever man lets him in." M. Buber, *Der Weg des Menschen nach der chassidischen Lehre*, p. 49. We can let God in only where we really stand, where we live, where we live a true life.

[23] M. Buber, Ich und Du, in: *Werke - Schriften zur Philosophie*, I, München - Heildeberg, 1962, p. 90.

[24] "What then am I? A thing which thinks. What is a…" R. Descartes, *Metafizičke meditacije*, Demetra, Zagreb, 1993, p. 54. Thus, according to Descartes' definition, a man is closed within the province of his subjectivity.

a closed substance because his life is permeated and intertwined with a network of human relationships, so Buber's thought on philosophy and relational personalism,[25] offer an alternative to modern theoretical and practical approaches to the world,[26] the new paradigm ego and equality renewal, the right to independence and identity of the other; the relationship with the other than becomes an ethical space, a space of realization of one's own personality: "*Alles wirkliches Leben ist Begegnung – All real life is a meeting*". [27]The other becomes the determining factor of my moral and existential growth, but also a prerequisite for man's infinite progression to the transcendence as a true essence.[28]

The structure of man is essentially dialogical. One's own ontological state depends on and is defined by the other. "*Man becomes me in relation with Thou.*"[29] Meeting with the other is manifested as a structural need for personal existence, since the other complements what is lacking in my state of one final being. For Buber, *"I – Thou" relationship is fundamental. "To be present" is the starting point for every true I-Thou relationship* and means *the opening of I to Thou*, coming closer to the other in his uniqueness, integrity and reality.[30] In order to realize his humanity,[31] the dialogical person does not consciously feel the other as an obstacle, "I-Thou" relation is direct[32] and as such is characterized by exclusivity[33] because dialogue can take place only between two persons.

Accepting of the differences in 'Thou' is the act of acknowledgment and acceptance and is a *crucial characteristic of dialogue* based on the aforementioned components. To accept the diversity of one who faces

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[25] We can define it as a philosophical and theological schools of thought that regard personhood (or "personality") as the fundamental notion, as that which gives meaning to all of reality and constitutes its supreme value; it is the center of cognition and the purpose of ethical action in which the relationships with God, the other and nature are ontically determined.

[26] Cf. Z. Kinđić, *Misaona figura odnosa u filozofiji Martina Bubera*, in: Godišnjak fakulteta političkih nauka, 4 (2010) 4, 149-150.

[27] M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 85.

[28] "The extended lines of all genuine relationships intersect in the eternal Thou."- M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 128.

[29] M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 97.

[30] "We know presence only through the Thou (...)." M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 86.

[31] "The relation aims to the contact (touch) with the thou". M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 120.

[32] "The relation to the Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between / and Thou. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between I and Thou...; Every means is an obstacle". M. Buber, *Ich und Du,* p. 130.

[33] Each authentic relation is marked by exclusivity. "Each authentic relationship with some being or some essence in the world is an exclusive relationship. His Thou is separate, it is set apart, it is unique and it stands opposite." M. Buber, *Ich und Du,* p. 130.

me means *to accept him in his essence and in his reality*.[34] Who does not accept the factor of diversity creates the ontological boundary and lacks the basic word of the "I-Thou". The person who enters the relationship does not choose an interlocutor and this inability to choose based on ontology relationships shows that *the recognition of the other is not choice-based phenomenon.*

Relationships always seek mutuality that includes autonomy, independence of the partners in dialogue and unity in relation. It is not bipolar causality of I-Thou, which is expressed in giving and receiving. "Relation is reciprocity. My Thou affects me, as I affect it."[35] The ability to enter into a relationship is manifested in the interdependence of action and depends on the freedom of man.[36] Dialogue does not end in either I or Thou, but between I and Thou. "In one true dialogue … what is essential does not end in either of the two participants, it does not end in a neutral way … rather than in a very precise and accurate way between the two …"[37] and "has its roots where the man sees his otherness in the other… I call this sphere – which is rooted in the existence of man … and which has not been fully understood yet, conceptually – sphere of "interrelation" (*das Zwieschen*). .. the primordial category of man's reality … "[38] So history is happening in the interjection. *Zwischen* is a real place, a place of relationship. Buber refers to the sphere of interpersonal relation as the ontology of the interhuman "*Ontologie des Zwischenmenschlichen*", i.e. "*das echte Gäsprächs ist eine ontologischer Sphäre* – genuine dialogue is an ontological sphere".[39] The ontology of the interhuman becomes the basic concept of Buber's anthropology.

The relationship is the central principle of the definition of man for Buber who reminds us that every mode of realization of the relationship corresponds to a different way of life chosen by each "I". *The "I" of the primary word of I-It makes it appearance as individuality and becomes conscious of itself as a subject … The I of the primary word I-Thou makes it appearance as a person and becomes conscious of itself as a subjectivity. Egos appear by setting them apart from other egos. Individuality makes its appearance by being differentiated from other individualities. A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons."[40] Fur-

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[34] Cf. H. Kirchhoff, *Dialogik und Beziehung im Erziehungsverständnis Martin Bubers und Janusz Krczaks,* Haag Herchen Verlag, Frankfurt/M., 1988, 63.

[35] M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 88.

[36] "Here I and Thou freely confront one another in mutual effect that is neither connected with nor coloured by any causality. Here man is assured of the freedom both of his being and of Being." M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 112.

[37] M. Buber, *Das Problem des Menschen*, p. 405.

[38] M. Buber, *Das Problem des Menschen*, p. 404.

[39] M. Buber, *Elemente des Zwieschenmenslichen*, p. 286.

[40] M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 120.

therly: "No man is pure person and no man is pure individuality. None is wholly real, and none wholly unreal. Every man lives in the twofold I. But there are men so defined by person that they may be called persons, and men so defined by individuality that they may be called individuals. True history is decided in the field between these two poles."[41] "The moment of mutual relation changes the underlying perspective of the persons in relation, thus their mutuality is more than a category of human relationships, it is an anthropological reality in which the man and his neighbor form a community (*Miteinander*). The "I-Thou" relation is the meeting (*Begegnung*) of persons. For Buber, the "I-Thou" relation is grace.[42] Buber's thought on education is based on his philosophy of dialogue, of the meeting.

3. Dialogical education

When Buber refers to education, it is not only directed or limited to the individual, but also to the life of community, different groups and cultures. He defines education as: "Educating means to act in such a way that the (general) choice of the world acts through a person to another person, so the strange paradox is that the person mediates in this event or allows something to happen."[43] Referring to education, Buber points out to an authentic human exchange. A modern man, unfortunately, forgets the truth; he is not only a being in the world but also a being for the world, and no man is an island, entire in itself, so that no one can influence it. We all live in the flow of universal reciprocity and therefore we learn from all that belong to the world, including animals. "Our teachers educate us and our deeds shape us."[44] In his analysis of education, Buber points out the two seemingly distinctive but interrelated and interdependent essential components of our education. It is about education (*Bildung*) and the worldview (*Weltanschaung*)[45] since "the education of a person as well as the community building greatly depend on individuals and their efforts in mastering and maintaining their relationships with the world, which are manifested in different worldviews."[46] Accordingly, it is a matter of educational diversity that excludes any imposed or uniform model of education, the educators should be warned about. Buber is aware that educators' objective judgements are not freed from their personal considerations that are influenced by their vision of the world

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[41]   M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 122.

[42]   "Das Du begegnet mir von Gnaden – The Thou meets me through grace." M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 85.

[43]   M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 804-805.

[44]   M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 88.

[45]   A general perspective on life and the world embraces the highest life principles.

[46]   M. Buber, *Bildung und Weltanschaung*, p. 811.

and life. The relativity of human understanding is a kind of worldview, so educators should be aware of their biases and maintain the intellectual integrity coping with the prevailing diversity of worldviews.

Education is always an organized process that involves three major components of human existence: ontological (the building of personhood, the positive features and attitudes, a view of life and the world), ethical (character, moral, society, work attitude; every man wants to be a subject in the process of creating things), and social (man's position within the sphere of interpersonal relationships, self-evaluation, and the shaping of attitudes and behavior toward others who are different.

For Buber, mutuality is the basis of every symmetrical relationship. However, each relationship does not imply full reciprocity and equality, especially asymmetric relation, such as the relationship between educator and student. Dialogical education is the fundamental task of all involved in the process of education due to the ever-increasing possibilities of communication among people. The encounter requires acceptance so that the other can uphold his/her personhood and feel affected by a positive environment filled with security and freedom.

According to Buber's philosophical thought on education, the fundamental goal of education is in developing the creative potential[47] in autonomy and integrity inherent to everyone and education for responsibility. "'The relation in genuine education is one of pure dialogue."[48]

From the very beginning of life every human is gifted by the original creative impulse (*Urhebertrieb*).[49] The child, so every man at any age and in his own nature, wants to create, to make things. Unleashing the inward creative power of man is one of the prerequisites of upbringing. Creativity should not be guided by the greed, the lust of possessing the world's wealth, but by the desire of man to express himself. Creativity refers not merely to one's natural creative talent but rather the spontaneity of man, his naturalness and genuineness.[50] If the creative impulse of an individual is not awaken, it will never lead to an essential element of building a true human life and active participation in mutuality. Creativity can be accessed in various ways depending on the model of teaching. Old methods of teaching focused on prescripts and approved models, thus moving away from the child neglecting his creative spirit. Contrastively, modern methods of teaching, rooted in the scale of values and individualized

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[47] "Creativity originally denotes the divine calling to the hidden essence in the non-essence." M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 788.

[48] M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 803.

[49] Using this term Buber wants to highlight the difference between human creativity and divine creation. To be creative means to create something that has not been created yet. M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 789.

[50] Cf. M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 792.

knowledge, offered a completely different approach to the child, stimulating his creativity under the watchful eye of the teacher, i.e. his criticism and leadership. While the first approach provokes resignation or stiff resistance, the second approach stands in favour of providing freedom to the child but at the same time directing him to respect the form. This almost unobserved encounter, this utmost delicacy of approach – perhaps the raising of a finger, a questioning look – is one half of the educational activity.[51] The modern educationists advocate for freedom in teaching criticizing ancient educationists who recommended control and strict discipline. Education should enable a person to overcome the alienation of the contemporary world, individualism, narcissism, and solipsism. Life between birth and death can have its fulfillment if it is a dialogue." ... I and Thou come into being only in the world of people, thus 'I' becomes a being only in relation with 'Thou'. A subject matter of philosophical science of man that includes researches in anthropology and sociology should be a relationship between man and man. If you consider the individual by himself, then you see of man just as much as you see of the moon; only man with man provides a full range. If you consider the aggregate by itself, then you see of man just as much as we see of the Milky Way; only man with man is a completely outlined form. Consider man with man, and you see human life, dynamic, twofold, the giver and the receiver, he who does and he who endures, the attacking force and the defending force; the nature which investigates and the nature which supplies information, the request begged and granted-and always both together, completing one another in mutual contribution, together showing forth man."[52]

Since we are involved in our own life experiences through; thinking, saying, acting, creating, influencing, we come into being through our responses. Buber confirms that today's man is increasingly seeking for and finding the tyranny of 'It' in the world, instead of the presence of a *Thou*, an authentic presence.[53] The goal of education is a comprehensive character education; therefore a true education fulfills its purpose only through character development. Any form of education should strive to realize its aim; the aim of education should be cultivating personal moral integrity, understood as a concrete presence but also as a future possibility; it should be, as repeatedly emphasized in the pedagogical essays of German philosopher – the education of a 'great character'.[54] The "great character" is neither an originally isolated "self-sufficient individual, nor a member of the natural (organic) community,"[55] as seen by Freud, but

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[51]   Cf. M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung,* p. 792-793.

[52]   M. Buber, *Das Problem des Menschen*, p. 407.

[53]   Cf. G. Milan, *Educare all'incontro. La pedagogia di Martin Buber*, Città Nuova, Roma, 1994, p. 114.

[54]   Cf. G. Milan, *Educare all'incontro*, p. 51.

[55]   G. Milan, *Educare all'incontro*, p. 54-55.

the dialogical man, so Buber rejects both individualistic and collectivist educational approaches as negative, since they weaken man and make him inactive.

In his essay "Über *Charaktererziehung*", Buber analyzes the relationship between the educator and the student and points out the necessity of observing the person's integrity, presence, current state, possibilities and future. He contemplates on the integrity of the person as the unity of body and soul, freed by any influence of the educator, as opposed to the character, which he understands as a link between the individual's uniqueness and a unity of his attitudes and deeds which can be affected by education.[56] Character formation primarily means harmonizing one's life and acting with natural law; being intelligent and active in shaping one's own attitudes and personality, having a clear vision of life and being ready to resist the influence of others.

For Buber education is asceticism. "He points to the ascetic character of education, which, in responsible love, is joyfully directed to the world of our life entrusted to us, in which we should work and should not interfere it with the 'will to power' or to 'eros'."[57] Thus, asceticism comes from responsibility for entrusted life, and as such includes a self-discipline and renunciation of the bodily and the earthly needs in the interest of the individual or the community, and thus leading to the transformation of life that makes him able to overcome all the obstacles that separate him from his foundation; referring to the educational process, it includes renunciation of negative factors such as the 'will to power' and 'eros' that negatively affect the dialogical character of education.[58]

Neither 'eros' nor 'will to power' can constitute an educative relationship. The ascetic character of the true educator consists in his sense of responsibility and inclination not to enjoy or control the student, but primarily to determine the person's proximity or distance for the sake of good relationship rather than enjoyment.

Eros is choice; choice made from an inclination. This is precisely what education is not. The man who is living in 'eros', chooses the beloved, the modern educator finds his student there before him. For Buber, being a loving modern educator is not about choice or inclination, but about loving each student he finds before him.[59]

The relationship between the educator and the student is realized through a relationship in which the other is regarded as a neighbor, as a "companion" on the way whom I try to understand and confirm as the

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[56] Cf. M. Buber, *Über Charaktererziehung*, p. 817.

[57] M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 800.

[58] Cf. Askeza, in: O. Mandić, *Leksikon judaizma i kršćanstva*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, 1969, p. 53.

[59] Cf. M. Buber, *Reden* über Erziehung, p. 799.

definite person he is in his potentiality and actuality; to look at him and treat him as partner in a "bipolar relationship", as an interlocutor in the educational dialogue.[60] A student is not considered as a "tabula rasa" but as an authentic, active, competent and gifted interlocutor who contributes to the continuous educator growth in the process of education. Thus, the process of education always involves the educator enhancement called by Buber the "*die Erfhrung der Gegenseite*"[61], the experience of the other which includes empathy, immersing into the other's feelings, the capacity to understand others' emotions and as such is a precondition for socialization.

Buber indicates that the educative relationship is realized through a "world of solidarity before God, where the educator is raised to become a tool,"[62] a representative or God's deputy, one that facilitates and accompanies the other, but also one who has the opportunity for one's own improvement and fulfillment.[63] The educator becomes a true mediator through whom the student opens to the world. "The educator who helps to bring man back to his own unity will help to put him again face to face with God."[64]

The educator, the true God's deputy, is not the master of the educative relationship because of the task assigned to him; to realize personalized education in the way God would have done it, in a specific and individual way, because each person is an "Individual" and should be treated accordingly. So, educative relationship should be based on a trusting and mutually affirming reciprocation required for genuine listening, questioning and communicative dialogue.[65] Buber affirms that education must lead man to live responsibly and in solidarity with others, not only in the community but also before God.[66]

The true and genuine goal of education is not learning, knowledge acquisition, to come to knowledge and truth, or to reveal what is deeply hidden in man (maieutic), but above all to empower the subject to meet with creative and formative forces in the world; to educate person for dialogue, to empower him to discover the true values of both the individual and the community. The goal of education is to form the "image of God" in man.

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[60] Cf. C. Solares, *La filosofia dell'educazione in Martin Buber*, Puntopace, Taranto, 2011, p. 101.

[61] M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 801.

[62] M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 787.

[63] Cf. C. Solares, *La filosofia dell'educazione in Martin Buber*, p. 102.

[64] M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 832.

[65] Cf. M. Buber, *Über Charaktererziehung*, p. 820.

[66] Cf. M. Buber, *Reden über Erziehung*, p. 807.

4. Faith Formation and Openness to the Divine

Man can find the purpose and meaning of life through his intimate relationship with God. By his nature, he is "*homo religiosus*", and the desire for God is written in his heart. He seeks to overcome his constraints through religious experience. The relationship between God and man is primordial and an integral part of human identity.

While all other relationships have utilitarian elements, God cannot be used as a means to achieve the goal. Thus the human relationship becomes the symbol of perfect relationship. "The relation to a human being is a proper metaphor for relation to God."[67] It is an ontic relation, since one bears witness to God by being accountable for the other.

The relationship as such becomes a privileged path that leads us to God where "The extended lines of relations meet in the eternal Thou. Every particular Thou is a glimpse through (*Durchblick*) the eternal Thou. By means of every particular Thou primary word addresses the eternal Thou[68], so this meeting with the Thou of man and of nature is also a meeting with God."[69] "From the very beginning, Buber's thought is oriented towards religious relationship".[70]

The relationship between God and man is "interdependent", but this "interdependence" is not its essential element. God needs man to accomplish His creation,[71] which is the beginning of a dialogical life. You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything; but do you not know too that God needs you — in the fullness of His eternity needs you.[72] The relationship with the eternal Thou is not a closed relationship within itself, but it is open to man's task and witnessing. Influenced by Hasidic teaching,[73] Buber indicates to an ethical dimension of the religious sphere.[74]

The man's task is to realize God in the world, but he wants to possess God, thus moving him into the realm of the world of 'It', he wants to have Him in time and space[75] and makes Him the object of his worship,[76] so for

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[67] M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 148.

[68] M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 128.

[69] M. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, London, 1955, p. 58.

[70] Cf. R. Misrahi, *Martin Buber - Philosophe de la Relation,* Paris, 1968, p. 65.

[71] Cf. M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p.132.

[72] "Man is needed, he is a need of God." A. J. Heschel, *Čovjek nije sam*, Rijeka, 2010, p. 164.

[73] Cf. M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 133.

[74] Cf. M. Buber, *Gottesfinsternis*, p. 577.

[75] Cf. "Man desires to possess God; he desires a continuity in space and time of possession of God. He is not content with the inexpressible confirmation of meaning." M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 155.

[76] Cf. P. Vermes, *Martin Buber*, Edizione Paoline, Milano, 1990, p. 86.

Buber, religion[77] poses the greatest danger in breaking the original dialogue. We are more concerned about God than about the world, and the essence of religion and particularly religiosity is the action in the world that must be visible. We shape the human figure of God in the world.[78] Buber distinguishes religion from religiosity. While religiosity is the creative principle through which human feelings of adoration and bowing down before the Unconditioned are expressed through various forms and expressions, religion is the organizational principle, the sum of customs and teachings through which it is manifested and in which the religiosity of a people is contained, strengthened by the commandments and dogmas that are transmitted to the future generations as binding endurance.[79]

Life cannot be divided between a real relation with God and an unreal relation of *I* and *It* to the world. He who knows the world as something by which he is to profit knows God also in the same way.[80] In his human relationship with God, Buber saw the meaning of life and of the entire existence, so "God can be met in every encounter".[81]

Original dialogue between God and man is maintained through faith which should be inseparable from man. It should permeate his everyday living being the meeting place between man and God, for only in this way man can realize his personality and find the meaning of life.

For Buber, one of the major problems of contemporary Jewishness is the problem of the young people's attitudes towards religion. Namely, in the most intimate sense, every person is called to religiosity.[82] What is the relationship between young people and religion? Youth is the time of one's total opening to the fullness and diversity of the world, and thus to the eternal life. At that time, man has not yet opted for the truth that would be worth of obscuring all other views. His thirst for knowledge knows no bounds other than those imposed by his own experience; there are no other responsibilities in life than that for his own life. But sooner or later he will have to subjugate his own knowledge and will to the restrictive laws of being and obligation and to decide on his adherence to religious doctrines and various precepts. "Whoever imposes religion to youth closes all the windows of one's own building except one; closes all

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[77] Religion is "the exile of humankind; its homeland is the fullness of life lived in 'the face of God', a life that is rooted in the fear of God in which 'all security is the mystery'. M. Buber, *Gottesfinsternis*, p. 528-529.

[78] Cf. M. Buber, *I racconti dei hassidim*, Ugo Guanda Editore, Parma, 1992, p. 377-378.

[79] Cf. M. Buber, *Discorsi sull'Ebraismo*, Milano, 1996, p. 71-72.

[80] Cf. M. Buber, *Ich und Du*, p. 151.

[81] Cf. X. Tilliette, *Il Cristo dei non credenti e altri saggi di filosofia cristiana*, Roma, 1994, p. 165.

[82] Cf. M. Buber, Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione, in: *Discorso sull'Ebraismo*, Gribaudi, Milano, 1996, p. 135.

roads except one."[83] There is no good in imposing religion to young people and involving them into a system of binding rules, but it is necessary to awaken their faith, their readiness to meet with the Unconditioned. Young people should not be taught about the superiority of one religion over another, but they need to know that everything can become a means of revelation; that every deed in its shining unity is dedicated; that "every man has his own moment," in which doors are opened for him to hear the Word. Human life is nothing but dialogue, so whatever man does is a response or his failure to respond to what meets him. The entire history of the world is a dialogue between God and His creatures. Every revelation is a call and a mission. History as a dialogue between God and mankind takes place between these two poles: the call invoked by God and the final positive response. Young people need help to discover their call and to avoid any inertia in discovering the metaphysical in their own being, in order to respond to the call of the Absolute, in dignity.[84]

Their life should not be determined by God's laws and rules because the divinity of human life is above the law and rules. The religious principles and commandments are a variable outcome of the attempt of the human spirit to act in harmony with the Unconditioned. God does not change, his manifestation changes through the human mind. The action of the Unconditioned reaches out every man, at least once, but youth is the period in which It meets everyone. In that time, every man experiences a moment when the Infinite opens in his own being and penetrates him, but only if he recognizes him; he recognizes the Unconditioned by the strength of his glimpse and through the creation of symbols, through his surrendering and response. In the most intimate sense, every man is called to religiosity; It is the true opening of a young man; His spirit opens not only to all parts but to the whole.[85] But most of people miss this moment, they remain in the circle of faith they have inherited or turn away from it; they continue to believe in and live according to what the symbols of faith impose in their forms or refuse to follow the religious rules, not supporting the meeting with the Unconditioned but rather *turning to something that is limited.* Whoever neglects this call for the encounter lives in the profane and limited world full of confusion where there is no success. The Unconditional acts through man only when he is surrendered to Him; allows Him to shake and transform him, only when he responds in the totality of his own being; by his mind through the symbolic perception of Godhead; by his soul through the love for the Wholeness, by desire through the actions of his life.[86]

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[83]   M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 134.

[84]   Cf. M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 135-136.

[85]   Cf. M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 135.

[86]   Cf. M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 137.

However, instead of accepting the call, man turns away from God which is the first mistake inherent to the previous generation, inclined to superficial rationalization; the second mistake refers to a superficial approach which is far more serious. A false consent is worse than rejection. In some way, faith can reach out the detached one, but not the *deceitful heart*. Man can be a rationalist, free thinker, atheist, but he cannot be a passive recipient of spiritual wealth, the one who merely talks about God.[87] Such man is alienated and sees nothing but his own existence, thereby harnessing his inner potential and the power of the divine in him.

The one who is truly connected is aware of the three elements of the community. The first element precedes his existence, and consists of *the scriptures and the sacred history of the people* witnessed by words and deeds; their signs depict the relationship between the people and God. The second element encircles him i.e. his community neighbors in whom, though in degenerate form, the divine is present and perseveres in the dark tragedy of everyday life which is divinely illuminated by the original light from above. The third element is hidden within very man, *the ancient memory of the deepest levels of his own soul*, from which he hears the word more truthful than the ones coming from the surface of one's own life experience; but it is only heard by the truthful surrender to God and by the attached one.[88] These are three sources of strength for a young man; the threefold basis for his relationship with the Unconditioned, since His action on an individual is merely a symbol of His acting on mankind. Unlike a Christian, a Jew holds his own ground , and even when formal forms of religion do not give him answers, he needs not to turn to other spheres of life because, "there is simply no sphere of life that is not closely related to religion."[89] Young Europeans today feel depressed and alienated. This is the consequence of intellectualism, the hypertrophy of the intellect separated from the organic life, the parasitic intellect contradictory to the natural spirituality that includes the totality of life. Such intellect is alienating because the bridges of human communion such as friendly love, companionship and partnership lead from man to man, from spirit to spirit, not from brain to brain. The parasitic nature of the intellect makes man isolated; it is a powerful loneliness of people isolated and lost in their anxiety and depression. Young people want to escape such loneliness; they long for communion so strongly that they are willing to sacrifice themselves for an illusory communion. The parasitic

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[87] Buber once wrote, "If to believe in God means to be able to speak about him in the third person, then I certainly do not believe in God, but if to believe in him means to be able to talk to him, then I believe in God." M. Buber, *Begegnung*, Heidelberg, 1986, p. 56.

[88] Cf. M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 137-138.

[89] M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 140.

intellect of Jewish youth, provoked by an anomalous life in exile and loneliness, is even more powerful. Moreover, a majority of young Jewish people, especially on the western part, are separated from their people and organic relations with other people are illusory. Therefore, they eagerly seek for communion. What can satisfy this part of the Jewish youth and help them *to overcome loneliness (the product of intellectualism), is a true attachment to the creative religious life of their own people.* Man should be raised for dialogue with himself, dialogue with the other and God; it should be a truthful conversation, because truth is life for religion and not just a concept. Briefly, it can be communicated through words but it is revealed in the most appropriate way through the life of a man of solid faith. Religious truth, unlike philosophical, is not a common formulation; it is a path, not just a thesis, it is a process.[90] When asked about what the truth is, Buber answers: "God is the truth as well as man; they are both truth as much as they are both living beings". The individual corresponds to God. For "to be a man means to be related to the divinity", an individual realizes the "image" of God at the moment he becomes an individual. God is the truth because He is (exists), the individual is the truth because he finds himself in his own existence.[91] We find ourselves in the process of opening ourselves to others and through them to God.

Conclusion

Buber's philosophy offers an alternative to modern theoretical and practical approaches to the world. It restores equality, the right to independence and the other's person identity; the relationship with the other becomes an ethical space, the space of realization of one's own personality. The encounter with the other is structural need of personal existence, because the other complements what is lacking in our state of one final being.

The life of every man is a dialogue that starts from the moment when God called creatures from nothingness into life. Faith maintains this genuine dialogue of life, so it should not be separated from the person but rather permeate his everyday life, which is the meeting place of God and man. It is therefore impossible to observe the man's life without his relationship with God since all segments of his life are intertwined by Him. Buber observes education look through the prism of the man's relationship with God. Education is essentially dialogical and should enable a person to overcome the alienation of the contemporary world, individualism, narcissism and solipsism. Education is asceticism that flows from responsibility for life, which free us from the negative factors that change

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[90] M. Buber, *Discorso intorno alla gioventù e alla religione*, p. 141-144.
[91] M. Buber, *Die Frage an die Einzelnen*, p. 225.

the dialogical character of education expressed through 'will to power' and 'eros'. The space in which such education is realized is the world of solidarity before God, where the educator is the tool, the deputy of the true God, the bridge that helps the person to return to the original unity in order to stand again before God's face. The goal of education is to form the "image of God" in man, building a great character, the dialogical man who lives responsibly and in solidarity not only with the community but also before God, in an atmosphere of trust and truth, for "being a man means to be related to the divinity". Indeed, Buber proves not merely to be an educational theorist but a true and genuine educator who points to the fundamental values of human life that arise from the primordial relationship with God being an integral part of personal identity.

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MARULIĆ'S PROPOSAL FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Abstract

In the first part of the article the author presents the main characteristics of Renaissance humanism, a movement that significantly flourished just at the time when Marko Marulić lived and worked. A fundamental feature of that period was the quest for a "universal man", with the idea of recreating him through the revival of the wisdom of classical Greco-Roman culture. Marulić, along with other Christian humanists sought for the realization of the ideal "universal man" recognizing him in Jesus Christ, unlike others. For Marulić, true education is only Christian education that comes down from "above", from God, and it is the only one that guarantees the achievement of ultimate happiness, which is what Christianity calls "eternal life". In the last part of the article the author expounds Marulić's thought on raising children and points out that the humanist of Split, in harmony with the Holy Scripture, advises reward and punishment, praise and rebuke which supported by good and bad examples, enables him to synthesize the fundamental features of biblical and humanistic education.

Key words: *Marulić, humanism, humanists, Christian ethics, education.*

Introduction

Marko Marulić of Split (1450–1524), a world-famous humanist, wrote his verses and prose records in three languages, in Latin, Italian and Croatian. Due to his works, for example *Evangelistarium* and *De institutione*, written in Latin and translated in almost all major European languages as well as numerous publications, he gained fame and the respect not only of his contemporaries but also of future generations, until the beginning of the 17th century when he gradually fell into oblivion. Most of his works express his commitment of being a true Christian writer, concerned for the general social morals and for the eternal destiny of his contemporaries. The article deals with the socio-cultural environment of the period in which Marulić lived, its positive and less positive features.

The second part of the article focuses on the educational thought of this great writer of Split. In conclusion the author summarizes the writer's model on raising children.

1. The ideal of "universal man"

Marulić lived at the turn of the centuries and cultures. In terms of geographic space, his native town Split in which he spent most of his life fell under the influence and rule of Venice some twenty years before his birth, but at the same time the town remained vulnerable and exposed to Turkish attacks due to the vicinity of the Turks. In terms of time, Marulić lived in the late Middle Ages and at the time of flourishing movements of Humanism and Renaissance to which he contributed significantly. Although it is not easy to determine the specific nature and meaning of the Humanism and Renaissance movements, regarding the subject we are dealing with, it is important to point out that with Renaissance a certain novelty appeared in the perception of man and his realization, in the perception of society and its development, etc. At that time some humanists thought that, in pursuit for the realization of human life, i.e. in pursuit for the creation of universal man – *homo universalis*, it was no longer necessary to resort to the Church doctrine or to some divine Revelation, but that one should use the cultural and educational heritage that Greco-Roman culture had left to mankind. New, Renaissance man does not consider himself passive and subordinate to the order predetermined by the influence of the Church. On the contrary, he wants to be the one who manages the process of social development which affects his life. The first step towards a new order is to consider one's own current situation and to look for a way out of it by returning to the ancient classics. Historical process is seen as a cyclical process, as a return to the beginning, as a return to the golden age of man, and man himself is the one who has to realize it. The idea of Renaissance Humanism cannot therefore be simply reduced to admiring the ancient literary and artistic forms or to imitating the ancient classics. Considering the presence and significance of antiquity in Renaissance, a Renaissance man, a humanist reacts against the current state, which is static and gloomy, and, wishing to improve the future, he resorts to the past, to the ancient classics. Within the "darkness" of the present, antiquity seemed to the Renaissance humanists as a golden period in the history of mankind, a historical period in which man was free to determine his own figure. That is the reason why a strong desire arose to "revive" the lost golden age. The perfect expression of the image of man can only be achieved by establishing a new golden age which is already looming and coming after the dark period of medieval ignorance. Interest in antiquity, inspired by a new awareness of man, required new norms (based on the antiquity), since the old ones

could no longer be applied to the society that was changing. Therefore, we could say that it was not the study of antiquity, in terms of the search of the applicable norms of new life, which led to a new Renaissance man, but that new man resorted to ancient times.[1]

At the end of the Middle Ages, i.e.in the whole 15th and the first part of the 16th century, man is in the focus of interest of most humanists. In fact, contemporary discourse on humandignity has its foundation in the Renaissance talk on *dignitas hominis*. Many humanists, along the lines of Cicero and teachings of the Church Fathers, draw up their own writingsof human dignity and excellence.[2]

2. Christian humanism

In addition to the aforementioned features of the phenomenon known as the Renaissance and the attitude of a prominent part of the holders of this phenomenon (Valla, Ficino, and others) toward the Church and Church life, fortunately there were many positive aspects at the turn of the 15th to the 16th century. One of them is definitely Christian humanism, i.e. a trend of humanistic thought that wanted to offer a Christian response to the emerging problems and questions.[3] A whole range of Christian humanists, like Petrarch, Dominitius, Pico Della Mirandola, Mantovano, Maffe Vegio, Marulić, Erasmus, and many others tried to "harmoniously unite the ancient element with the Christian in order to make fertile the intellectual attempts of antiquity in finding out the new thoughts and incentives for further development and deepening of

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[1]   Cf. A. Weiler *L'umanesimo cristiano del rinascimento e lascolastica*, in: *Concilium* (1967) 3/7, p. 45.

[2]   So, for example, the Italian humanist Antonio da Barga writes his *Libellus de dignitate excellentia humanae vitae* on the basis of which another one, Bartolomeo Faccio, in 1448, writes his own writing *De excellentia hominis* dedicated to Pope Nicholas V, without mentioning Antonio of Barga. A few years later (1452) the work *De dignitate et excellenti hominislibri IV* appears, written by Giannozzi Manetti. There are also others who talk about human dignity like Lorenzo Valla, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and others. On writings about human dignity in the period of Renaissance see: H. Baker, *The Image of Man: A Study of Human Dignity in Classical Antiquity, The Middle Ages and the Renaissance,* Cambridge, Mass. 1947; reprint New York, 1961; E. Garin, La `Dignitas Hominis' e la letteratura patristica, in: *La RinascitaI* (1938), p. 102-136; E. Garin (ed.), *Testi umanistici sul "De anima",* Padova 1951. It is to mention that not even Marulić avoided the theme of human dignity in his writing *Psichiologia de ratione animae humanae*, and it seems he was the first author to use the term "psychology".

[3]   On Christian humanism see: F. Hermans, *Histoire doctrinale de l'Humanisme chretienne, I L'Aube*, Casterman, Tournai-Paris, 1948; E. Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano. Filosofia e vita civilenel Rinascimento*, EditoriLatreza, Bari, 1994; F. Vandenbroucke, *La spiritualità del Medioevo*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1991, p. 456-472; A. M. Erba, *L'umanesimo spirituale, L'Enchiridion di Erasmo da Rotterdam*, Edizioni Studium, Roma, 1994, p. 15-31; J. P. Massaut, IV. Humanisme et spiritualité du 14eau 16esiècle, in: *Dictionaire de spiritualité V*, p. 989-1001.

the existing culture".[4] Christian humanists, like many others, were also enchanted by the treasure of antiquity and recognized the classics as the best intermediaries of culture. However they were aware of the dangers posed by a revival of ancient literature, especially in the historical circumstances in which they lived. Although man was at the centre of their thoughts, they did not forget that that man was redeemed and destined for eternal life. In other words, Christian humanists tried to realize a true transformation of anthropocentrism, distinctive in the initial stream of humanism, establishing a certain balance between theocentrism and anthropocentrism. Christian humanists did not find it strange to exalt at the same time human love and the beauty of the body as well as God's grace that enables man to be fully realized.[5] They were not looking for the ideal of earthly life in ancient philosophy or in the lifestyle of Greco-Roman classics, but in Jesus Christ. Their programme became the programme of human nature and God's grace. Promoting the human values and fighting for human dignity they did not neglect the lasting values of Christianity.

In search of authentic Christianity, Christian humanists reject the scholastic hair-splitting, calling for the return to the Holy Scripture and Church Fathers, i.e. to biblical theology, since it enables a relationship with Christ from the Gospel. Christian humanists pointed out the need for a more heedful treatment of some aspects of theology, which the scholastics had failed to provide. They tried to develop a "positive" theology which was to insist on the necessity of a more direct and intimate contact with sources. For these humanists the role of theology wasto establish the foundations of Christian doctrine, i.e. to return the theology researches to sources, to the Holy Scripture and to the Fathers.[6] By returning to sources they wanted to propose more precise Christianity, i.e. the simplification of the rites, sincere devotion in which the absolute trust in God's charity will dominate. In view of the medieval devotions, Christianity, as suggested by the humanists, really seemed like a novelty. J. Pelikan writes: "Although they juxtaposed the novelty, *renascentia,* of their time with the barbaric decadence of the Middle Ages, in their admiration and devotion to Jesus they were equal to any representative of medieval theology."[7]

However, there was a difference. In the medieval period, in the centre of Christian life, theology, spirituality and piety was the figure of Christ, true God and true Man, who, on the one hand was adored and invoked as God, while on the other hand the believers' eyes were specifically directed

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[4]   F. Olgiati, *L'anima dell'umanesimo e del Rinascimento*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 1925, p. 61.

[5]   Cf. F. Hermans, *Histoire doctrinale*, p. 15.

[6]   Cf. E. Vilanova, *Storia della teologia cristiana*, Borla, Roma, 1994, p. 52.

[7]   J. Pelikan, *Gesù nella storia*, Editore Laterza, Bari, 1989, p. 168.

at His humanity, particularly at two mysteries of Christ's life: the mystery of Christmas and the mystery of Passion. In humanistic thought, on the contrary, Christ was not observed through the mysteries of his life, but He was shown in an abstract way.[8] For them, Jesus was primarily the teacher of true wisdom, a model to imitate, the author of salvation, the one who taught practical morality (*philosophia Christi*) by which, if daily lived, one can achieve the innate goodness of human nature, one can achieve salvation. Humanistic *philosophia Christi* is presented as the understanding and realization of evangelical principles; that's why it is present in human feelings more than in syllogisms, it is life more than disputation, conversion more than reasoning,and inspiration more than erudition. In short, *philosophia Christi* corresponds to the very evangelical teachings, so that humanists expressly define it as *instauration conditiae naturae,* i.e. the restoration of the authentic, original and good human nature.[9] But, just this is the reason why Christian humanists are criticized. Namely, as J. Aumann writes, "by their intensive study of Greek and Roman classics, a wrong opinion on the innate goodness of man was created, with the result that they did not care much about the effect of original sin or about the necessity of mortification and sacrifice".[10]

For Christian humanists, Jesus Christ, who is the only model and the only archetype of human behaviour,[11] should be sought and found primarily in the Gospels, and they are the key to getting to know Him. According to them, medieval theology (scholasticism) does not offer a true face of Jesus Christ, but the original texts show His true face, since they are the authentic sources of Christianity. Thus, the theology of humanistic period, understood as a research of the authentic meaning of divine message, coincides with scriptural exegesis, while its methodology nearly comes down to philology. In this regard, some humanists are the forerunners of various forms of historical-critical methodin researching the Holy

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[8] A good example of that abstract understanding of Christ can be seen with Erasmus of Rotterdam who writes: "Do not believe that 'Christ' is an empty word: He is nothing else but love, simplicity, fullness, purity, in short everything that he taught" (*Enchiridion, Fourth Canon* in: A. M. Erba, *L'umanesimo spirituale*, p. 155).

[9] Cf. E. Orlandini Trevano, "Introduzione", in: Erasmo da Rotterdam, *La formazione cristiana dell'uomo*, Rusconi, Milan, 1989, p. 53-54.

[10] J. Aumann, *Sommario di storia della spiritualità*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1986, p. 276. Marulić here deviates from the aforementioned teachings of Christian humanists. However, he also writes about human innate goodness (cf. *Evangelistarium* I/ III, 4/, Književni krug, Split, 1985, p. 271), nevertheless he points out the frailty of human nature, insisting on mortification and strict asceticism as the necessary means to strength it, giving priority to God's grace.

[11] Erasmus, for example, writes that "the spirit of the one who yearns for Christ should be different from the actions and opinions of the crowd and the model of devotion should be sought nowhere else but only in Christ. He is, namely, the only archetype and if someone walks away from Him just by a single step, he is moving away from the right path and taking the wrong one" (*Enchiridion, Sixth Canon*, p. 191).

Scripture that developed in the first decades of the twentieth century. While studying the Gospel andliterary methods of philological erudition, applied by some humanists to the texts of classical antiquity (L. Valla), the reader was able to reveal a true meaning of the Gospel and, accordingly, learn the "words of life" that Jesus spoke. Naturally, the aim was to discover the authentic Christ of the Gospel. Because of that, Christ's life and teachings were studied on the basis of original sources, written in Greek.It still required a methodological and critical study of both, texts and history. This "positive" theology had reverberations also with those who studied it. A true theologian is not the one who just discusses the principles of Christian faith, but the one who live by them, practices them daily and transfers them to others. To seek for the real face of Christ means to imitate him. In short, if one lived according to the *philosophia Christi,* he might be reborn in Christ, i.e. in himself he might reproduce the image of his Creator, which ultimately means that one might embody the ideal of universal man. J. Pelikan notes that "the term *universal man*, which was the slogan of Renaissance and which the humanists not only used but embodied, summarizes what Renaissance thought about Jesus and arts expressed, i.e. that He was a "special man" and a "unique man" in a complete sense of the word".[12] Arts also, for its part, tried to show the embodiment of Jesus himself, "no longer in a hagiographic and mystical way, but utterly naturalistically, including the physical elements: the nudity of the Child and the Crucified is not a lack of respect, but the affirmation of the full truth about God-man".[13] To sum up, for Christian humanists, including Marulić, the central place of human history belongs to Christ, whom they perceive as the axis of the whole human history. We can say that this was true for their personal lives too. At least we can say that this was true for Marulić.

3. Marulić's Christian humanism

Due to his works and the influence on his contemporaries and future generations, Marulić is certainly one of the leading Christian humanists. Actually, the fact that he considered himself a "Christian" or rather "Catholic" humanist, encouraged him to public engagement, to defend and spread the Christian faith so that he became a true "*propagator fidei acerrimus*".[14] His main aim was to present and justify the necessity of Christian doctrine, as the only one that leads to eternal life. His works are

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[12]   J. Pelikan, *Gesù nella storia*, p. 168.

[13]   B. Secondin, *Allaluce del suovolto, 1. Lo splendore*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1989, p. 230-231.

[14]   This is how Wilhelm Eysengreinin his *Catalogus testium veritatis* call Marulić (Dilingen, 1565, p. 197).

often of apologetic character (against Jews, against Christian humanists intoxicated with ancient classics, against the sceptics, etc.), but at the same time they provide a model and call one to live the authentic Christian life according to his understanding based on the Holy Scripture, on the work of the Fathers and his own spiritual experience.

In several of his works Marulić expresses criticism towards some humanists, his contemporaries, who put man and his dignity in the centre of everything, exclusively using the thoughts and experience of classical antiquity.[15] On the other hand, he presents himself as an inheritor and representative of traditional, Catholic, theological anthropology. Marulić's *philosophia Christi* is in fact identical with Christian teachings which he primarily finds in the Holy Scripture.[16] For him, Christian education or Christian ethics, as he names his own *philosophia Christi*,[17] is the highest of all sciences, as it is the only one that can put the Christian life in order and help man to achieve his final goal, the eternal happiness. Marulić is explicit: "... above all sciences rises the one that is called ethics because it deals with the regulation of human behaviour. Namely, since there is nothing more praiseworthy in man than virtue and nothing more disgusting than vice, what then may seem more admirable and more valuable to embrace but the science that instructs and educates man how to turn away from the evil andcling to honesty?"[18] Christian ethics is a given and gift to man, it cannot and mustn't be created at one's own discretion; it goes beyond man.[19] Obviously, for Marulić, a desirable human life is only

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[15]   In *Evangelistarium* it says: "It is useless, philosophers, to knowingly and shrewdly meditate if your life is not blameless and pure. Neither will you, orators, have any benefit of speaking eloquently and ornately if your life is not decorated with virtues. And neither will you who dream on two-headed Parnassus have any benefit of being equal to Homer or Vergil, if you do not throw away the abominations of vices and keep the purity and whiteness of bearing. Therefore, focus your desires and efforts on honesty; rather choose honesty without scholarship, than scholarship without honesty, if it is not possible to have both, education and virtue. But if you have faith, hope and charity, you will receive the prize of blessings that God will generously give to you." (*Evangelistarium II, /VII, 33,* Književni krug, Split, 1986, p. 360-361).

[16]   Marulić's *philosophia Christi* is most completely presented in his *Evangelistarium.* He writes in the preface:"I have firmly decided not to stray from the Law or from the Gospel, but to collect, while going through the vast expanses of both Scriptures, all that seems most necessary. Nothing alien will be included, so that we do not appear to need somebody else's." (*Evangelistarium I,* Književni krug, Split, 1985, Preface, p. 46-47). Here "alien" generally refers to non-Christian doctrine, especially to before-Christ philosophical opinions.

[17]   Marulić does not use the expression *philosophia Christi,* unlike, for example, Ersmus who, along with the expression Christ's philosophy also uses as synonyms the expressions: Christian philosophy and evangelical philosophy (cf. L.-E. Halkin, *Erazmo i kršćanski humanizam,* KS, Zagreb, 2005, p. 143).

[18]   Ev. I, *Preface*, p. 45.

[19]   Writing about Marulić's understanding of Christian ethics, that is of morality, Drago Šimundža points at the transcendence of the moral order that goes beyond man and to

a virtuous life. Virtues are the focus of his interest, not theoretical or speculative, but practical and existential. That is the reason why he is writing his *Institution,* as an illustration of the doctrine previously presented in his *Evangelistarium.*[20] Specifically, in it he presents the examples of those who lived certain virtues that are, according to him, necessary for the realization of Christian life, and thus the eternal happiness. He says that "nobody would chose to live in poverty, humility and moral purity, nobody would watch, fast or physically bother, even assuming that all people would glorify it – if there were no one who has already adhered to that".[21] Therefore, the ideal is avirtuous life, not the virtue for its own sake, but only if it leads to Christian holiness, i.e. to Christ. Therefore, Marulić does not agree with the teachings of those who, along the lines of stoicism, claim that "a wise man is always blessed because he is happy with the virtue itself as it is enough to him." He, on the other hand, argues that Christians know that "virtue itself is not a blessed life, but it is the heavenly and eternal happiness immanent to virtue if that virtue is united with true faith." Therefore, he invites his readers: "Let us reject the pagan stupidity, let us adopt the wisdom given to us not by man but by God."[22] True ethics is not something invented by mankindand it cannot be changed at one's own discretion. It goes beyond man because its source is in God and, therefore, it is the highest of all sciences. To accept the divine philosophy and to live in accordance with it, guarantees the ultimate realization of life, i.e. the eternal life.[23] Marulić does not offer any definition of virtue, but simply states: "The very virtues are a gift of God."[24] He does not make difference between the acquired and inspired virtues, between

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which man should subject, and concludes: "In this way, by absoluteness of morality, Marulić directly opposed, at the height of Renaissance rush, to all subjectivist and relativistic concepts of moral principles and life practice" (Opći pristup Marulićevu Evanđelistaru, in: M. Marulić, *Evanđelistar I*, Književni krug, Split, 1985, p. 32).

[20] It is true that, according to the preserved editions, *Institution (*Venice, 1506) was published before *Evangelistarium* (Venice, 1516). But nonetheless, according to archival data, it seems that *Evangelistarium* was written and published before *Institution.* Namely, some historical sources state as the year of the first edition of *Evangelistarium* the year 1487, and as the year of the first edition of *Institution* the year 1498. (Cf. P. Runje, O ranim, nepoznatim izdanjima ‚Institucije' Marka Marulića, in: Marulić, 25 (1992) 6, p. 705-709; P. Runje, Evanđelistar Marka Marulića – Inkunabule, in: Marulić, 26 (1993) 1, p. 58-62).

[21] *Instituticija I*, Književni krug, Split, 1986, *Inscription*, p. 57.

[22] Ev I /III 6/, p. 278-279.

[23] In the *Inscription of Institution,* and he inscribes it to Jerolim Ćipiko, Marulić presents a kind of summary of Christian view on saints, on their role in the Church and their veneration. Saints have achieved holiness because they lived divine philosophy: "Those who relied not on human but on God's doctrine, those who did not follow the earthly philosophy but philosophy from above, they ascended to heaven where that philosophy had come from." (*Instituticija I, Inscription*, p. 58).

[24] Ev II / IV, 9/, p. 56.

natural and supernatural, probably because Marulić did not find a clear difference in the sources he used, i.e. in the Holy Scripture and works of the Fathers.[25] Of all virtues he is writing about, he explicitly mentions and emphasizes the theological virtues, because "these three virtues are the strongest bond that connects and unites us with God, who we will never leave if we have luck to end our life in them."[26] All other virtues are aids to spiritual life and should be observed in the light of theological virtues. It should be noted that Marulić divided his *Evangelistarium* into seven books, and three parts, dedicating the first part (book I) to faith, the second part (book II) to hope, and the third part (book III–VII) to charity. In fact, not many chapters are directly dedicated to theological virtues.[27] A great part of *Evangelistarium* (over 190 chapters) deals with various virtues, vices and aids to spiritual life.[28]

Marulić exalts the virtuous life and puts it not only above the human innate talents (*Dialogue on the Praise of Hercules)*, but above all human knowledge, above all human arts and sciences, since the eternal life depends on our virtuous life.[29] Marulić looks at the earthly life "sub specie aeternitatis". He is worried about man's eternal destiny. He writes: "I really do not know if there is anything more useful for a Christian but to remember what will be at the end and keep it constantly in mind. It diverts us from vices, encourages a virtuous life … to despise what is transient and yearn for what is eternal."[30] Every Christian should take care of his life and lead it guided by the thought: What benefit do I get from this for the eternal life? Eternal salvation is the motive of every human activ-

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[25] In *Preface* of *Institution* he writes that his intention was to expose "the examples of evangelical virtues, that is of Christian perfection" (Inst. I, p. 63). Then, in five books, and in a total of 54 chapters, he gives examples of various virtues.

[26] Ev I /II, 26/, p. 253.

[27] Ev I 1-3: *On the expression of faith to God; On steadiness and strength of faith; On faith without deeds; II, 1: On hope in forgiveness; IV, 1-3: On love of God; On love of neighbour; On love of enemies.*

[28] It is difficult to say after which key Marulić divided the matter of particular chapters. B. Lekić writes that: "Marulić must have had a deeper reason for such systematization, though he had nowhere explained it… I think I won't be far from the truth if I say that this is the reason: Marulić is the opponent of pagan ethics. That ethics seems to him entirely insufficient. Christian, supernatural ethics is a real and full doctrine of how to live. Because of that he probably thought it was insufficiently Christian to discuss individually and particularly the natural moral virtues. … Those natural virtues are not a mere pendant to the supernatural. They become super-naturalized in the Christian alone, in the way that whatever a Christian does, he acts under the influence of grace" (Život i djelo Marka Marulića, in: Dobri pastir, (1974) 1-4, p. 188).

[29] Cf. Lj. Schiffler, Marko Marulić i filozofija u svjetlu enciklopedizma, in: *Dani hvarskog kazališta XV – Marko Marulić*, Književni krug, Split, 1989, p. 275.

[30] *The sermon of Marko Marulić on Christ's last judgement* in: M. Marulić, *Latinska manja djela I*, Književni krug, Split, 1992, p. 163-164. He also writes in Ev I / I, 18/, p. 109-113, and in Inst. III /V, 9/, p. 164-172.

ity and the main human concern. Man can reach his own fullness only in absolute Being, in God. In accordance with Christian tradition, Marulić sees in God a practical norm, a supreme and main criterion of spiritual and entire Christian life. God is at the beginning of human existence, and at the end as the last man's goal. In God's eyes man is the highest on earth. Everything on earth is subjected to man, and man is subjectedonly to God.[31]

3.1. Christ: source and model of virtues

Evangelical virtues are at the heart of Marulić's interest; they are in service of man's moral and spiritual life, i.e. of his union with Christ. Basically, a pronounced Christocentricism is one of the main features of Marulić's work.[32] Christ is in the centre of Marulić's theological thought, not only as a particular research subject of some of his works (*On Imitation of Christ; On Humility and Glory of Christ),* but He is the axisaround which everything revolves, even the author's life itself. Christ is the beginning and end of man's spiritual life. Marulić does not talk about Christ in a speculative and abstract way, but presents Him through the mysteries of the incarnate man. Christ is the perfect man (*homo universalis*), an ideal after which the Christian thread of Renaissance and humanism aspired. Along this line Marulić writes that "we get from our Saviour and Lord both a lesson and an example of all virtues and holiness, so that we can reliably ask for them from Him and, better than elsewhere,calmly muse on them with Him."[33] In short, Christ is the model of every virtue. Namely, as He is the truth, He does not sin; as He is goodness, He does not deceive; as He is the wisdom, He knows everything; as He is the power of God, He is almighty; as He is the salvation of His people, all He has done and everything He has said relates to the salvation of all of us."[34]

Christ has become man to bestow his divine life upon mankindand to liberate man from the tyranny of devil. Christ's incarnation concerns every man. Therefore, in his works, especially in his *Evangelistarium* written for all people, Marulić treats every area of human life and holds that the man who follows Christ can transcend himself. To imitate Christ, i.e. to follow Him,[35] is the basic idea of Marulić's spirituality proposed for all life classes. Everyone should, stepping in the footsteps of Christ,

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[31] Cf. Chapter *On providing charity in order to be like God* (Ev II /V, 21/ p. 176).

[32] More on this see: M. Parlov, *Otajstvo Krista – uzor kršćanskog života prema Marku Maruliću*, Književni krug – Marulianum, Split, 2001. The second part of the book (p. 51-134) is dedicated to the mysteries of Christ in Marulić's thought.

[33] Ev I /III, 24/, p. 329.

[34] *Ibidem.*

[35] Just mention that the expressions "to imitate" and "to follow" are not identical and that there were discussions about them between the Protestant and Catholic theologians.

i.e. practising a virtuous life, become increasingly similar to the Master. Using this thought Marulić forms a kind of spiritual axiom: "As much as one reaches the likeness of Christ imitating Him in this world, so much he will be closer to Him in the kingdom of God."[36] This final likeness with Christ, which is the goal and aim of life on earth, will be achieved only if life itself is founded on the rock, on Christ. "Therefore, to achieve a better and perfect life, we will put the foundations of future building only on top of the hardest rock, on Christ."[37] The call to follow Christ is the call to live a truly authentic Christian life, and that is the life filled with all the virtues. Marulić is explicit: "He demands that the one who decides to follow Christ is abundant in all virtues. Actually, the one who follows Christ tries to take off the old and put on the new and become a new man, to replace arrogance with humility, anger with gentleness, non-abstention with sexual purity, in short, to replace vice with virtue."[38]

For Marulić, as well as for other Christian humanists of his time, true faith is reflected as an effort to become like Christ, true morality as a rejection of earthly goods, and true devotion is to follow Jesus Christ, God who has become man.[39] For Marulić, Christ is the "Teacher of true virtue"[40] and to the one who wants to follow Him Marulić proposes vari-

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Marulić, on the line of the Fathers, uses these terms as synonyms (more on this see: M. Parlov, *Otajstvo Krista*, p. 137-141).

[36] Ev I /I, 20/, p. 119.

[37] Ev I /I, 1/, p. 58. At another place he will write that Christ, on the contrary, is not present with vicious man: "Christ will not be able to live in a heart where deception has made its dwelling... Christ has no rest where fox scams reside and where man's pride rises to the heights like a bird" (Ev I /I, 15/, p. 97).

[38] Ev I /I,14/, p. 93. In a chapter of *Evangelistarium* (III, 24: *We need to be moulded into Christ)* Marulić briefly exposes the virtues that he considers to be necessary for a Christian to be molded into Christ: humility, obedience, patience, modesty, poverty, charity, purity and prayer. The program of spiritual life that Marulić offers requires a daily spiritual battle, which leads to a permanent progression to a virtuous life (*profectus virtutum).* This was also one of the main features of the spiritual movement *devotio moderna* which Marulić himself belonged to (more about this see in: M. Parlov, Teme 'Devotio moderne' u misli Marka Marulića, in: *Religijske teme u književnosti*, Zbornik radova međunarodnog simpozija održanog u Zagrebu 9. prosinca 2000, ed. Ivan Šestak, FTI, Zagreb, 2001. p. 39-59).

[39] On the features of religiosity of Christian humanists see: R. Romano – A. Tenenti, *Il rinascimento e la riforma (1378-1548). Parte seconda: la nascita della civiltà moderna*, Unione Tipografica – Editrice, Torino 1972, p. 294; M. Petrocchi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana. I. Ilduecento, trecento e il quattrocento*, Edizionidi Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 1978, p. 100-101.

[40] Ev II /VII, 6/, p. 279. Writing about arrogance which even saints have sometimes fallen into, Marulić says: "Even the Disciples of Christ sinned when an argument among them arose about which of them was the greatest. But the Teacher of true virtue rebuked them saying that it is inherent to pagans, not to Christians, to yearn for honours and to look magnificently." And he concludes: "The one who, even when appointed to a prominent position, provides the inferiors with what is necessary for salvation, i.e. gives lessons of virtue or a suitable support to sustain life, this is the disciple of Christ, contrite and

ous means necessary for the authentic Christian life. Virtues, especially theological virtues, need to be followed by the "deeds of righteousness".[41] Though, not even these deeds, no matter how exalted, would be sufficient to deserve the eternal life, unless they were followed by divine grace, i.e. by the merits of Christ. Marulić writes: "Our cleansing is not enough, that is, refraining from sin; if Christ's merits are not added to it, we will not deserve to enter the kingdom of God."[42] The search for the ideal of human life in general, in Marulić's vision of Christian life, becomes the search for the authentic image of Jesus Christ, for God-man, for the universal Man. Saints are the example how to follow Christ, but they are also a call to Christians to imitate them, because to imitate them means to imitate Jesus Christ. And this is the aim of his *Institution.* Following the true heroes of human race, Christian saints, we achieve the union with Jesus, and by that we realize the deepest meaning of human life on earth.

3.2. On raising children

As we have mentioned, Marulić is interested in concrete human life, with all its joys and sorrows, problems and difficulties; he gives advice trying to help people in everyday, concrete life to become true Christians. His concreteness includes the family life too, with all its complexity. Thus, for example, Marulić dedicates some chapters of his *Evangelistarium* to marriage (Ev, 5, 6), to the choice of a wife (Ev, V, 9), to love for a woman (Ev, 5, 8), to duties of husband and wife (Ev, V, 7), to the management of family and raising children (Ev, V, 10). When it comes to raising children Marulić summarizes the centuries-old Catholic pedagogy in one sentence, based on human and religious education as presented in the Bible: "The duty of father and mother will be not to raise children for luxury but for modesty, not to spoil them with babbling but to keep them on a tight leash with punishments, to teach them piety and faith, to beat them if guilty, to

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humble, though respected for his dignity, not caring for his own benefit but for the benefit of others" (*Ibidem*, p. 279-280).

[41] Ev I /I, 3/, p. 63. Marulić says that "faith is the root of virtues" (*Fifty stories*, 2 in: M. Marulić, *Latinska manja*, p. 332), i.e. he stresses the importance and role of faith in spiritual life (cf. also Ev I, 1-2: *On the expression of faith to God; On steadiness and strength of faith.*) But he is aware that there can be faith without good deeds (cf. Ev I, 3 – *On faith without deeds*) Therefore, he warns his readers: "Namely, though invited to the wedding of faith, if one comes without wedding garment, i.e. unadorned with virtues, he will be expelled from the house over the threshold, and what is worse, with his legs and arms tied, he will be thrown out, into the darkness" (Ev I /I, 3/, p. 64).

[42] *On humility and glory of Christ,* Književni krug, Split, 1989, p. 86. It is similarly written in *Evangelistarium:* "Blessed are those who wash the stains of their sins. But they need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, because repentance would not help at all if Christ's blood had not redeemed those who had been sold into the slavery of damnation. Therefore, those are washed in the blood of the Lamb who, believing in Christ, cry out for His mercy, repenting and hoping" (Ev I /II,11/, p. 200).

commend them if they have behaved well and obediently, to discourage them from what is evil by reprimands, threats and canes, to encourage them for virtues by incentives and promises, to present them the examples of other people's lives in order to avoid bad examples and imitate the good ones, to worry more about their behaviour than about their health."[43]

In accordance with what the Holy Scripture and also patristic tradition talk about human and religious education in general, Marulić advises reward and punishment, praise and rebuke, education for virtuous life substantiated with examples, because "words encourage and examples attract." As a diligent reader of the Scripture he was able to discover that God educates his people teaching them to seek virtues, and scolding and punishing them if they do not seek betterment and conversion.[44] Marulić connects the classic, stoic ideal of education, i.e. education in modesty, with biblical aim of Christian education, i.e. the education for virtues. One can see that Marulić is a very realistic man, aware that children can be easily spoiled and that parents mostly take care about their children's health, and less about their behaviour. In his educational and pedagogical approach, as Drago Šimundža points out, "Marulić holds that prize is an important motive, but punishment is also sometimes necessary; in fact, though it is not emphasized enough, he advocates for the ethics of love."[45] Referring to Christian virtue ethics grounded in theology, and its ultimate aim-*telos*, i.e. the eternal life, Marulić presents himself as an interesting and genuine writer of our time, too.[46]

Conclusion

At the end of the Middle Ages, on the horizon of the European civilization, a complex phenomenon of Humanism and Renaissanceappeared, still unexplored to the end, which brought a new view of man and society. One of the novelties was a desire forthe autonomy of morality and development of society, irrespective of the Church and its doctrine. Social life was intended to be built on the foundations of what the Greek-Roman culture offered, as it was understood as the golden age in the history of mankind. Marulić, together with other Christian humanists, proposed

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[43] Ev II /V, 10/, p. 134.

[44] Cf. X. Leon-Dufour, Odgajanje, in: *Rječnik biblijske teologije*, Zagreb, 1980, p. 750-757.

[45] D. Šimundža, Opći pristup Marulićevu Evanđelistaru, p. 30.

[46] This is the statement of the leading, world famous Croatian moralist Ivan Fuček: Marulić fra i moralisti croati (1450-1524), in: *Colloquia Maruliana IX* (2000), p. 165-178. Fuček concludes his article about Marulić among Croatian moralists with the following words: "E' vero che la composizione di Marulić, lo stile, il linguaggio, gli esempi, le applicazioni concrete, e via dicendo, portano il sapore del suo tempo. Ma l'idea, il suo criterio architettonico, nell'odierno contesto conflittuale e in questa tendenza 'post-moderna', ci appare proprio come una *profezia* per il nostro tempo, cioè quello del 2000" (There, p. 177).

the return to the sources of Christian ethics, i.e. return to the Scriptures and to a healthy church Tradition, which he would find primarily in the works of the Fathers. Marulić holds that morality, and thereby Christian education as well, cannot be something autonomous, something controlled at one's own discretion. Christian ethics comes from above, from God, so that man must be subjected to it, and exactly that subjection, summarized in the imitation of Jesus Christ, guarantees the realization of what man longs for, to achieve a happy life, i.e. the blessed life. Marulić always looks toward the actual life and manifests himself as an excellent didactic teacher and spiritual master who even today has much to say.

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EDUCATION FOR MERCY – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PONTIFICAL DISCOURSES

Mercy is lifestyle, an essential and continuous characteristic of the Christian vocation

Abstract

In today's world of distorted views of life, religious values and beliefs, powerlessness and despair, there is a growing need for the virtue of mercy which could grant hope, peace and justice to mankind. The aim of this paper is to identify a core terminology in a million-word specialized English corpus that was compiled for the purpose of this research, focusing on the concept of mercy and mercy-related terms. The corpus consists of the last three Holy Fathers' pontifical discourses freely available at the Holy See web site. The key-word lists g enerated by WordSmith tools for three subcorpora are contrasted to confirm preliminary assumption on their possible correspondence. The assumption is based on the fact that, regardless of different contexts and times the discourses were created, their authors share common religious legacy, beliefs, views and attitudes based on the Scriptures. The paper attempts to find the corpus-based evidences to an unbroken continuity of spiritual authorities in interpreting and pleading for mercy and justice in their pontifical discourses. This paper aims to contribute to the development of theological reflections based on the virtue of mercy, corpus linguistics, domain-specific terminology and clarity of religious concepts and ideas.

Key words: *mercy, education, domain-specific terminology, pontifical discourses, corpus.*

Introduction

As defined by J. P. Gee, "… discourse analysis is one way to engage in a very important human task. The task is this: to think more deeply about the meanings we give people's words so as to make ourselves better, more humane people and the world a better, more humane place".[1]

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[1]   J. P. Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis, Theory and Method*, Routledge, 2005.

Since specialized language is characterized by specific terminology, complex structures, recurrent expressions, nominalization, etc., a set of highly frequent words, which often act as headwords or component words of multi-word expressions, often suggests or highlights the main idea of a text or a small/huge text collection. The focus of education for mercy is to deal with tolerance and justice. However, mass media lack resources that are based on such principles necessary for healthy relationship among people. The need for mercy as expressed by Pope John Paul II[2] indicates to: "How greatly today's *world needs God's mercy*! In every continent, from the depth of human suffering, a *cry for mercy seems to rise up.* Where hatred and the thirst for revenge dominate, where war brings suffering and death to the innocent, there *the grace of mercy is needed* in order to settle human minds and hearts and *to bring about peace.* Wherever respect for life and human dignity are lacking, there is *need of God's merciful love*, in whose light we see the inexpressible value of every human being. *Mercy is needed* in order to ensure that every injustice in the world will come to an end in the splendour of truth". Being merciful to the other is so beneficial to the spiritual growth of any individual but it is not God-given benefit. On contrary, the growth in mercy is a lifelong endeavour and goal of any true faithful. It is hard to reach spiritual maturity unless you are taught how to develop and nourish the virtue of mercy. Thus, the concept of mercy needs to be clarified.

1. Definition of the term mercy

Generally, the term mercy may denote both character and activity. In describing God or a person in a position of authority as merciful it means they show kindness and forgiveness to people.[3] An act of mercy, based on compassion and forbearance is manifested through unmerited or undeserved forgiveness and humanity. It denotes "the disposition to be kind and forgiving. Founded on compassion, mercy differs from compassion or the feeling of sympathy in putting this feeling into practice with a readiness to assist. It is therefore the ready willingness to help anyone in need, especially in need of pardon or reconciliation."[4] Mercy is said to be a virtue influencing one's will to have compassion for, and, if possible, to alleviate another's misfortune. It is the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas that although mercy is as it were the spontaneous product of charity, yet

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2   John Paul II, Pope's Homily During Mass for Dedication of Divine Mercy Shrine Krakow-Lagiewniki: *Confession of Trust in the All-Powerful Love of God* (17 August 2002).

3   The Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, Glasgow.

4   Catholic Dictionary, in: http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=34849 (accessed, 10 December 2017).

it is to be reckoned a special virtue adequately distinguishable from this latter. In fact the Scholastics in cataloguing it consider it to be referable to the quality of justice mainly because, like justice, it controls relations between distinct persons.[5]

The word "mercy" is expressed in Hebrew by two words: *rehem* and *hesed*. *Rehem* points to the mother's lap holding a child and their connection based on a single bond of love. Thus, mercy denotes something intimate, true gentleness, kindness, patience, sacrifice. *Hesed* denotes undeserved sympathy, cordiality, benevolence. However, mercy[6] is not an empty echo, instinctive goodness, sudden heartfelt or emotional impulses but rather an option for conscious and wilful goodness as an everlasting attitude.

Christian charity is neither a kind of human solidarity nor compassionate goodness. It is the realization of love of the Triune God in the history of salvation. "Be merciful, as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). The mercy of God the Father is manifested in the Son, in Jesus Christ but also in Christians through the Holy Spirit.

God's mercy has been revealed from the beginning as one of His attributes, as the revelation of God (Exo 34:6). God is self-revealing in mercy. However, the history of salvation is marked by sin. Israel felt God's mercy as forgiveness. "Answer me, Yahweh, for your faithful love is generous; in your tenderness turn towards me" (Ps 69:17). "Your kindnesses to me are countless, Yahweh; true to your judgements, give me life" (Ps 119:156). If God reveals himself as a faithful and merciful, people should adequately respond. God's mercy becomes a model and the cause of human mercy. Merciful God expects us to be merciful to brothers (Am 1:11), without constraints (Deut 24:6-22). This should be a characteristic of every believer: "to love mercy" (Mic 6:8).

In the New Testament, God's mercy is manifested in Jesus Christ, who is "merciful" (Heb 2:17), the iconic presence of "The Father of mercies" (2Cor 1:3). Jesus' life is the manifestation of our God's mercy. He bends down over every human misery, physical and moral, those in need of tenderness and compassion, understanding and forgiveness. Jesus is the realization of prophetic proclamation: "Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice. And indeed I came to call not the upright, but sinners." (Mt 9:13).

His miracles were a manifestation of his love, compassion, mercy and closeness to the sick (Mr 1:41). St. Luke the evangelist offers unforgettable parables of the lost and found sheep, the lost and found drachma and the Prodigal son (Lk 15). They all emphasise the merciful love of the Father who is bending over spiritual and physical suffering of His chil-

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[5] Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, in: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10198d.htm (accessed, 7 December 2017).

[6] Cf. G. Augustin, *Kraft der Barmherzigkeit. Mensch sein aus den Quellen des Glaubens*, Matthias Grünewald Verlag, Ostfildern, 2016.

dren. The issue of mercy is well elaborated by Mandarić Valentina[7] in her study on Mercy: The Way of the Church to the Human Being and Contemporary Outskirts. The study presented by Wojciech Zyzak[8] deals with mercy as a theological term and its various dimensions.

1.1. The Holy fathers' reflections on the term 'mercy' and its definitions

On the concept of mercy and its mystery, Pope Francis points out that "the very word "mercy" is a summons to an open and compassionate heart. It comes from the Latin world misericordia, which evokes a heart –cor– sensitive to suffering, but especially to those who suffer a heart that overcomes indifference because it shares in the sufferings of others." (3 November 2016). An overview of the definitions of the term mercy provided by the Pope: "It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it… the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity… the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us… the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life (…) the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness"[9]. "(…) divine mercy (eleos) as a synthesis of the work that Jesus came to accomplish in the world in the name of the Father (…) everything in Jesus speaks of mercy(…) indeed, he himself is mercy (…) mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth"[10].

Referring to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, Pope Benedict XVI highlights the meaning of "the word "mercy" which – in Greek *oiktirmon* and in Hebrew *rachamim*, maternal womb – expresses the compassion, kindness and tenderness of a mother… By walking together in humility along the path of justice, mercy and righteousness which the Lord has pointed out to us, Christians will not only dwell in the truth, but also be beacons of joy and hope to all those who are looking for a sure point of reference in our rapidly changing world… I would say precisely that charity is the fruit of truth – the tree is known by its fruit – and if there is no charity, then truth is not adopted or lived either; and where truth is, charity comes into being."

On the subject of divine mercy, John Paul II points out: "mercy is the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God; It has the power to confer on justice a new content, which is expressed most simply and fully

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[7]   Cf. V. Mandarić, *Milosrde: put Crkve do čovjeka i suvremenih periferija*, Bogoslovska smotra, 86 (2016) 3, p. 705-730.

[8]   Cf. W. Zyzak, *Mercy as a Theological Term*, The Person and Challenges, 5 (2015) 1, p. 137-153.

[9]   Francis, *Misericordia Vultus*, 2015, 2, in: cf. w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_ letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html.

[10] Phrases extracted from the Pope Francis subcorpus.

in forgiveness; Forgiveness is also the fundamental condition for reconciliation, not only in the relationship of God with man, but also in relationships between people; Apart from the mercy of God there is no other source of hope for mankind (…). This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world (…). In the mercy of God the world will find peace (…) as it is one of the great intuitions and gifts that have been left to the People of God (…). Man attains to the merciful love of God, His mercy, to the extent that he himself is interiorly transformed in the spirit of that love towards his neighbour (…). The hour has come when the message of Divine Mercy is able to fill hearts with hope and to become the spark of a new civilization: the civilization of love (…). Divine mercy is love more powerful than sin, stronger than death… the Lord is rich in mercy, and even: The Lord is mercy (…). The truth, revealed in Christ, about God the "Father of mercies," enables us to "see" Him as particularly close to man especially when man is suffering, when he is under threat at the very heart of his existence and dignity (…). As we reflect on the call of Jesus to do penance we discover the new world of mercy, which is revealed in the Cross, "a radical revelation of mercy".[11]

1.2. Mercy as a lifestyle

Mercy is a lifestyle, an essential and continuous characteristic of the Christian vocation. In his speech delivered on June 13, 2016, Pope Francis explains the difference between compassionate speech and action. He defines mercy as the culture and programme of life. Mercy denotes programme-related concept. He supports his claim with the fact that the very name of God is mercy and therefore the importance of compassionate action in everyday life should be based on it.

Contrary to the logic of profit and media, the logic of mercy includes compassion and a special concern for others. There is the growing importance of symbols of mercy today, for example, on the occasion of the closing of the Jubilee of Mercy in the Diocese of Feldkirch, Vorarlberg, some of today's symbols of mercy were exposed in the cathedral, such as headset, symbolizing "I listen to you", a rose which symbolizes "I pray for you" and bread being symbol for "I share with you." Perhaps, the new opportunity to remain the light of the world and the salt of the earth, today's Christians should find in listening to the Word of God and a specific person; praying to God for themselves, their loved ones and people around them and in the sharing of spiritual and material goods. The special Year of Mercy shows how much the mercy of God is at Pope Francis' heart. During the Jubilee of Mercy he held catechesis and delivered speeches on this topic, trying to bring the infinite mercy of God closer to man and to pro-

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[11] Quoted phrases and lexical expressions are extracted from subcorpora.

mote the culture of Christian life in the tradition, sacrifice and compassion for the other, i.e. through concrete acts of mercy done for the other.

1.3. "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy"

This first sentence of the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* focuses on Jesus Christ being the mediator and the face of God's mercy. "These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him."

This truth about Christ as the mediator of mercy can be found in the speeches and writings of all three popes. The doctrine of mercy is grounded on it, claiming that Jesus Christ is the intersection of mercy. The truth about the love, being the very essence of God, is shown in Jesus Christ: "Jesus shows us in particular the truth about the love which is the very essence of God."

When Pope Benedict speaks of mercy mediated by Jesus, he uses terms such as love, truth and freedom. Indeed, the theme of love permeates his entire theological reflection. His first encyclical Deus Caritas Est is programmatic for many theologians. Referring to the principle of unity of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, Pope Benedict XVI, claims that God shows His love for us through the gift of His Son, enriching us with love and making us capable of love. "The love of God is the guarantee, a foundation of our overcoming, getting out of and surrendering of our "self" to God and our neighbour." We can say that just as the concept of mercy is programmatic for Pope Francis, so the concept of love is for Pope Benedict. However, the concept of love for him is far more than a feeling. It is self-giving for which the best evidence is Jesus Himself accompanied by the infinite closeness of God. Pope Benedict supports his claim quoting "Jesus is the lodestar of human freedom: without him, freedom loses its focus, for without the knowledge of truth, freedom becomes debased, alienated and reduced to empty caprice. With him, freedom finds itself."

Every person is interested in this truth which is proclaimed by the Church. It finds its centrality in the Eucharist which is the focal point of the Church mission, the proclamation that God is love! From its beginning, the Church calls for "Living in accordance with the Lord's Day", which the phrase of St. Ignatius of Antioch "*iuxta dominicam viventes*". It means "living in the awareness of the liberation brought by Christ and making our lives a constant self-offering to God, so that his victory may be fully revealed to all humanity through a profoundly renewed existence".

When Pope Benedict refers to the merciful action of Christians, he uses terms such as spirituality, the culture of the Eucharist, the renewed mentality, the Christian faith. Pope Benedict puts the mystery of faith and the

Eucharist in relation with different cultures and urges that the Eucharist is transformed into spirituality which means "commitment to solidarity and social justice along with the respect for human dignity that comes from God's love, and flows into it."

2. John Paul II - the Pope of Mercy

Pope Saint John Paul II was passionate about of God's Mercy and its great preacher. He approved the Divine Mercy Devotion in 1978, even when he was the Archbishop of Krakow. He also published the encyclical "Rich in Mercy" in 1981, where he claims: "The paschal Christ is the definitive incarnation of mercy, its living sign in salvation history and in eschatology." He beatified Sister Faustina Kowalska, on the Octave of Easter in 1993 and canonized her on the Octave of Easter 2000. In his homily during the Canonization Mass he established the Feast of Divine Mercy, mandatory for the whole Church and entrusted the world to the Divine Mercy, in 2002, in Krakow.

2.1. Mercy - an important characteristic of the Christian vocation

Along with St. Faustina Kowalska, Pope John Paul II discovered the whole world the mystery of God's mercy which is in the focus of his entire pontificate. He clarifies the concept of mercy in his encyclical Dives in Misericordia referring to Jesus model of mercy: "Jesus Christ taught that man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but that he is also called "to practice mercy" towards others: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Mt 5:7). The Church sees in these words a call to action, and she tries to practice mercy."

Pope also highlights that it is not one-time-task but rather a lifestyle based on the culture of mercy: "This authentically evangelical process is not just a spiritual transformation realized once and for all: it is a whole lifestyle, an essential and continuous characteristic of the Christian vocation. It consists in the constant discovery and persevering practice of love as a unifying and also elevating power despite all difficulties of a psychological or social nature: it is a question, in fact, of a merciful love which, by its essence, is a creative love."

Furtherly, Pope explains the creativity of merciful love and Christian charity as a two-way participation in love. He invites us to imagine the crucified Christ as a perfect role model and an everlasting inspiration of mercy, Who always sees and recognizes our works of mercy made in His name. The act of merciful love is realized only if we are deeply convinced that it receiving through giving as quoted: "An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are

accepting it from us. If this bilateral and reciprocal quality is absent, our actions are not yet true acts of mercy, nor has there yet been fully completed in us that conversion to which Christ has shown us the way by His words and example, even to the cross, nor are we yet sharing fully in the magnificent source of merciful love that has been revealed to us by Him".

During his pontificate, Pope John Paul II restlessly advocated for human dignity, the culture of life against the culture of death, peace in the world, a fair distribution of goods and justice among all nations which is documented by his encyclicals and testified by his travels all around the world. He also gives a very deep insight into the relationship between justice and mercy emphasising that justice requires refinement through love in all relationships. It especially refers to family relationships and friendships which include merciful love based on tenderness and sensitivity of heart: "Consequently, merciful love is supremely indispensable between those who are closest to one another: between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between friends; and it is indispensable in education and in pastoral work"[12]. (Dives in Misericordia).

3. The theme of mercy in religious education

Since the Church is "the sacrament of mercy, the body of Christ, the sacrament of the continuing effective presence of Christ in the world", its primary task is to proclaim Christ as the Saviour and the Redeemer of the world. The Church's missionary zeal and commitment to the evangelization and catechetical instruction aim to the unity of every person in Christ, the only Redeemer of man. Regardless of the slight differences in terminology and the lengths of their pontificates, the three Popes have paved the way for the promotion of human dignity, Christian beliefs and practices and they affirm that the Church is the mediator of God's mercy which should be announced to everyone. In this context, the pontificate of Pope Francis complements the pontificates of his predecessors.

Analysis of the pontifical discourses reveal that a great theologian, Pope Benedict focused on orthodoxy (right-teaching), the preservation of faith and clarification of the truth of the Church's teaching. His holy predecessor Pope John Paul II, in the spirit of his time, advocated for the preservation of human life and its dignity, the culture of life, peace and justice among nations, the evangelization and the union of each man in Christ. Guided by the Church legacy and doctrine, Pope Francis, continues to profess, proclaim and practice mercy in order to remind the contemporary world of its power and significance.

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[12] Cf. *Dives in Misericordia*, 14, in: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html.

He emphasizes the missionary paradigm of the Church (cf. EG 15), the Church's permanent missionary activity (cf. EG 25); This is the church that goes to the periphery (cf. EG 17, 20, 24, 30, 46), the periphery of human existence (cf. EG 20-23, 27-31, 78-86), because God's mercy is vitally important for each man. "Today's world is in need of God's mercy more necessary than ever, so the task of the Church to proclaim mercy is imperative."

Changes Pope Francis wants to introduce in the Church refer to its relationship with the world, i.e. today's world and culture become historical and salvific place of discovering the meaning and significance of the Gospel. Such understanding of the Church's mission results in: the primacy of the present over all other times, the priority given to orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy and the primacy of the Church as the Assembly of God's people over her hierarchy.

This is the ground for new approaches to faith formation. Such education is based on a deep knowledge of faith, adherence to Christ including the missionary zeal, the personal experience of mercy and the culture of mercy. Such faith formation cannot be associated with a self-centred pastoral care and a sterile form of catechesis. Moreover, the world should be permeated by the spirit of Christ through doing new works of mercy and repeating those already done. Without this, there will be no education in faith, i.e. mercy is the pillar of comprehensive faith formation.

4. Research

The research was conducted on a specialized corpus compiled of the last three Holy Fathers' pontifical discourses[13] in the English language. All texts were converted from *html* and *pdf* formats into plain text files for the further processing by WordSmith Tools 5.0.[14]

4.1. Data set and tools

The corpus consists of 1 282 174 words, in total, and is divided into three subcorpora entitled according to the Holy Fathers' names.

i. Pope Francis subcorpus consists of 264 speeches and messages created from March 20, 2013 to November 20, 2016, including Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy *Misericordiae Vultus* [i]; the two Apostolic Exhortations: *Evangeli Gaudium (EG)*[ii] and *Amoris Laetitia*[iii] and Apostolic letter *Misericordia et Misera*[iv].

ii. Pope Benedict XVI subcorpus contains 267 speeches and messages created from April 25, to May 12, 2013. It also includes the three

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[13] Accessible at the official web site of the Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html.

[14] M. Scott, WordSmith Tools 5.0. Lexical Analysis Software, 2010.

Encyclicals: *Deus Caritas Est*[v], *Caritas in Veritate*[vi], *Spe Salvi*[vii], and Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*[viii].

iii. Pope John Paul II subcorpus is compiled of 221 speeches and messages written from May 7, 1980 to March 26, 2005. It includes Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliation and Penance* and the three Encyclicals: *Veritatis Splendor*[ix], *Dives in Misericordia*[x] and *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*[xi].

The reference corpus is used to create lists of outstandingly frequent words (the key-words) which characterise three subcorpora. The frequency threshold was set to ≥ 4.

Table1. Subcorpora and the reference corpus statistics

Sub corpus	title	pages	tokens	para.	No. doc
	Pope Francis	718	428 135	4 713	264
	Pope Benedict XVI	729	426 490	4 692	267
	Pope J. Paul II	724	427 549	4 947	221
	Total	2 171	1 282 174	14 379	752

4.2. The keyword lists' creation and analysis

The subcorpora are processed by Wordsmith Tools in order to create the word lists prerequisite for generating the key-word lists as well as concordances to trace recurrent instances of a key-word in a text and information about its collocates. Identification of a key-word is based on the comparison of word frequency in the subcorpus with that in a larger reference corpus of general language i.e. the default British National Corpus reference list. The key-word list is displayed both in frequency and alphabetical order. Function words that have no lexical meaning were removed from automatically obtained keywords lists. The number of the key-words was limited to 100.

As shown in Table 2, the word *mercy* is highly ranked in Pope Francis subcorpus (1054 freq.), followed by significantly lower number of 588 occurrences in the Pope J. Paul II subcorpus and only 75 occurrences in the Pope Benedict XVI subcorpus. Apart from the word mercy, there are 15 keyword matches (60%) across three subcorpora such as: *God, Church, people, love, life, Jesus, Christ, world, Lord, human, faith, Spirit, peace, grace* and *justice*. These keywords share a common contextual background and they are profoundly interrelated.

Their complex relationships can be detected through the following structures:

God's (special) <u>love</u>, God's pardon, people of God, God of mercy and <u>forgiveness</u>, merciful and forgiving love of God, <u>Spirit</u> of God, God of <u>peace</u>, God of creation, God of <u>life</u>, God of <u>redemption</u>, God the Father

Table 2. Key word lists contrasted

Corpus	Pope Francis		Pope Benedict XVI		Pope John Paul II	
KWL	Key word	Freq.	Key word	Freq.	Key word	Freq.
1	GOD	2380	GOD	2303	GOD	2509
2	CHURCH	1701	CHURCH	1721	CHRIST	2267
3	PEOPLE	1456	LIFE	1494	CHURCH	2190
4	LOVE	1454	LOVE	1331	LIFE	1743
5	LIFE	1405	CHRIST	1292	LOVE	1558
6	JESUS	1247	WORLD	1181	PEOPLE	1224
7	MERCY	1054	FAITH	1163	JESUS	1219
8	CHRIST	925	PEOPLE	1099	WORLD	1170
9	WORLD	899	HUMAN	1052	HUMAN	1111
10	LORD	887	JESUS	773	LORD	801
11	HUMAN	745	LORD	750	FAITH	780
12	family	*726*	WAY	705	PEACE	730
13	FAITH	677	CHRISTIAN	640	MAN	719
14	<u>GOSPEL</u>	626	HOPE	626	SPIRIT	674
15	SPIRIT	583	TRUTH	609	CHRISTIAN	634
16	<u>HEART</u>	576	being	562	TRUTH	611
17	children	*527*	WORK	559	<u>GOSPEL</u>	610
18	today	514	joy	509	WAY	609
19	FATHER	510	PEACE	503	MERCY	588
20	brothers	505	MAN	495	FATHER	563
21	HOPE	490	SPIRIT	481	sin	455
22	PEACE	466	JUSTICE	316	<u>HEART</u>	450
23	GRACE	322	solidarity	160	GRACE	420
24	JUSTICE	234	GRACE	150	<u>HUMANITY</u>	302
25	<u>HUMANITY</u>	191	MERCY	75	JUSTICE	301

of mercies, God of merciful love, God's (beloved) <u>children</u>, God's grace, <u>family</u> of God, <u>righteousness</u> of God, world God created, <u>world</u> without God, truth of God, whole Church of God, multi-faceted gifts of God to <u>human</u> beings, <u>faith</u> in God, humble servant of God Most High, <u>reconciliation</u> of God with humanity, love of God-with-us, <u>way(s)</u> of God, merciful <u>Father</u>, all-powerful love of God, God of all consolation, <u>Lord Jesus Christ</u>, Christ- the God-Man, Lord God, true God, <u>truth</u> of God's word, <u>Gospel</u> of God's love, Gospel of God's grace, God's loving plan for

humanity, family of God's beloved children, God's universal love and saving grace, God's love for man, God's work, human world, God-the source of all joy, Christian life of God's people, loving kindness of God, Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world, perfect love of God, God's justice, human justice, reconciling justice, merciful justice, Church as 'Peace of justice', zeal/cry/fight for justice, duty of serving justice and peace, interplay of justice and tenderness, works of charity throughout the world... love and mercy in the world, etc. The most frequent keyword God is interwoven with all other keywords indicating to God's omniscience, centrality and His being 'the Alpha and the Omega' (Rev 1:8)[15].

a)   Distinctive words identified in the Pope Francis subcorpus are: *family, children, brothers and today.* The word 'family' occurs as a headword or a component word in the following multiword expressions conveying both positive and negative meanings:

beauty/meaning of family life, anthropological basis of the family, Gospel of marriage and the family, dignity and mission of the family, Christian identity of the family, Holy Family of Nazareth, family spirituality, legal deconstruction of the family, blended or reconstituted family, deterioration of the family, etc. The keyword 'children' acts both as noun premodifier and the headword in the following expressions: children rights, children upbringing, children education, children procreation, children trafficking, children raising, children welfare, children protection, children trafficking, children sexual exploitation, abuse of children, children's cries of pain, phenomenon of 'street-children', unborn children, gift of children, prodigal children, etc.

The word '*brothers*' is a part of the most common greeting expression 'Dear brothers and sisters', used by Pope Francis. The word '*today*' is employed as an adverb or a noun to highlight the present period of time in the following structures:

today's (social and environmental) crisis, today's world, today's information explosion, martyrs of today, man and women of today, today's problems, today and always, today missionary activity, complexity of today's society, today's society of mass communications, today's ecumenical challenges, today's widespread fear, Church in today's changed setting, today's cultural reality, today's fast pace of life, today's problematic situation, the Church of today, today's sad context of conflicts and disasters, widespread individualism of today's culture, victims of today, "the 'today' is a flash of eternity. In the 'today', eternal life is in play (28 July 2013).

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[15]   The New Jerusalem Bible, 1985.

Time is valuable for Pope Francis simply because of its two extremes: the beginning and the end. Since the past cannot be redeemed and the future is yet to come one should make the most of the part of time that actually exists, i.e. the present or today. It seems that, according to the Pope, each day should be lived for the glory of God in order to empower our own spiritual well-being and the well-being of others.

b) Distinctive words employed in the Pope Benedict subcorpus are: *being, work, joy and solidarity.* The word '*being*' is mostly used as a component word of hyphenated compound:

well-being of others, social well-being, spiritual well-being, moral well-being, quest for well-being, emotional well-being, selfish well-being, being-with; as the gerund (active/passive): Christian way of being present, worthy of being lived, consciousness of being loved, forgiven; being concerned for each other, efforts being made to build peace, joy of being Christian, hope of being saved, being anchored to the Truth, being born anew, being witnesses of the truth, being responsible for others, children being forced into labour, being out of work, art of being authentically human, impression of being powerless in the face of current crises, awareness of being love by God, feeling of being of help to others, experience of being loved, beauty of being disciples of Christ, sense of being accepted unconditionally, being touched by Christ, being in touch with Christ, etc.; as a noun in the following expressions: respect for human being, threat to the human being, relational being, defenceless and innocent being, fulfilment of the human being, dignity of the human being, a being called to live in relationships, Christ's 'being for all', "having" does not count, it is "being" that counts! (15 February 2012);" where truth is, charity comes into being". (23 February 2012).

The word '*work*' is interwoven with other keywords on the list and occurs in the following structure:

work of charity, work of the Church, work of evangelization, work in the Lord's vineyard, work for the common good, work on behalf of society, Holy Spirit at work in others, the greatest work of charity-evangelization, responsibility to work for peace, work of redemption, God's work, work for the good of each person, church's work of communication, work of the Lord Jesus, apostolic work, charitable work, work for the spiritual and material rebirth, work of spreading the faith, pastoral work, volunteer work, great work of charity, work for justice, world of work, work and celebration, wondrous work of the Creator, tireless work for the purification of consciences, readiness to work in good faith, dignity of human work, Lord's saving work, work to promote common good, work of God' providence, work of building dialogue, work as a fundamental good, work of solidarity, God's mercy at work, work of education in faith, work of building ecumenical ties, work for

the <u>freedom of faith</u>, missionary work, love of work, obligation to work for justice, work of human hands, <u>enslaved</u> by work, work tirelessly in the service of the <u>civilization of love</u>, work of <u>assisting the needy</u>, joy-filled discovery of love at work, <u>life-giving</u> work of the Holy Spirit, work in favour of <u>the right to life</u>, Gospel of work, work of justice, Christian charitable work, work to oppose <u>violence</u>, work of <u>rebuilding Christian unity</u>, work for the <u>salvation of others</u>, etc.

The word '*joy*' acts as a noun in the structures such as:

joy of Easter, joy of an <u>encounter with Christ</u>, joy of being Christians, joy of <u>believing</u>, sentiments of deep joy and <u>brotherly closeness</u>, joy of <u>"going" to meet humanity</u>, joy of the <u>Resurrection</u>, joy of the feast of <u>forgiveness and reconciliation</u>, joy of helping others, joy of <u>sincere and pure love</u>, joy of a job well done, joy of/in faith, message of joy and <u>hope</u>, joy of living, joy of seeing <u>nature's beauty</u>, Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, joy and peace, joy of being <u>surrounded by God's love</u>, secret of true <u>joy in God</u>, meaning and joy of <u>life</u>, great <u>deficit</u> of love, joy and hope, the joy of Jesus, joy of <u>conversion</u>, joy of <u>salvation</u>, joy of Eucharist adoration, God's joy, Christian joy and hope, divine gifts of joy and peace, <u>culture</u> of joy, God's blessings of joy and <u>peace</u>, Author of life, of joy, of <u>love</u> and of peace, joy of blessing, spiritual joy, joy of the Gospel, <u>God-given</u> joy, joy of listening, joy of <u>giving</u>, etc.

"…the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal 5:22); "Joy is the gift that sums up all the other gifts" (22 December 2008); "Joy, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, is a fundamental hallmark of the Christian" (31 May 2012). "Seek joy in the Lord: for joy is the fruit of faith. Joy is the sign of God's presence and action within us. To have lasting joy we need to live in love and truth" (18 October 2012).

Concordance lines of the word '*solidarity*' show its relationships with other keywords from the list which occur in lexical expressions such as:

solidarity with the victims of natural disasters and <u>poverty</u>, personal relationships marked by <u>truth</u> and solidarity, works of solidarity and <u>mercy</u>, solidarity and <u>peace</u>, global <u>culture</u> of solidarity, solidarity between <u>generations</u>, horizon of solidarity and <u>love</u>, sustainable development in solidarity and the <u>common good</u>, solidarity and <u>empathy</u>, <u>violation</u> of solidarity, humanizing goal of solidarity, solidarity and <u>responsibility</u> for justice, <u>immense need</u> for solidarity, works of <u>justice</u> and solidarity at the service of humanity, <u>freedom</u> and solidarity, new culture of solidarity, highest ideals of justice, solidarity and peace, <u>commitment</u> to solidarity for <u>the needy</u>, solidarity of the <u>whole Church</u>, <u>duty</u> of solidarity and the commitment to justice, solidarity and Christian <u>charity</u>, reality of human solidarity, testimony of solidarity, paths of justice, <u>reconciliation</u> and solidarity, <u>gratuitousness</u> and solidarity, future of <u>hope</u>, solidarity and harmony, etc.

c) The word '*sin*' is the only distinctive word in the Pope John Paul
II subcorpus. It occurs as a headword or a component word of the
following expressions:

mystery of sin, mortal, venial sin, personal/social sin, sin against
others' freedom, sin against the dignity and honour of one's neigh-
bour, sin against the common good, sin against love of neighbour, sin
against justice in interpersonal relationships, sin against the rights of
the human person, sin which destroys charity, sin-a product of man's
freedom, sin-an integral part of the truth about man, liberation from
sin, power/evil of sin, responsibility for sin committed, the "first sin",
essence and darkness of sin, sin of the world, snare of sin, nature of
sin, struggle against sin and temptation, forgiveness and remission of
the sin, human world-wounded by sin, correction of sin, conversion
from sin, balance and harmony broken by sin, infectious source of sin,
breaches caused by sin, grace lost by sin, roots of sin, upset and dis-
turbed by sin; disappearance, loss, weakening of the sense of sin in
contemporary society, commandment no to sin, ecclesial significance
of sin and of conversion, healthy sense of sin, burden of sin, stain/
shadow of sin, Christ's victory over sin and death, emptiness of sin
and desperation, trial of sin, suffering of sin, slavery of sin, weight of
human sin, victims of injustice and sin, realities of sin and grace, con-
sciousness of sin, struggle between grace and sin, state of sin, grav-
ity of sin, law of sin and death, strength to sin no more, prodigality
and sin of the son, etc. The word '*sin*' combined with word '*mercy*' and
'*love*': mercy that wipes out sin, mercy stronger than sin and offense,
love more powerful than sin, stronger than death.

Quotes referring to the word '*sin*' extracted from the subcorpus:*"the sin
of the century is the loss of the sense of sin"* (Pope Pius XII)*; "the saving
grace of Christ is much more powerful than sin and human weakness", (*Cf.
Rom 5:20), 28 April 1983*; "Great is our sin, but even greater is your love!"*
(Vespers hymn during the season of Lent, 10 April 1994). "*No human sin
can erase the mercy of God"* (6 August 1993)*.*

The word 'mercy' is closely related to the word 'love'. The power of mer-
cy expressed by the word 'love': "Love is indeed "ecstasy", not in the sense
of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus
out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-
giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discov-
ery of God"[16].

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[16]   Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 6, in: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/
encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

power
hope — face
truth
look
light

Most Holy Trinity
joy, serenity, peace — mystery
cross
encounter — self-giving
path

JESUS CHRIST

humanity
human being — people
freedom — man

powerlessness
the hunger — solidarity
the marginalized
justice — world
respect — fairness

children
relationships — family
care — commitment — life

love

gift

empathy
condolence — heart

Holy Spirit
Gospel — Sacred Scripture — word

model — faith
guidance — trust
advocacy — affection
sight — blessing

Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy

GOD — Father
fulness of time
plan of salvation — eternal life
tenderness
compassion
infinite goodness — forgiveness
reconciliation
absolution

MERCY

Church
missionaries
season of grace — servants
religious brothers/sisters, bishops
Jubilee of Mercy — path to conversion
Door of mercy

Christian
practice of mercy — spiritual works
corporal works
charity
credibility — legacy
new evangelization — renewal of faith
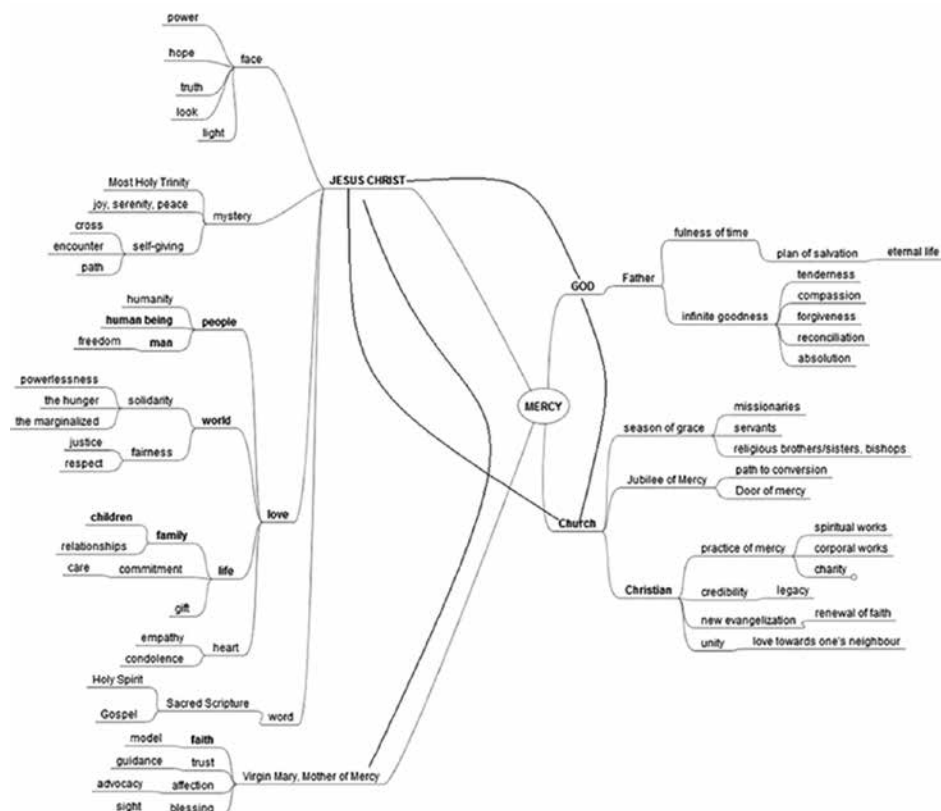unity — love towards one's neighbour

Figure 1. A mind map showing relationships between key concepts

Conclusion

A million-word English corpus of the pontifical discourses of the last three Holy Fathers was processed in order to obtain the key-word lists for three subcorpora. The extracted key words were compared and analysed. A mind map showing relationships between key concepts was designed. Research results indicated to 60% keyword matches accros three sub-corpora which confirm preliminary assumption on their possible corre-spondence. Regardless of different contexts, times and lexical choices, the pontifical discourses can be characterised by simplicity, easiness, precision of terms, clarity of religious concepts, contextual redundancies used to ensure comprehension of a communicated complex message, context-dependent meaning, definitions, claims, arguments, citations, contextualization aimed to greater understanding and acceptance of the message. Sharing common religious legacy, beliefs, views and attitudes based on the Scriptures, the Holy Fathers advocate for the preservation

of faith; clarification of the truth of the Church's teaching; the culture of life, love, peace, justice and freedom among nations; the evangelization and the union of each man in Christ. Despite the apparent differences in style, the corpus-based evidences indicate to an unbroken continuity of spiritual authorities in interpreting and pleading for proclamation and witness to mercy, reminding the contemporary world of its power and significance. Education for the virtue of mercy promotes Christian culture and humanism.

The Holy Fathers' documents are freely available at the following Holy See web sites:

i. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html

ii. https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf

iii. https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

iv. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20161120_misericordia-et-misera.html

v. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html

vi. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html

vii. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html

viii. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html

ix. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html

x. https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html

xi. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html

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AFFIRMATION OF HUMANITY BASED ON POSITIVE EDUCATION IN MODESTY ACCORDING TO POPE JOHN PAUL II'S TEACHING

Abstract

This article focuses on the complex but unique sense of shame, which is closely associated with the issue of the dignity of the human person. Shame as well as human personality permeate one's whole being and are inseparably linked to the body. In contrast to original happiness that man experienced before the Fall, there is the historical experience of shame. The virtue of shame provokes fear for man's own "self" and risk making him an object for use. Since the experience of fear leads to lust which consequently affects the collapse of social communion, the absorption of shame by love is required. In fact, even after the experience of the First Sin, an inextricably intertwined human body and personality leave a room to the affirmation of man's personality. This very fact indicates to the duty of promoting the heart-led education, taking into account the integrity and dignity of human person as a subject as well as his intimacy and the body, especially mastery of shamelessness, feeling of decency and beauty of art as well as decent clothing. All of this is required to regain original happiness of the first man that springs from his self-knowledge and unity with other people.

Key words: *education, shame, John Paul II, love.*

Introduction

The original and inexhaustible divine love, which was breathed into man as the breath of life, is the source of the fundamental values of the modern man's upbringing. The concept of shame[1] makes an important difference between the primordiality and the historicity that we know.

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[1]   Referring to the literature in the Croatian language used in this paper and the Croatian translation of the Bible published by *Kršćanska sadašnjost*, the words shame (*stid*) and disgrace (*sram*) are synonyms, as well as their derivatives. Thus, deeper linguistic analysis of these concepts is not provided. More about the meaning of *sram* and *stid* in

This concept clearly expresses what the original man had and the historical man lost. However, it is important to point out that the human personality is indivisible from the human body which is the ground for communication and unity of a man and a woman opening a way to an everlasting affirmation of the human personality. That is why contemporary man desperately needs shame, as a condition *sine qua non* for one's self-awareness and subjectivity, but also for a happy and fulfilled life and to construct social reality. Although, shame reveals and warns about the consequences of the First Sin which are a constant reminder of man's fall, at the same time, it is a positive form of self-defence for the person protecting his body and personality. Thus, the paper deals with the issue of shame taking into account this view. This understanding is in line with the documents of the Second Vatican Council, fruitful philosophical, ethical and anthropological researches of Karol Wojtyla, but also the follow-up of the Synods of Bishops on Evangelization (1974) and Catechesis (1977). Certainly, there was reference to John Paul II's catecheses on the General Audiences that were held on Wednesday from the beginning of his pontificate, and particularly from 5 September 1979 to 29 October 1980, entitled "*Male and female he created them*" and also his "*Letter to Families*" from 1994, on the occasion of the International Year of the Family.

Referring to these documents, the first part of this scientific work deals with the anthropological consequences of fallen man's feeling of shame. Shame is a boundary experience of original eternity and fallen historicity. It denotes a fundamental change of man's identity when "the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked" (Gen 3:7). It is important to point out that fallen, historical reality represents the history as we know, and refers to the state of fallen man, marked by sin and death.

The second and main part of the article focuses on the important virtues that should not be disregarded in the process of education of contemporary man. They are required for the perspective of positive education in modesty, and should be taken as the Good news for the renewal of culture. Though it continually warns about the consequences of sin, the positive aspect of shame as a remedy for man's inner tensions, for the disunity between man and God, the interpersonal disunity, conflict between man and the created world, and finally remedy for man's mortality. In this context, the shame paves the way to genuine love, to personal happiness and social interaction and is particularly important for decent clothing and art.

Finally, in the last part of the article we try to summarize the key issues of positive education in modesty.

the Croatian language, in: G. Črpić, K. Novak, *(Be)sramna* kultura, Crkva u svijetu, 51 (2016) 3, p. 379-395.

1. Feeling of shame as a bounary experience (Gen 3:7)

The importance of original nakedness and lack of shame are even more evident if we take into account the state in which the historical man[2] found himself after the First sin breaking the primordial covenant with his Creator. This entirely new situation is witnessed by words: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths" (Gen 3:7). The experience of shame is the consequence of their deception and vain expectation to "become like God."[3] Contrary to it, a man becomes aware of the need to hide external and visible masculinity or femininity in his inner self. Due to this fact, we can talk about the shame of the body that is associated with sexual shame. It is obvious that it is a matter of fear or anxiety that occurs in the inner man, and all due to his nakedness. In addition to the shame of the body there is also the shame of experience. As such, shame encompasses other dimensions of man's intimacy such as thoughts, feelings, and intentions. This shame reflects the intention of hiding those reactions and experiences which reveal the body as an object for use[4]. Since the person is human being, in addition to his physical, outward appearance he also possesses inner capacity for true intimacy,[5] and when it comes to the experience of sexual shame, there is a radical change in man's experiencing, understanding, and thus behaviour. This is the ground for Pope's understanding of the experience of shame, i.e. the original lack of shame and the state of original innocence transforms

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[2]   Original identity and human dignity in the works of John Paul II refer to original man created out of God's love and the historical man after the first sin.

[3]   Such interpretation of shame refers to a subject that reveals the nakedness of his own 'self' and is in line with the definition taken from psychiatric manual of Kaplan, Sadock and Grebbe: "Shame is a failure to achieve his own self-expectations." Quoted from: S. Tognacci, *Psychology of Shame: Major Psychological and Cultural Aspects*, Crkva u svijetu, 51 (2016) 3, p. 457. Quoted in references: H. Kaplan - B. Sadock - J. Grebb, *Psichiatria.* Manuale di scienze del comportamento e psichiatria clinica, Centro Scientifico Internazionale, Torino, 1995-97, p. 303.

[4]   Cf. K. Wojtyla, (Love and Responsibility), *Ljubav i odgovornost*, Verbum, Split, 2009, p. 189. (We especially refer to the relevant chapter on *Metaphysics of Shame* (p. 174-195), furtherly cited by the title and page number.) This view of Pope John Paul II on the experience of shame is in line with the most relevant personalistic definitions of shame, on which Šimun Bilokapić commented: "However formulated and whatever they emphasize, all definitions clearly indicate to the protective function of shame referring to the whole person. Not only it protects sexual intimacy but also personal intimacy as well as the mystery and love of the person. According to personalistic thought, shame is a form of self-defense within the social sphere, protection of an individual and his values against a general public sphere, the protection of personal secrets against profanation and vulgarization, and at the same time, it includes the preservation and promotion of all mentioned aspects. Š. Bilokapić, *Značenje i funkcija stida iz perspektive moralne teologije*, Crkva u svijetu, 51 (2016) 3, p. 429-430.

[5]   Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 175.

to from the state of human sinfulness as a threshold or a boundary experience[6] of historical man. Crossing over this threshold, a man with God, enters into history, but as the historical man who sins against himself and others[7], thus a return to the beginning, to the same boundary experience should be based on theological knowledge. This is necessary for man if he tends to obtain his original innocence, love, mercy and justice of God's children "within God's power", and the final celebration that had been already prepared for him in eternity, "in God".

1.1. Shame as specific human dimension

Although it occurs along with the first sin, it is important to point out that the discovery of shame is not novelty or something that the human eyes have overlooked so far. Conversely, shame brings a limitation in seeing with the eyes of the body. The original man was endowed by seeing through the mystery of creation[8] with the eyes of God. For him, such vision was a source of self-knowledge and original happiness. Instead of the first man's original innocence and happiness in observing another being as he is, the experience of the historical man of lust which according to the Yahwist narrative has "concupiscent" character brings the difficulty in identifying the meaning of his own body and breaking his spiritual and physical unity. Lust attacks human freedom and threatens to the destruction of his personal subjectivity. Therefore, the inherent feeling of shame is an everlasting and almost an urgent warning. All this brings unrest to the male-female relationships as well as to the relationships with other living beings (animalia), since the man ceased to be above the world of living creatures and became susceptible to instincts. In addition, shame urges man to hide these threatened values that allowed his opening to the other person, in his inner being[9]. However, the gift of these values represents the key for self-knowledge. So, man due to imbalance between the exterior and his own intimacy, falls into a vicious circle, i.e. conflict between aspiration towards personal subjectivity and self-giving aimed at his self-realization, and adversely aspiration towards "hiding" in his own inner being. In this way, his role in the world as the subject, sociability, mutual reciprocity between men and women and his relationship

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[6]   (The Theology of the Body) *Teologija tijela*, 11/4; 19/3.

[7]   Analyzing the phenomenon of shame on the basis of socio-political contract Stipe Buzar claims: "Shame is morally appropriate only when it is associated with guilt, i.e. feeling of shame is appropriate only when an individual is blameworthy. The shame is in fact presented as an emotion, but also as the individual's attitude towards environment, other people, 'self', etc. *Broken Contract. An Ethical Inquiry into Shame*, Crkva u svijetu, 51 (2016) 3, p. 492.

[8]   Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 13/1.

[9]   Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 28/2-6.

with the world as well as with the Creator is violated. All of these difficulties and dangers that burden man and humanity should be in the focus of each individual's education and upbringing.

1.2. Fear for the subject's own "self"

The experience of shame encroaches on the original man-woman relationship and unity as well as the existential communion with the Creator. The misuse of freedom has resulted in the tragic tension and confrontation: man against God, the flesh against the spirit, instincts against reason and will. This determines the "time and space" of shame.[10] However, the shattered relationships are rooted in a lack of self-mastery. In fact, due to his self-determination gifted by the Creator, the man is the only subject in the created world. Pope John Paul II claims that "person has authority over the self (sui iuris)," and that "no one else, except God the Creator, has the right of ownership. The man has a property in his own person and has the power of self-determination, so no one can distort the integrity of the man. No one can violate man's possession of self, except he willingly opt for giving himself out of love. This *objective inalienability (incommunicability)* (alteri incommunicabilitas), *as well as the inviolability of the man is clearly expressed through the experience of sexual shame.* The experience of shame is a natural echo of who the man is[11]. And, he is the subject and his body, made in the image of God, reveals sacramentality of creation: male and female as a visible sign.

The man's personality and his role of the subject are closely associated with his body. Therefore, the awareness of a possible misuse of the body that would reduce the other to an object, results in shame relative to the other sex and hiding their visible masculinity or femininity. In this regard, John Paul II furtherly argues that: "In shame, the human being experiences fear with regard to his 'second self', (e.g. woman before man) and this is substantially fear for his own 'self'. Feeling shame, the human being almost instinctively manifests the need of affirmation and acceptance of this "self," according to his true value. He experiences shame in his inner self and externally before the "other."[12] The man's discovery of "nakedness"(Gen 3:9-10), leads to the awareness that he is deprived of the participation in the gift of God and His love by which he could nourish his active subjectivity and avoid any experience of depersonalization. So, the loss of the supernatural and preternatural endowments leads to the loss of natural gifts that are inherent to the humanity as the image of God, but also as the source of sociability.

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[10] Cf. Š. Bilokapić, *Značenje i funkcija stida*, p. 432.

[11] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 178.

[12] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 12/1.

1.3. Lust as the collapse of the original social communion

Original knowledge that the man's body is the sign of the image of God distinguished him from all other living beings and was the guarantee of his ruling over the material world as well as maintaining its balance. The man is the only being created for his own sake and for the eternity "in God" so that all other living beings are subjected to him and that can serve him in time. From the experience of fear for his own 'self' and his identity flows regret for original unity, but also difficulty in achieving it in the new historical conditions. It is obvious that the shame is deeply rooted in the dimension of man's solitude and his own 'self', but also in the mutual personal relationship of man and woman. Consequently, shame penetrates the social-world system, and John Paul II rightly defines it as "cosmic shame".[13] Finally, since the self-consciousness of his own personality springs from the discovery of other being like him, so shame is social embarrassment which requires someone else before whom a man wants to hide and cover his body.

It is an indisputable fact that shame occurs in human hearts along with the lust of the flesh. Since the body is a source of the original happiness of man's unity as male and female, shame radically affects their mutual relationship. It makes man and woman to hide their nakedness from each other, i.e. their sexual differences. In this way, it is an obstacle to their mutual self-giving, mutual donation and acceptance. The new situation burdens simplicity and purity of their relationship. Such burdened sexuality became an obstacle and a source of mutual confrontation instead of being a call for the full subjectivity of man and woman in their interpersonal communion. Moreover, it distorted the completion of the image of God in man as *communio personarum* – the communion that man and woman were to constitute, becoming "one flesh".[14] Thus, shame deprives man and humanity of participation in the original creative love, making the collapse of original communion.[15] St. John defines this radical change as the three forms of lust: lust of the flesh, of the eyes and the pride of life (1Jn 2:16), which threaten the original acceptance of the human body in his personal truth, and therefore the original sacramental nature of man as the image of God.[16] The collapse of his own "self" creates tension at the social level.

1.4. An obscured nuptial meaning of the body and the issue of mortality

In regard to the nuptial meaning of the human body, it primarily means the original self-mastery and ability to express pure love through

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[13] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 12/1; 27/1; 27/4.

[14] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 29/2-3.

[15] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 29/4.

[16] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 27/2-3.

mutual self-giving and acceptance. In fact, through this interpersonal communion man becomes a gift fulfilling the deep meaning of his being and his existence. The experience of shame radically changes human moral conscience, and instead of being the source of human happiness it becomes an unrelenting judge. A lack of happiness is associated with the lack of freedom, and consequently, the imbalance in the reciprocal self-giving and acceptance "for the other's sake". Moreover, it depersonalizes man, making him an "object for myself", "an object of attraction and lust" and "of misappropriation of other being" and as such is reduced to the level of the other living beings (*animalia*).[17] In a nutshell, he becomes an object, and a radiant shine of the purity of heart, its original innocence and the perfect ethos of the gift are obscured by the veil of shame. Instead of mutual self-giving in freedom, lust and appropriation of other person dominate, as the first pages of the Bible clearly express God's saying of the woman, "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). The original communion of persons is subjected to concupiscence and threatened by lustful appropriation and possession through mutual unity. Manifested as coercion *sui generis* of the body, concupiscence limits and reduces person's self-mastery. It also obscures the original beauty of masculinity and femininity as an expression of the spirit.[18] The person is manifested in the original human body, but concupiscence destroys its richness and dignity.

It is to point out that a man, through genuine or fake approach to his body, either stands upright or falls. Thus, in this fact we look for the turning point. As mentioned earlier, mutual self-giving through masculinity and femininity is a fulfilment of human freedom.[19] True freedom is inextricably associated with the inviolability of a subject and a person as well as with the fundamental and essential truths about the man as the image of God. This very inner truth is inscribed in the depths of the human heart as a *communion personarum*, though struggling hard for the balance in giving and receiving of human love. This original relationship of man and woman will remain a permanent ground for confirmation of subjective authenticity and the reciprocity of donation.[20] Since shame comes as the second experience of 'self', after the discovery of concupiscence it can be viewed positively, as a mechanism which protects from the consequences of lust and helps to uphold the balance of the original innocence. Therefore, it is important to note that the nuptial meaning of the human body is not completely distorted and suffocated by lust, but that it is threatened by incapacity of a mutual self-gift and fulfilment.

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[17] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 17/3; 32/1.5.

[18] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 30/5; 31/3; 32/6.

[19] Cf. E. Vesely, *Ivan Pavao II. za novu kulturu života*, Obnovljeni život, 51 (1996) 3, p. 264.

[20] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 19/2; 33/4.

However, this very nuptial meaning the body is still the connecting point with man's primordial.

Through the revelation of the mystery of shame, original biblical cycle of knowledge-generation, which is closely associated with the nuptial meaning of the human body, was subjected to the law of suffering and death. The original life that the man received from his Creator becomes a historical, which means that it is bounded with conception, birth and death.[21] Despite his disappointment and inevitable perspective of death, his original life as well as the nuptial meaning of his body, remain the area of confirming his own personal subjectivity and mission by which, the original fullness of the image of God in him as the subject and the person is revealed, opening the perspective of eternity, too. Finally, it is to highlight the positive dimension of shame which opens the door of immortality.

2. The heart-led education in modesty

The man becomes aware of a certain value only when it is lost. As long as it is inherent it is thought of as something usual. Once it is lost, man becomes aware of its existential and driving forces. The same happened with the original love, which was manifested through the original gifts as the participation in the divine life. The gifts that the Creator gives to his beloved creature as well as mutual pre-existential self-giving of men and women build the identity of the person but, at the same time, they are focused on fulfilling their mission in the world. Therefore, person's upbringing requires return to the original love which aims at detecting the values of the person capable of self-giving. All this leads to the affirmation of the person, a mature personality, competence for the mission, which is again a call for the participation in love. The Sixth Synod of Bishops on the Family, which was held from 25 September to 26 October 1980 in Rome, dealt with these issues. The Synod emphasized four general tasks for the family as the nucleus of life and mission: forming a community of persons; serving life; participating in the development of society; sharing in the life and mission of the Church. John Paul II refers to it and explains the family role in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, and later, in the *Letter to Families* in 1994.[22] Taking into account the essential elements of Christian education and the values that it transfers, this letter is rightly called the "rule for a happy Christian family life."[23]

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[21] Cf. *Teologija tijela*, 22/7.

[22] Cf. Ivan Pavao II., Pobudnica *Familiaris consortio* (22. 11. 1981.), KS, Zagreb, ²1997, 17 (hereinafter: FC).

[23] J. Frkin, *Pismo obiteljima pape Ivana Pavla II.*, Obnovljeni život, 49 (1994) 6, p. 591.

Furtherly, whether this civilization will be defined as the civilization of love or death depends on the heart-led education in love i.e. education for a truly dignified human life in communion and collaboration.[24] This form of education aims at the flourishing and affirmation of individual's full spiritual potential. It also allows man to accomplish his own humanity i.e. his perfect righteousness and holiness which springs from truth and love.[25] Referring to the importance of man's identity, his 'being' rather than 'having', John Paul II, sums up the role of this form of education in the idea of priority of persons over things, ethics over techniques, spirit over matter, and finally mercy over justice.[26] In this context, referring to the man's origin, the perspective of education in modesty can be found in fostering positive attitudes due to which we can look at ourselves, our loved ones, the society and the world through God's eyes. Thus, the theology of the body promotes education in modesty as its important factor and as the good news for cultural renewal.[27] Hence, this form of education offers the ground for the original happiness of man.

Therefore, education in modesty should be perceived as a cure for man's inner conflict by which he can effectively harmonize his desires, aspirations and reality. In this sense, shame spontaneously safeguards of his own personality, his self-giving and self-esteem. Also, such education is the cure for discord between God and man, since man is existentially dependent on the gift and giving gift to his Creator. Only through reviving this very testimony of gift-giving man, as the bearer of the image of God, can live truly. Furthermore, the affirmation of shame presents the cure for the interpersonal and social conflicts, since it allows an individual to safeguard his/her own intimacy, but also his/her self-giving to someone who will properly evaluate and revive it through the mutual self-giving and receiving. It is important to emphasize that shame is the cure for the disunity between man and all of creation. Today, ecology as a scientific discipline focuses on this issue, giving considerable attention to it. Finally, since shame is the threshold one should cross in order to understand the human origins, it is also the cure for man's mortality. This cure leads to immortality "in God" i.e. the immortality of love. For this reason, shame is inseparable from love that absorbs and distinguishes it existentially and positively.

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[24] Cf. Ivan Pavao II., *Pismo obiteljima* (Letter to families), IKA, Zagreb, 1994, 13. An analysis of the civilization of love, life and truth and the civilization of death, hate and lies in the thought of Pope John Paul II, is thoroughly elaborated by J. Stala, *Punina postojanja osobe – civilizacije ljubavi u kontekstu postmoderne*, Crkva u svijetu, 50 (2015) 3, p. 469-477.

[25] J. Stala, *Punina postojanja osobe*, p. 474.

[26] Cf. Ivan Pavao II., Enciklika *Redemptor hominis* (4. 3. 1979.), KS, Zagreb, 1997, 16. *Idem,* Enciklika *Evangelium vitae* (25. 3. 1995.), KS, Zagreb, 1995, 98; FC, 8.

[27] Cf. M. Healy, *Muškarci i žene su iz Edena*, p. 37.

2.1. Education for the absorption of shame by mature love

We have already pointed out that the shame reactions lead to the protection of the value of the person. The spontaneous need to hide the sexual values inherent in the person is the natural way to the discovery of the value and dignity of the person as such. Therefore, the moment of love is fundamentally constitutive of this effort. Certainly, shame is not an end in itself, but it aims to bring the person into the loving communion of persons through their mutual donation.[28] In this context, we refer to the absorption of shame by love, i.e. the absorption through love and final uniting in it. In such unity of the communion of persons, man and woman are not ashamed of their mutual experience of the values of the human body. If shame is "absorbed" by love it does not mean that it is eliminated or destroyed, on the contrary, shame paves the way to love, and reinforces it. In case of disharmony, a person is in danger of descending or being pushed into the position of an object for sexual use which is contrary to the very nature of the person. It is a kind of active and passive natural form of self-defence for the person against his/her degradation. At the same time, it is the path to personal happiness, since the true love means that the sexual values are subordinated to the value of the person. Thus, love and reducing 'self' (actively) or the other person (passively) to a mere object are mutually exclusive.[29] It does not mean that the emotion of love itself gives one the right to physical intimacy. On the contrary, love as an emotional experience even if it is reciprocated, it is not identical with a mature love completed by commitment of the will which implies mutual choice and donation. It is based on a deep affirmation of the persons' values aiming to their everlasting union in marriage and is clearly oriented towards their parenthood, i.e. maternity and paternity. This mature love completed by commitment of the will is the most valuable good of the person.[30] In this context, John Paul II points out that upbringing and the knowledge of the bodily aspect are required. "Accordingly, every effort must be made to render such knowledge accessible to all married people and also to young adults before marriage, through clear, timely and serious instruction and education given by married couples, doctors and experts. Knowledge must then lead to education in self-control: hence the absolute necessity for the virtue of chastity and for permanent education in it. In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressive-

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[28] Cf. D. Runje, *Stid i Post 2:25-3:21*, Crkva u svijetu, 51 (2016) 3, p. 401; *Metafizika stida*, p. 180.

[29] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 182-183.

[30] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 187.

ness, and able to advance it towards its full realization."[31] It is obvious that the absorption of shame by love leads to the original good of man and to seeing of his personal subjectivity with eyes of God, from which flows man's awareness and happiness. Having this in mind, it is obvious that education in modesty, which encompasses a complex bodily aspect and personality, should be given considerable attention.

2.2. Education for mastering shamelessness

Having defined the concept of shame as a healthy reaction within the person directed towards a loving communion of persons, it is also necessary to define its antonym, the concept of shamelessness which is closely associated with it. We distinguish between "physical" and "emotional" shamelessness. Shamelessness denotes a lack of personal, sexual and emotional intimacy.[32] Pope John Paul II defines shamelessness as: "any mode of being or behaviour on the part of a particular person in which the values of sex as such are given such prominence that they obscure the essential value of the person. Consequently, it leads to reducing person to the status of an object for use and joy [...], not as a person-affirming love. "Emotional" shamelessness consists in the rejection of that healthy tendency to be ashamed of reactions and feelings which make another person merely an object of use because of the sexual values belonging to him or her.[33] Taking into consideration the important fact that shame paves the way to love, shamelessness is just the opposite, since it does not pave the way to a mutual love, but only and exclusively to the enjoyment. All this depersonalizes person, harms his/her dignity and reduces him/her to an object for use. The human body itself is not shameless as well as the reaction of its sensibility. However, the trivialization of its bodily, sexual and emotional aspects consciously, freely and deliberately leads to shamelessness. Taking all into consideration, the issue of shamelessness and the values associated with it should be regarded thoroughly due to their functionality. The basic principle of preserving the dignity of the person and of his/her good always takes precedence over any other functionality, because the man is called to be a subject, not an object.

Sexuality and the expression of nuptial meaning of the body and loving in a bodily way aim not only to childbirth, but also include child-rearing and fostering of his/her human and religious dimensions. Moral education contributes to the divine life and spiritual maturity of man. Based on biblical and theological sources, the vocation of parenthood is clearly and definitely confirmed as being: far from any banality and the sexual degra-

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[31] Cf. FC, 33.

[32] Cf. Š. Bilokapić, *Značenje i funkcija stida*, p. 440.

[33] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 189-190.

dation aiming to fulfil one's own "benefit" and selfish "enjoyment".[34] Right this presents a threat for modern civilization dominated by favouritism, trivialized intimacy and stimulated voyeurism, while the human personality and the body are exposed and "used" for media spectacle. Agenda for success consists of the primary goals of human life, such as enjoyment and hedonism as well as the need be known and famous. The education for civilized life and love aims to completely opposite goals. Since it safeguards one's own intimacy and that of the other person, it can be called education for mastering shamelessness. Of course, it includes the functional shame impulses which allow proper evaluation and safeguarding of person's intimacy in the sphere of love and sexuality.

2.3. Education for decent clothing

As already stated, shame is at the root of interpersonal communication. It upheld a perfect relationship until the man recognized and revealed his nakedness. People become so vulnerable that even a gaze can hurt. In the context of education in modesty and for the sake of preserving the integrity of the person, it is necessary to address the problem of inappropriate clothing. We should bear in mind that the human body, the interpersonal communication and unity have ever made a room for the affirmation of human personality. Clothing is therefore an attempt to reach the inviolability based on the biblical truth: "they were naked and unashamed." In order to establish a genuine balance between the physical nakedness and the communication, according to the Bible, the man made the "apron of fig leaves" (Gen 3:7) as his first cloth, and God made the "coats of skins" and clothed the naked man (Gen 3:21). It is the protection from external danger, the social protection mechanism against the violation of each person's individual dignity and sexual intimacy. Covering his entire body, the "coats of skins" became a part of human identity. It is a visible sign of the divine intervention which improves human dignity dressed in God's cloth.[35] Such divine intervention allows man the existential communication and the interpersonal communion on the path towards the realization of his own original dignity. Therefore, the purpose of clothing is to raise awareness of dignity of one's own inner being, and necessarily the other's respect of it.

When it comes to clothing, shamelessness contributes to deliberate obscuring of the most important value of the person viewed through sexual values, which provokes a reaction as if that person is a mere object

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[34] Cf. I. Fuček, *Prenositi ili priječiti život? Pitanje "naravne" ili "umjetne" kontracepcije*, (Comment, *Familiaris consortio*, 28-35), Obnovljeni život, 40 (1985) 1, p. 8.

[35] Cf. D. Runje, *Stid i Post 2:25-3:21*, p. 405; p. 409-410. Source cited in the footnote: Cf. C. Tomić, *Prapovijest spasenja. Knjiga postanka glava 1-11*, p. 138-139.

for use and an instrument of physical enjoyment, instead of being the subject of love.[36] Referring to it, Pope John Paul II said: "Man is not so perfect being that a look at the other person's body, especially a person of the other sex, just provokes his selfless affection and simple loving."[37] It is important to emphasize that the nakedness itself does not correspond to shamelessness which springs from a negative function of nakedness aimed to depersonalisation of man, the lust revival and possessing the other as an object; shame points to it clearly.[38] Although contemporary fashion is a complex issue, wearing skimpy clothes on a beach or during liturgical celebrations in the Church is not analogous, but today's approach to it is rather problematic. However, neither the entire clothing of the body determines one's morality, nor the reduced coverage indicates to a lack of shame. Without taking into account the context, it is unacceptable and wrong to equate one's skimpy outfit with shamelessness or a fully clothed person with the sense of shame. On the contrary, shame and shamelessness are not determined or defined by one's own nakedness or covering up of the body, but by the way the naked or dressed body is presented, offered or exposed to the attention and look of other people. Shame or shamelessness are determined by the fact whether the naked or dressed body primarily reveal the value of the person, or obscure it emphasizing the body only as an object and its attributes, abstracting from its being the image of God.[39] Therefore, the principle of functionality is inseparable from personal dignity, self-respect and prudence.

It is important to emphasize that the educational process should aim at fostering responsibility for safeguarding of the values of the human body through appropriate clothing, far from any uncontrolled exposure to the views of others, but also from a provocative or veiled coverage. An observer should feel personal responsibility for looking at the other with respect avoiding any share in the other person's nakedness; otherwise it is regarded as violence, sin and degradation of the person, except in the context of nuptial meaning of the body. That is why education for decent clothing is an important, positive aspect of education in modesty.

2.4. Education in chastity in art

The principle of functionality does not only refer to education for decent clothing but can be applied on the other forms of artistic expression, especially in sculpture, painting, literature and film. Functionality itself quali-

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[36] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 192.

[37] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 192.

[38] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 193.

[39] Cf. Š. Bilokapić, *Značenje i funkcija stida*, p. 440; p. 451. Source cited in the footnote: Cf. G. Zuanazzi, *Temi e simboli dell'eros*, p. 126.

fies shame and warns about the degradation of person. It provokes unrest associated with concupiscence, discerning it positively from shamelessness and aiming to its full affirmation in love. This means that the principle of functionality applied to education in art should finally lead to the affirmation of the person, preventing person's reduction to the status of an object for use. Karol Wojtyla claims: "Art has a right and a duty, for the sake of realism, to reproduce the human body, and the love of man and woman, as they are in reality, to speak the whole truth about them. The human body is an authentic part of the truth about man, just as its sensual and sexual aspects are an authentic part of the truth about human love. But it would be wrong to let this part obscure the whole."[40] Due to a possible abuse of the human body, shame creates precise limits and threshold that should not be exceeded. On the other hand, if we discuss about the artistic expression through the enjoyment of seeing or listening, shame is again the regulator of ethics, which consists of three elements: the body, the viewer, the dialectic of seeing and being seen. In the context of consumerist and propaganda models of modern mass media, this dialectic of seeing is often distorted and harmful. Being the object of the other person's view degrades harms and damages an essential part of our being. In contrast, the positive impact of the experience of shame based on art can encourage the man to question his attitudes and his remorse can restore damaged relationships.[41] Any form of the artistic expression should be based on this principle. Since pornography reduces body to the object of sexual pleasure, it negates any feeling of shame, and thus a true integrity of the whole man. Disregard of the mystery of the human person and the person's body leads to the collapse of human civilization. That is why education in chastity in art should take into account fine nuances and functionalities. When the artistic expression has an explicit function to emphasize sex as the only intrinsic value of the person and to identify it with love, then it is obvious that this is a distorted reality that depersonalizes man. It makes him a mere object for the other, far from his original happiness, the original ethos and the most precious good. Approach to art based on shamelessness is contradictory to its definition as an aesthetic quality of what is beautiful and the communication between both artists and the world, and people with each other. Thus education in chastity in art as well as its reception are the central to positive education in modesty.

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[40] Cf. *Metafizika stida*, p. 194.

[41] Cf. S. Tognacci, *Psihologija srama: glavni psihologijski i kulturološki vidovi*, p. 474-476. Source cited in the footnote: U. Galimberti, *Le garzantine. Psicologia*, Garzanti, Milano, 1999, p. 873.

Instead of a conclusion: the main points of education in modesty

Getting knowledge of shame is important for raising a man with healthy personality that positively affects the functioning and balance of the whole society. Therefore, referring to the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* and *Directory of Family Pastoral Activity by the Church in Croatia*, Veronika Reljac summarized the nature, structure and objectives of the educational process in several main points which are the following:

- introducing the interpersonal dynamics;
- an in-depth awareness of the concept of sexuality, based on Christian anthropology;
- the basics in the psychological aspects of marriage and parenthood;
- identifying cultural trends that impact sexuality, love, marriage and family;
- building critical reading skills and developing media literacy."[42]

The interpersonal dynamics is associated with the healthy personality facing no fear for the loss of one's own "self" as the subject in society. An in-depth awareness of the concept of sexuality encompasses the theology of the body and the nuptial meaning of the body. The psychological aspects of marriage and parenthood are related to education for the absorption of shame by mature love, which leads to the fullness of good for the person and society. Cultural trends and media literacy are associated with the issue of shamelessness, clothing and art. It is to conclude that shame is the key component of each of these points. Certainly, it refers to shame as the boundary experience and unavoidable threshold that separates the man's present historical state from his original state, but at the same time, it leaves room for education and accomplishment of the future life and immortality the man has ever been destined for.

Finally, the goal of any education, and so education in modesty is to prevent degradation of the person and building of a more humane society which again relies on an individual. Today, the affirmation of shame and its limit-setting are required due to their constant disregard and violation, which inevitably lead to lust, and thus reducing the person to an object for use. On the other hand, a positive experience of shame leads to the affirmation of humanity and its joyful moment of knowledge. It refers to a man who respects his own dignity and the dignity of other person not allowing a reduction of his own "self" nor the other "I" to a mere object for use, i.e. reductive objectification of the human body to an instrument of enjoyment. Hence, his profound ethics, morality, virtue and strength spring from it. Shame pervades his inner relationship (intrinsic shame),

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[42] V. Reljac, *Modaliteti obiteljskog pastorala*, Riječki teološki časopis, 17 (2009) 2, p. 467.

the relationships with others and the world (relational shame).[43] Therefore, shame is at the root of civilization[44] and education in modesty aims to building a civilization of truth, life and love. This civilization is witnessed by the original lack of shame and fear of the first man and woman who could stand in front of each other naked and unashamed. This original truth and balance reveal life based on mutual friendship, avoiding any self-idealization that would disrupt such relationship, but also the relationship with God. It points to mutual trustworthiness that leaves no room for fear of disappointment and appropriation of the other person, for contempt or humiliation of the other or any threat to the human dignity and integrity. Finally, it shows total openness, without hiding anything.[45] After the Fall, a man can be educated in such openness only through positive education in modesty, i.e. education that paves the way for human affirmation and happiness, taking into account all the abovementioned aspects of the value and the moral relevance of shame. Bearing in mind that happiness and affirmation have social connotations it is obvious that education in modesty is at the heart of the civilization of love being imperative in all times. Therefore, positive education in modesty today is a complex task which should be definitely based on the principle of human dignity and decency.

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[43] Cf. Š. Bilokapić, *Značenje i funkcija stida*, p. 426-427.

[44] Cf. G. Črpić, K. Novak, *(Be)sramna kultura*, p. 389.

[45] Analyzing the meaning of shame in the biblical examples that indicate not to the lack of shame but to its occurence, Domagoj Runje concludes that the feeling and experience of shame ultimately pave the way to building of the positive good. Cf. D. Runje, *Stid i post 2:25-3:21*, p. 401.

II. Holistic approach to religious education

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HOLISTIC APPROACH AND EXPERIENTIAL FAITH FORMATION

Abstract

A modern man increasingly recognises that the scientific progress and the material prosperity without manners of the heart does not make a man happy and does not give meaning to his life as the man may have expected. Young people in particular are increasingly longing for "a different world". This also requires different approaches in the domain of education and teaching. In any case, there is a need for a more holistic education, which also includes a spiritual and religious dimension of life. Young people feel that cognitive learning, which provides them with skills for everyday life and "survival", is not enough. In their distress, young people yearn for values and visions that relate to the question of "the last sense" that often goes beyond the concern for "this world", while at the same time it gives meaning to it. Thereby, the religious education is also faced with challenges that require holistic, experiential and foremost integrated educational approaches. In doing so, the religious education is being searched for, not outside of their lives, but inside them and it will create a vision related to the meaning of life and salvation.

Key words: *holistic education, integrated education, experiential faith formation, religious education, emotional intelligence.*

Introduction

When Jesus, after the resurrection, revealed himself to the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, he found them concerned about the "daily life". They were fishing but failed to catch anything. When they returned in the morning, he asked them for food: "Children, have you any food?" (Jn 21:5).

It is interesting that Jesus addresses them as "children" – as if he had already had bad experience with adults. Perhaps he thought of the known multiplication of the loaves, when he found out that a child (boy) has some bread and two fish (Jn 6:9). It is not excluded that someone else in the crowd also had "a little something". However, adults are opportun-

istic and do not like to share – we first take care of ourselves. Children, however, are more naive and tell everything and do not hide anything. Perhaps Jesus is trying to turn them away from pragmatism and opportunism with this name. But disciples do not allow themselves to do so and respond convincingly: "Nothing." (Jn 21:5). Jesus advises them to cast the net "on the right side of the boat" (Jn 21:6). When they do so, they catch a lot of fish. At that time, they also recognise him. When they return to the coast, they discover Jesus has already prepared the food.

Several examples can be found in the Bible and in the Christian tradition, in which the "right side" is exposed as the better one and "closer to God". Interestingly, the human cognitive system is built the same way. The right side of the brain is used for more holistic thinking, while the left side is more pragmatic and opportunistic.[1] Holistic thinking is considered to be less pragmatic, and more emotional and empathic.

1. Basis of education

The well-known researcher of emotional intelligence Daniel Goleman notes that "at the beginning of humanity", hippocampus and amygdala have been combined in the brain centre for the sense of smell. On this basis, during the course of evolution, cortex and neocortex have been developed, which are in our brain responsible for learning and memory.[2]

This exciting hypothesis can take us straight to the biblical Garden of Eden, to Adam and Eve before the Tree of Knowledge: "The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2:9).

According to the Goleman's hypothesis that the first roots of cognitive abilities lie in the "smell", it is interesting that the paradise trees – including the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil – are described as "pleasing to the eye and good for food". Sight and taste are therefore taken into account; however, the Bible does not mention anything about smell. The smell is also not mentioned not even in relation to the description of the original sin: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasant to the eye and desirable, because it makes one wise" (Gen 3:6).

Thus, when the man ate the "forbidden fruit", we can intuit that the sight, touch and taste are older and more primary senses than smell. A man was therefore able to react sooner based on taste, sight, probably hearing and certainly touch than based on smell. At that time, the man did not have the acquired and in this sense preventive knowledge of the "good and evil".

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[1]   E. Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, ASCD, Alexandria, 2005, p. 14.

[2]   D. Goleman, *Emotionale Intelligenz*, DTB, München, 1997, p. 33.

In Paradise, the first man learns from experience, directly from the consequences of the acts committed, which is ultimately the fundamental dimension of biblical pedagogy. With taste and touch we have accepted the consequences of the acts, because the taste of food is already within us; the touch can also hurt at the very first moment. In both cases, there is no time for preventive learning; therefore these two senses symbolize "reckless reactions", in which we cannot foresee the consequences, at least not formally. Thus, with the taste and touch we accept the consequences at the time of perception. In communication with God, symbolized by the Creator's "life breath" (Gen 2:7), God, in principle, explains and alerts the first man of the danger and consequences of enjoying the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge, but a mere theory apparently is not enough. Let's face it; a man becomes "wise" only on the basis of "taste" or experiential learning from his own mistakes.

Hearing and sight offer a bit more time to prepare for the proper reaction compared to taste, but in terms of learning, probably even these two senses did not represent sufficiently large mental effort to initiate the cortex development. According to the Goleman's theory, the smell is certainly that particular sense which has, in the early stages of evolution, mostly affected the concepts of good and evil and choosing between good and evil and has thus mostly promoted the development of mental (moral and religious) capabilities. If it's indeed true that the cortex centres of human cognition evolved from the brain centre for smell, then, obviously, this particular form of perception gave the man the most of his "thinking" or the maximum incentives and the motivation for learning. From this perspective, it is also logical that the Bible fails to mention the sense of smell in connection to the Tree of Knowledge, since Adam and Eve did not consider it. If they did, they would "realize" in time that something "stinks" in the snake challenge. But the eyes were too "hungry" and have deceived them into skipping the learning process of "smell" and have thus immediately moved on to tasting or enjoying the (forbidden) fruits. The sin was – recklessly – committed sooner then they realized the "smell" of the complex situation. God, however, has a much better "smell" and he realized immediately after the sin that something "stinks" in the human paradise. Therefore, he searched for the man, taught him and corrected his religiously estranged and immoral stance. So God sets the religious and moral learning as the foundation of any learning.

From the perspective of learning, Adam' and Eve's avoiding to communicate with God after the sin (Gen 3:8) and shifting the responsibility to another is interesting and at the same time understandable. On one hand, their reactions illustrate how challenging the religious and moral learning in fact is, while on the other hand, the fact that Adam and Eve accept the consequences of their actions without any objection leads us to recognize the holistic and experiential learning ability of the first peo-

ple. This God's "psychology of learning" that takes into account a man's freedom, but at the same time assumes that he will accept the consequences of his actions –while in doing so, God helps him to endure them mercifully and generously – is intertwined throughout the whole Bible and the Christian religious education also derives from it.

The fact that Adam and Eve hid themselves before God after the sin reveals that the moral recognitions are rooted in the religious education. Morally, they were not healed by the intelligent insight and not even by the independent decision, but they reached both of that based on the religious communication with God. Moral learning is actually nourished from religious communication.

Thus, when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and drifted away from the heavenly life with God, they also had to "eat" the consequences of this reckless act. Even the Bible therefore teaches us that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach". What stinks and not out of love, is not good and is not "wise". This logic leads us to the "recognition" that the religious and moral dimensions are "teachers" of all other forms and methods of education. A man began to learn and became an intelligent creature only upon facing the challenges of smells and making good decisions against evil.

2. Emotional intelligence and religious education

Motivation, emotion and cognition are three basic mental operations.[3] In some contexts, emotionality is also mentioned as the opposite of "cognition", as being something incompatible with clear and prudent thinking. In recent decades, emotionality plays a vital role in human life and is becoming an increasingly important dimension of education. Stronger and more comfortable expressing feelings, of course, does not guarantee greater emotional intelligence or a higher emotional quotient (EQ). In contrast, uncontrolled emotions are still detrimental to life and emotional self-control is no less important today than it was in the past. However, modern education is not limited to concealing feelings, and in particular does not use methods of repressing emotional life and expression. Modern education builds upon the concept of emotional intelligence which can be defined as "the ability to accept and express emotions, processing emotions into thoughts and understanding and taking into account emotions both in ourselves as in our fellow man".[4] These abilities name-

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[3] Some psychologists mention four main forms of mental functioning, adding conscience to the above listed three (J. D. Mayer, P. Salovey, What Is emotional intelligence?, in: P. Salovey, D. Sluyter (ed.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Implications for educators*, Basic Boocks, New York, 2000, p. 397).

[4] J. D. Mayer, P. Salovey, What Is emotional intelligence?, in: P. Salovey, D. Sluyter (ed.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Implications for educators*, Basic Boocks, New York, 2000, p. 397.

ly significantly impact the attitudes and actions of a man in the process of education.

Neuropsychology teaches us that emotional functioning uses at least five brain centres. Particularly important are the following three: the thalamus, which is considered as the "reception centre" of the perceived information; the cortex, which sends the information to the brain centres that process it and are "specialized" for this purpose; the amygdala, which directs all our reactions.

Information or perception firstly reaches the thalamus, which "translates" it into the brain language and sends it forward towards the cortex which disperses it through all further interested centres. Especially most of the information related to emotional perceptions ends up in the amygdala, the centre and also a kind of an emotional storage facility. If the visual perception is emotionally strong and under the pressure of stress tends to rapid reaction, then a part of perceptual information uses a shortcut for reaching amygdala from thalamus,[5] which means that this information bypasses the cortex. In this case, the amygdala received unprocessed information, thereby sensing a "state of emergency" or an extraordinary threat. In such a case, a man reacts quickly, before he knows "why and how" is best to act. The information received by the amygdala via a shortcut cause a kind of an obsessive state and these pre-cognitive emotions force a man to an immediate reaction. Since the information is not processed, he is fast, but reckless and often inaccurate. Sometimes such emotions overwhelm us and lead to a situation, for example when we react quickly and recklessly, without knowing what we are doing.

The amygdala is also a storage of emotional memories. When we learn about reasonable behaviour, the amygdala sends emotional signals to the front cortex, where the two brain centres of two lobes are located, which serve for further processing of emotional experiences. On the basis of such processed emotional signals we make decisions and form our emotional experiences. The right anterior lobe collects signals of negative emotions, while the left frontal lobe is intended to control the negative emotions and manage and prevent their "outbursts".[6] Cooperation of these two centres thus assumes the role of a "coordinator" of emotional feelings and behaviours. Thus, the left and the right cerebral hemisphere cooperate, which is relevant to holistic learning.[7]

As a kind of storage facility of emotional memory, the amygdala often uses the experiences of the past, especially from childhood. The latter were so strongly imprinted on the mind, because they were experienced sooner

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[5]   Cf. E. Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, p. 16.

[6]   D. Goleman, *Emotionale Intelligenz*, p. 47.

[7]   Cf. E. Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, p. 14.

than we were able to speak. Thus, they remained "unprocessed" because they were never verbalized and have a stronger effect as a "defence mechanism" compared to the processed and expressed emotions.[8] We might react extremely aggressively in slightly dangerous situations, because these experiences may remind us of an unprocessed and unarticulated fear from the early childhood. The reason for over-aggressiveness is therefore not an irrational assessment of the current situation, but rather the sense that due to the possible resemblance to the negative feelings from the early childhood, we are unable to express the present emotions and neither accept nor change the current situation. In such situations we therefore react similarly as we reacted in dangerous circumstances when we were babies and when we were not yet able to speak. The only difference is that in the adolescent and adult life a man has much greater power and has more resources available during the same emotional tension.

If we connect the possibility of uncontrolled emotional outbursts as a result of short-time travel of information from the thalamus to the amygdala with the role of unprocessed and unexpressed emotional experiences from the early childhood, many of the catastrophic violent behaviours of a child, an adolescent or an adult will become more clear. It is simply the moment when the unprocessed negative emotional information overwhelms the amygdala and then – in a kind of intertwinement between fear of a baby, bestial strength and cognitive as well as technical skills – we do not know what we are doing.

The religious education, particularly regarding the emotional intelligence, has roots in the primary relationship with the mother leading back to the prenatal period. Positive self-image, which is based on pre-confidence and on a feeling that a man, even as a baby is able – not in the form of aggression, but based on the basic confidence – to overcome fears and other barriers, is a fundamental category of religious and moral education. When a mother prays for her unborn child, the baby in her womb intuitively feels her closeness and organic connection. When in her prayer she talks to God, the baby also feels her security and a feeling that she is not alone when facing problems. When in terms of love and confidence she communicates with her husband or the baby's father, the baby already feels the sense of belonging and develops a collective (family) identity. A mother, who is "all alone" for everything and feels abandoned and lonely, provides the baby inside her with different signals as a mother who feels safe, accepted and loved – both by her husband and by God. The baby senses similarly enhanced security also when the whole family cultivates a confidential relationship with God, because this religious communication gives a greater psychological stability and safety to both the baby as

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[8]   Cf. D. Goleman, *Emotionale Intelligenz*, p. 42.

well as the parents.[9] Thus healthy and profound religious communication provides a significant contribution to the better "equipment" for life.

When we teach a child about the first prayers, he or she will sense that even when parents are not around, he or she is not all alone. In this sense it is not about the fact that a child should understand everything, but rather about the fact that a child, experientially and holistically, i.e. comprehensively experiences the sense of belonging, acceptance, security and love. This way religious education at the experiential level falls within the most fundamental stones of developing a healthy self-image, providing the man throughout his whole life with proper psychological stability and necessary support in overcoming hardships and obstacles.[10]

Modern findings encourage that emotional stability is not so dependent on early childhood, as was long thought, although it is true that in particular some of the consequences of poor parenting and upbringing require complex processing.[11] But "the thematic approach and intensive work on oneself makes a man, even in adulthood, capable of repairing the relationship towards themselves and to rearrange life".[12] Undoubtedly, it is possible to work deeply on ourselves even without the religious dimension. However, modern scientists increasingly point out that religious and moral education represents important factors in all this as they encourage reflection on life through the glasses of "last sense"[13] which enables a person to regulate his/her everyday life in a reasonable manner.

Cooperation between the left and the right frontal cortex forms a specific intersection, a meeting place between sensation and cognitive thinking.[14] Emotion-related decisions are formed here. It is this "balancing" between the left and the right cerebral hemisphere that permanently transforms a man into a personality who is capable of a better and, above all, more real and meaningful living and working.[15] In the existential openness to God the holistic religious education does not require to hide the defects and inculpatory characteristics, but assumes that we express and show them in a pedagogical process, because only then we are able to also

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9   Cf. J. Musek, Psihološki, nevroznanstveni in evolucijski vidiki verskega doživljanja, in: *Informacijska družba IS 2005: Zbornik 8. mednarodne multikonference.* Inštitut Jožef Stefan, Ljubljana, 2005, p. 50.

10   Cf. M. Gams, Znanost o verovanju, in: *Informacijska družba IS 2005: Zbornik 8. mednarodne multikonference*, Inštitut Jožef Stefan, Ljubljana, 2005. p. 44.

11   Cf. E. Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, p. 23.

12   C. J. Showers, Self-Organisation in Emotional Contexts, in: Joseph P. Forges (ed.), *Feeling and Thinking: The Role of Affect in Social Cognition*, University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 284.

13   R. Coles, *The Secular Mind*, University Press, Princeton, 1999, p. 148-149.

14   Cf. D. Goleman, *Emotionale Intelligenz*, p. 48-49.

15   Cf. R. W. Firestone, *The Ethics of Interpersonal Relationships*, Karnac, London, 2009, p. 74.

accept, process and change them constructively.[16] Thus, in the educational process, we all become pupils and teachers. In this sense it is not about learning with the intention to "learn something" and then "know it", but is rather a lifestyle, which is constant and continuous learning.[17]

3. The need for new "philosophy of education"

On many scientific discoveries the developed world recognizes that the 20th century was not only the century of progress, but also contains decades of moral decay.[18] Psychological profiles of criminals dramatically point to the fact that the vast majority of cases is about a classical moral and religious deficit, a lack of moral and religious sense and responsibility. In this sense, the future, despite constantly new scientific discoveries, is unable to avoid moral and religious challenges, but the latter will be receiving increasingly greater prominence.[19] A man is in fact already cognitively and secularly too intelligent to be able to survive without "heart intelligence", which includes moral and religious education. Only a man with manners of the heart may day after day be accompanied by the feeling well, "it was good" and only a morally responsible man is able to conclude his life with a feeling well, "it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Thus it is not surprising that young people call for a redefinition of education, in fact the new "philosophy of education", in which we "are the way we are" towards one another, without any concealment and deception, while in our mutual education, each of us accepts his/her part of responsibility. Young people do not want guidance from the adults on how to live, but they long for good examples of adult life.[20] When they feel that adults are able to solve their own problems and are able to cope with own challenges, they will find the ways to solve their problems.[21]

Of course, the "new philosophy of education" assumes sensible, thorough, positive and creative communication. Neurobiology notes that every communication converts into signals in the brain,[22] which affect the

[16] Cf. I. Boban, A. Hinz, Schlüsselelemente inklusiver Pädagogik: Orientierungen zur Beantwortung der Fragen des Index für Inklusion, in: H. Knauder, et al. (ed.), *Jede/r ist willkommen! Die inklusive Schule – Theoretische Perspektiven und praktische Beispiele*, KPH, Graz, 2008, p. 60; V. Ščuka, *Šolar na poti do sebe: Oblikovanje osebnosti, Didakta*, Radovljica, 2007, p. 334-335.

[17] Cf. V. Ščuka, *Šolar na poti do sebe*, p. 370.

[18] Cf. M. Borba, *Building Moral Intelligence*, Jossey Bas, San Francisco, 2001, p. 46.

[19] Cf. R. Coles, *The Secular Mind*, p. 188-189.

[20] Cf. K. M. Adams, *Po tihem zapeljani: Ko so starši otroke naredijo za partnerje*, Modrijan, Ljubljana, 2013, p. 120.

[21] One nine-grader gave the following answer to the question what does he expect from his parents for Confirmation: "If they will manage to solve their own problems and will stop with their constant bothering me about how hard it is for them, it will be just fine".

[22] Cf. R. W. Firestone, *The Ethics of Interpersonal Relationships,* p. 78.

behaviour, which in turn initiates our communication.[23] This means that positive communication trains us for better relations, while negative and aggressive communication deprives us of those sensible communication skills, we may have already had.[24] In this context the following words of Jesus are particularly true: "Whoever has will be given more, and they will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them" (Mt 13:12).

4. Holistic integrated pedagogy

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi is considered one of the pioneers of holistic pedagogy, who has both in organizational as well as in methodological approaches fought very hard for teaching that will satisfy the "child's needs".[25] His work represents the roots of all subsequent disciplines, which are associated with the concept of holistic and integrated pedagogy and is in particularly in the German speaking area related to the formula "3H = good parenting and upbringing".[26]

Integrated holistic pedagogy includes temporal and qualitative aspect of upbringing and education. In temporal sense, it provides a lifelong upbringing and education. The quality integrated pedagogy is often mentioned in connection with some disciplines that build upon the tradition of humanistic pedagogies and psychologies and use their pedagogical principles to enforce holistic education in such a way, in which a man through a compatible intertwining and upgrading of physical, mental and spiritual dimension grows an integrative personality.[27] With the help of creative media and its methods the holistic integrated pedagogy strives towards an activation of all human senses and intelligences, while exceeding methodological techniques and working towards an enhanced restructuring of an integrated personality.[28]

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[23] Cf. J. Bauer, *Lob der Schule: Sieben Perspektiven für Schüler, Lehrer und Eltern*, Hoffmann und Campe, Hamburg, 2007, p. 15-16.

[24] Cf. J. Bauer, *Lob der Schule*, p. 37.

[25] M. Liedtke, J. Heinrich Pestalozzi, in: H. Scheuberl (ed.), *Klassiker der Pädagogik*, Beck, München, 1991, p. 186.

[26] It refers to the three German terms: **H**and + **H**erz + **H**irn (hand + heart + mind) = good education.

[27] Cf. V. Ščuka, *Šolar na poti do sebe*, p. 39.

[28] Thus, for example gestalt pedagogy as one of the disciplines of the development of the integrated pedagogy is often encountered in contexts with integrative and inclusive pedagogy (F. Feiner, H. Knauder, *Gestaltpädagogik als inklusive Pädagogik*, Zeitschrift für Integrative Gestaltpädagogik und Seelsorge, 44 (2008) p. 6-7), as well as with experiential pedagogy and biographical education (A. O. Burow, *Gestaltpadagogik: Trainingskonzepte und Wirkungen*, Junfermann, Paderborn, 1993, p. 394-395), while its educative functioning also includes the known H. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (S. Gerjolj, Howard Gardners Theorie über multiple Intelligenz und ihre praktische Appli-

Integrated pedagogy, which also includes experiential dimension of education and learning, was developed in the mid-seventies, drawing from the humanistic pedagogy.[29] In relation to the school systems and the teacher education, the educators took the integrated character education and teaching into consideration which was inadequate. The educators, who have had good experience with some psychotherapeutic approaches, began to think about how these concepts and methods could be applied to their profession. They thought it was a pity to use them only for treatment, but not for the development of personality and personal competences in education.[30] It is a fundamental recognition that pupils and students are not "untarnished" with negative and painful experience and sentient curative processes are therefore desirable, in conjunction with the established methods of preventive education, which on one hand "clean" the past, while seeking the necessary resources for motivated learning and education in the present and for the future. Thus, the entire pedagogy is based on the belief that a man by nature tends to overstep or expand his existing boundaries (internally and externally) to be able to grow personally and to be able to realize himself in a reasonable way[31]. It is therefore a pedagogy that arises from a person, so the learning content is only meaningful in contact with the pupil, taking into account his biography and integrated image.[32] The role of the teacher is not so much in "teaching" as it is in the empathic and sensible monitoring of the pupil and the related ability of arousing the interest or activating the intrinsic motivation.[33] This is especially true in modern times when a load of information is available to the educands, while the problems arise in their integration and making sense of it. Thus, integrated pedagogy is not targeted in terms of conventional teaching methods, but it is a process-oriented educational activity that awakens the teaching impulses and educationally reacts to them.[34] A teacher, a pupil, the content, the objectives and the methods shape a specific didactic or pedagogical square, in which the roles of individual elements are equally divided, while the teacher sensitively monitors the teaching process and runs a learning dynamics of the

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kation: Ein Weg des ganzheitlichen Lernens im Sinne der inklusiven Pädagogik, in: H. Knauder, et al. (ed.), *Jede/r ist willkommen! Die inklusive Schule: Theoretische Perspektiven und praktische Beispiele*, KPH, Graz, 2008).

[29] Cf. G. Fatzer, *Ganzheitliches Lernen: Humanistische Pädagogik und Organisationsentwicklung*, Junfermann, Paderborn, 1993, p. 9.

[30] Cf. C. Hofmann, Gestaltpädagogik, in: O. A. Burow, H. Gudjons (ed.), *Gestaltpädagogik in der Schule*, Bergamann und Helbig, Hamburg, 1998, p. 37.

[31] Cf. V. Ščuka, *Šolar na poti do sebe*, p. 111-112.

[32] Cf. S. Gerjolj, Geštalt pedagogika kot celostna pedagogika, in: P. Javrh (ed.), *Vseživljenjsko učenje in strokovno izrazje*, Pedagoški inštitut, Ljubljana, 2008, p. 145.

[33] Cf. V. Ščuka, *Šolar na poti do sebe*, p. 274.

[34] Cf. A. Höfer, *Heile unsere Liebe: Ein gestaltpädagogisches Lese- und Arbeitsbuch*. Don Bosco, München, 1997, p. 90.

group.[35] Personality defects and vulnerabilities are therefore more a help then an obstacle for the teacher. It is important, however, that during the educational process we awake the resources of power (pedagogical eros) in ourselves and educands which are necessary for optimal education.[36]

Integrated education is also holistic because it does not end with the end of formal learning process, but continues spontaneously and profoundly. In particular, actualization of emotional experience continues its path of processing at the conscious and unconscious level, and also often especially in sleep.[37] Thus, learning processes of integrated pedagogy systematically also include rest and dreams, which serve as consolidation of emotional memories.[38] In this context, holistic education also comprises both conscious as well as unconscious level of processing of information and experience, while regularly involving both brain hemispheres into its processes.

The learning process is therefore often interwoven between "feeling" and "knowing" in the cognitive sense. The art of religious education certainly has – especially in the period of adolescents growing up – its roots in "feeling". Right after children and adolescents "feel themselves", they are also willing to listen. Therefore, the experiential pedagogy is of key importance for the religious formation. It may consist of several levels and several didactic approaches.

Various forms of meditation and imaginative visualizations are very suitable as points of entry, which relate to the lives of children or adolescents. These enable them to "watch" themselves in concrete situations of life, where at a later time unobtrusively comes God as their companion and Saviour.

The next level of experiential pedagogic communication represents non-verbal confession of a heard content where drawing is one of the most effective methods of teaching. The images of a man are the most attractive and a man is the most comprehensively expressed through them. "Human thinking loves patterns, images, colours. Thus, a person can, from the seeming chaos, create wonderful connections and forms in his imagination and intuitively create and express a new reality".[39]

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[35] Cf. A. Höfer, K. Steiner, *Handbuch der Integrativen Gestaltpädagogik und Seelsorge, Beratung und Supervision*, Werdenfels, 2004, p. 16.

[36] Cf. A. Höfer, K. Steiner, *Handbuch der Integrativen Gestaltpädagogik und Seelsorge*, p. 19-20.

[37] Cf. D. J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, The Guilford Press, New York – London, 1999, p. 332.

[38] Cf. J. L. McHaugh, *Memory and Emotion: The Making of Lasting Memories*. University Press, New York – Columbia, 2003, p. 80; S. Gerjolj, *Živeti, delati, ljubiti*, Mohorjeva družba, Celje, 2009, p. 128-129.

[39] D. Lazear, *Seven ways of knowing: Teaching for Multiple Inteligences*, IRI, Arlington Heights/Illinois, 1991, p. 52.

Only then verbalized confession comes in. While drawing predominantly activates the right hemispheric centres, a verbal interpretation of a drawing and confession takes place via the left half of the brain.[40] The climate of a prayer is almost automatically created in the verbalization of the "products". With a little skill we create an environment where young people feel the need for prayer. Thus, each verbalized confession can be concluded with spontaneous requests or acknowledgements, to which we add the usual call "please hear our prayers" or "Thank God". However, very often the author of a confession wishes for a certain common final prayer or a song.

The experiential dimension of religious learning and teaching can first be seen in the confession, and then also in the emotional solidarity that is built upon a positive religious communication. Only after such an adventurous and narrative unit and positive communication a theological proclamation comes in. Informally, it was already received by the adolescents, while its formalization serves to form it and forward it by integrating it into their own experiences. In these cases they often come to the traditional "aha-knowledge". We often meet some kind of an "ambivalent tension" in young people, in which young people sometimes consciously love and unconsciously hate God, but sometimes the opposite, they unconsciously or intuitively love and "consciously hate".[41] The mentioned "aha - knowledge" comes in moments when, in connection to the concrete events, they unconsciously or intuitively fall in love with God. In connection to the emotional intelligence where young people reflect their problems and challenges under the aspect of the "last sense", precisely religious intelligence puts life upon "new foundations".

The holistic, integrated and experiential pedagogy represents a point of entry for the Christian proclamation, as on this basis it functions concretely and redemptive. It is not necessary that every religious learning process is designed highly experientially, since children and young people will know how to place the announcement into their own experience through occasional but sufficiently intense and profound holistic approaches. But it is of course a good thing that the communication announcement is intertwined with teaching methods that go beyond the cognitive learning. Dramatization, role playing, use of manual skills, drawing and sculpting and expressive dances, especially body language, are excellent opportunities to exercise the holistic elements in the religious education which addresses a young man incomparably deeper and more existentially than cognitive learning and teaching.

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[40] Cf. K. Hadolt, Risanje kot pomoč pri reševanju konfliktov v skupini, in: S. Gerjolj, M. Stanonik, M. Kastelec (ed.), *Geštalt pedagogika nekoč in danes*, Društvo za krščansko gestalt pedagogiko, Ljubljana, 2011, p. 82.

[41] E. Ringel, A. Kirchmayr, *Religionsverlust durch religiöse Erziehung: Tiefenpsychologische Ursachen und Folgerungen*, Herder, Wien – Freiburg – Basel, 1986, p. 30.

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BEAUTY OF VISUAL ART AS A PATHWAY TOWARDS GOD

Abstract

Beauty and art are supposed to help a human being to open his/her deeper sight and to interpret the world and his life by pointing to the depth of his/her existence. Consequently, looking for the sense of life, and slowly responding to this sense one becomes able to find something beyond visible signs. The author of this article seeks to answer the questions: Can beauty be helpful to discover God and fulfil the aims and tasks of Religious Educations? Do the symbols and images call for a new reception? Is Beauty the gate or pathway for spiritual experience for a human being living in 21ˢᵗ Century in the postmodern context? What is the relationship between faith (understood as an existential experience, cultural fact, personal experience and the point of reference for a community) and beauty? What type of pedagogy, language and ways do we need to use to present God to contemporary human beings?

Key words: *Theology of beauty, visual art, meaning of life, Religious Education.*

Introduction

In his *Letter to Artists* Pope John Paul II describes the dynamic nature of beauty starting with the quote of Polish poet: "Cyprian Norwid, wrote that *beauty is to enthuse us for work, and work is to raise us up.* The theme of beauty is decisive for a discourse on art. It was already present when I stressed God's delighted gaze upon creation. In perceiving that all he had created was good, God saw that it was beautiful as well. The link between good and beautiful stirs fruitful reflection. In a certain sense, beauty is the visible form of the good, just as the good is the metaphysical condition of beauty. This was well understood by the Greeks who, by fusing the two concepts, coined a term which embraces both: kalokagathía, or beauty-goodness. On this point Plato writes: *The power of the Good has taken refuge in the nature of the Beautiful.* It is in living and acting that man establishes his relationship with being, with the truth and with the good. The artist has a special relationship to beauty. In a very true sense

it can be said that beauty is the vocation bestowed on him by the Creator in the gift of "artistic talent". And, certainly, this too is a talent which ought to be made to bear fruit, in keeping with the sense of the Gospel parable of the talents (cf. *Mt* 25:14-30)" (*Letter to Artists,* 3). This sentence written by Norwid, very well known in Poland, is a good starting point to reflect on beauty and faith. If someone is able to see beauty he is probably able to see more, to see Someone, who is behind the beauty. This is the essential point that we touch upon: that art is supposed to help a human being to open his/her deeper sight and to interpret the world and his life by pointing to the depth of his/her existence. Thanks to art, every person is encouraged to search for hope, love and the sense of life. Consequently, looking for the sense of life, and slowly responding to this sense one becomes able to find the invisible God. A human being needs not only the word, but also visible signs and symbols[1]. John Paul II understood very well that in today's rapidly changing society a person needs a new epiphany and new ways to the mystery of God.

This seems especially important in the 21st Century in the European and North American context, where we experience extensive secularization and a disconnection of many people from their religious tradition (except Islam). Many people still call themselves Christian, but they remain rather nominal Christians, or they believe without belonging to any Christian denomination[2]. This raises many questions: how can a child, growing up in the secularised, consumer, postmodern reality, fascinated with contemporary culture, communication technology and a multitude of choices discover the invisible God? In what way can a youngster be able to see and follow Someone who is so strongly eliminated from the mainstream media? How an adult can see the value of being acquainted with God? What is the relationship between faith (understood as an existential experience, cultural fact, personal experience and the point of reference for a community) and beauty? What type of pedagogy, language and ways do we need to use to present God to contemporary human beings? All these questions need us to respond with in-depth answers.

We also have to remember that various kinds of Religious education, Religion studies, Spiritual or Moral education dimensions in the school curriculum have evolved so much that they are concentrating more on presenting knowledge than supporting faith. They have developed from the notion of educating young people in world religions, cultures, and tra-

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[1] Cf. W. Kawecki, *Theology of Beauty. Looking for* locus theologicus *in contemporary culture*, Poznań, 2013, p. 43.

[2] Cf. G. Rossiter, *Understanding the changing landscape of contemporary spirituality: A useful starting point for reviewing Catholic school religious education*, The Person and the Challenges, 3 (2013) 1, p. 157-179.

ditions with respect to spiritual and moral dimensions to life[3]. With these developments taken into account, RE has still tended to remain relatively traditional covering the descriptions of religions, even though there have been some approaches that have focused more on personal development[4].

Through the lens of the visual art, it is possible to interpret the psychological and sociological dynamics of people's engagement with postmodern culture. Christianity has been reflected in art, artefacts, rituals and religious practices. In an interesting way, the approach is educative both with respect to traditional religious spirituality as well as to contemporary, eclectic, individualistic, subjective spirituality[5].

Taking into consideration the present context we may ask the next questions: can beauty be helpful to discover God and fulfil the aims and tasks of Religious educations? Do the symbols and images, which were painted on walls and ceilings in the Christian catacombs, in the first centuries, call for a new reception? Are they the only decoration of burial chambers, simply images depicting stories from the Bible or from the life of Christians; or do they express the faith of ancient Christians, passing on the message to contemporary Christians? The questions raised above will now be explored through the teaching of the Church, Tradition and human experiences on our journey with God.

Being a lay woman, catechist, teacher trainer, Pastoral Theologian and just a person with a special interest in art and history, I have decided to search for a new pathway towards God, which reflects the actual circumstances and challenges, and which, at the same time, portrays authentic artistic and Christian convention from the first centuries. Authentic art is one of the ways into religious experiences, because when a person faces beauty, he/she is stimulated to open himself/herself to the much broader perspectives, to react in a personal way to the content and form of art, and to ask himself/herself fundamental, existential questions. Beauty and art surpass the simple, aesthetic sense and refer to the transcendence. It is possible to say, that art may be a perfect way of catechising and evangelising children and youngsters within, but also outside the Church.

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[3] Cf. M. Crawford, G. Rossiter, *Reasons for living: Education and young people's search for meaning, identity and spirituality. A Handbook*, Melbourne, 2006.

[4] Cf. M. H. Grimmitt, *Religious education and human development: The relationship between studying religions and personal social and moral education*, Great Wakering 1987; M. H. Grimmitt (Ed.), *Pedagogies of religious education*, Great Wakering, 2000; E. Osewska, J. Stala, *Die katholische Schule zu Beginn des XXI. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel Polens und Englands*, Warsaw, 2015; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Anders erziehen in Polen. Der Erziehungs- und Bildungsbegriff im Kontext eines sich ständig verändernden Europas des XXI. Jahrhunderts*, Tarnów 2009; *Religious Education / Catechesis in the Family. A European Perspective*, ed. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Warsaw, 2010.

[5] Cf. G. Rossiter, *Understanding the changing landscape of contemporary spirituality* p. 157-179; P. Hughes, *Putting life together: Findings from Australian youth spirituality research*, Fairfield, 2007.

In order to respond to the given questions we need to go back to the Church's history and refer to the history of Christian art, especially to the origin and development in the first centuries. Very quickly, after the death of Jesus, his followers, especially apostles were transmitting Jesus's oral teaching and creating the first Church communities. Slowly the visual elements started to be considered important to express and deepen Christian faith, as well as to identify the followers of Jesus. Christian art was created and developed gradually since the second century in the Mediterranean and originally referred to the Late-antique art. Its development can be divided into two periods: before and after the Edict of Milan in 313, which recognized Christianity as the official religion. Slowly, Early Christian art developed in different provinces of the Roman Empire.

"The art which Christianity encountered in its early days was the ripe fruit of the classical world, articulating its aesthetic canons and embodying its values. Not only in their way of living and thinking, but also in the field of art, faith obliged Christians to a discernment which did not allow an uncritical acceptance of this heritage. Art of Christian inspiration began therefore in a minor key, strictly tied to the need for believers to contrive Scripture-based signs to express both the mysteries of faith and *a symbolic code* by which they could distinguish and identify themselves, especially in the difficult times of persecution. Who does not recall the symbols which marked the first appearance of an art both pictorial and plastic? The fish, the loaves, the shepherd: in evoking the mystery, they became almost imperceptibly the first traces of a new art. When the Edict of Constantine allowed Christians to declare themselves in full freedom, art became a privileged means for the expression of faith. Majestic basilicas began to appear, and in them the architectural canons of the pagan world were reproduced and at the same time modified to meet the demands of the new form of worship" (*Letter to Artists,* 7).

1. Beauty and theology

If we look at Church history we see been fundamental changes in spirituality since the first century and yet a certain similarity. Human beings are the same across history, drawing on culture to help them make sense of the world they live in and of their own experience. They need some sort of meaning or values to serve as a moral compass and to help them articulate their goals and aspirations for life. In the first centuries not only the witnesses of Jesus from Nazareth and His words, but also visual signs made a significant impact on people's understanding of life and their faith. First Christians were mostly illiterate, so they received their faith trough the stories about Jesus and very simple visual art.

In the 21st Century visual elements are important for the construction of meaning and purpose in life for both religious and non-religious peo-

ple[6]. Postmodern culture is more and more connected with visual imagery and access to ICT. Today, people living in Europe and North America cannot escape from the presence of so many visual signs, mostly connected with the consumer lifestyle. Contrasting the ways people in these two periods related to the visual aspects of their culture will show up significant differences in the focus, emphasis, beliefs, values and presumptions about life and the spiritual dimension.

So firstly, let us have a look at theology. It seems that one of the possible directions of developing theology is discovering faith through the category of beauty. Theologians should remember that their work expresses the dynamic inscribed into faith itself, and that the real object of his quest is the truth, Living God and His intention of salvation, revealed in Jesus Christ.

"This prime epiphany of *God who is Mystery* is both an encouragement and a challenge to Christians, also at the level of artistic creativity. From it has come a flowering of beauty which has drawn its sap precisely from the mystery of the Incarnation. In becoming man, the Son of God has introduced into human history all the evangelical wealth of the true and the good, and with this he has also unveiled a new dimension of beauty, of which the Gospel message is filled to the brim. Sacred Scripture has thus become a sort of 'immense vocabulary' (Paul Claudel) and 'iconographic atlas' (Marc Chagall), from which both Christian culture and art have drawn. The Old Testament, read in the light of the New, has provided endless streams of inspiration. From the stories of the Creation and sin, the Flood, the cycle of the Patriarchs, the events of the Exodus to so many other episodes and characters in the history of salvation, the biblical text has fired the imagination of painters, poets, musicians, playwrights and film-makers. A figure like Job, to take but one example, with his searing and ever relevant question of suffering, still arouses an interest which is not just philosophical but literary and artistic as well. And what should we say of the New Testament? From the Nativity to Golgotha, from the Transfiguration to the Resurrection, from the miracles to the teachings of Christ, and on to the events recounted in the Acts of the Apostles or foreseen by the Apocalypse in an eschatological key, on countless occasions the biblical word has become image, music and poetry, evoking the mystery of 'the Word made flesh' in the language of art" (*Letter to Artists,* 5). Even living in the postmodern age we can go towards this truth, e.g. via

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[6] Cf. M. Crawford, G. Rossiter, *Reasons for living.* J. Stala, *Die Polen angesichts der Umbrüche im politischen und gesellschaftlichen Bereich. Ein Vierteljahrhundert nach der Unabhängigkeit Polens*, The Person and the Challenges, 5 (2015) 1, p. 191-199; J. Stala, *Katechese im Zeitalter der Postmoderne. "Grundsatzprogramm für die Katechese der Kirche in Polen" aus dem Jahr 2010*, Bogoslovni vestnik, 74 (2014) 1, p. 107-117.

pulchritudinis – the way of beauty[7]. For many contemporary people visual art in virtual space provide an important means of expressing oneself[8].

The beauty of God is not only an aesthetic but also an ontological category which reveals God, who allows us to know him through the artistic means of expression in order to be with us. We also remember that in the Western European culture beauty is recognized as one of *transcendentalia,* because it surpasses the boundaries of categories (substance, quality, quantity, relation, etc.). From this perspective, beauty is the one of being and a spiritual category. A human being needs and searches for beauty understood in this way; the evidence for it is the whole spiritual and material culture. In this sense, beauty is God's name. God is the fullness of beauty, in the inseparable ontological and personal sense.

In looking for the faith by means of the beauty, we need to remember the truth that God, being Almighty, possesses all kinds of perfection, including beauty, in the utmost degree. God is beauty and so allows us to take part in His own beauty. It is even possible to say, that without God, beauty does not exist, because beauty is deeply rooted in Him. In the Bible, we find some verses that present the beauty of God (Ps 27:4; Ps 90:17). Theology tries to highlight all the attributes of God including beauty. On the other hand, through the act of creating the universe and human beings, we can see beauty belonging to God's creative act. Every man and woman is reflecting the beauty of God, but His Son Jesus Christ is the only perfect image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Jesus's incarnation was the most beautiful epiphany of love. Through His incarnation God has become audible and visible. It can be assumed that the *inner interchangeability* of the word and image occurs in Jesus Christ, which is confirmed by Christological Titles: *Logos*-Word and *Eikon*-Image[9].

Special attention shall be given to the beauty development in the relation to the personal reality of human. Beauty is the reality in relation to a person, building up the reality itself, expressing the essential and existential perfection, building up another world, i.e. the continuation of the creation process. Beauty is not able to exist without the person. Beauty

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[7]   Cf. W. Kawecki, *Theology of Beauty. Looking for* locus theologicus *in contemporary culture*, Poznań, 2013, p. 52-58.

[8]   Cf. *Ibidem.*

[9]   Cf. J. Królikowski, *Widzialne słowo. Teologia w sztuce* [*Visible Word. Theology in Arts*], Tarnów, 2009; W. Kawecki, *Teologia wobec kultury wizualnej* [*Theology vs. Visual Culture*], in: *Miejsca teologiczne w kulturze wizualnej*, Kraków – Warsaw, 2013, p. 15-29; *Kultura wizualna – teologia wizualna*, ed. W. Kawecki, J.S. Wojciechowski, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Warsaw, 2011; J. Stala, *Punina postojanja osobe – civilizacija ljubavi u kontekstu postmoderne*, Crkva u svijetu, 50 (2015) 3, p. 469-477; J. Stala, *Die Polen angesichts,* p. 191-199; J. Stala, *Katechese im Zeitalter der Postmoderne,* p. 107-117.

in God exists in persons, as well. Within the Holy Trinity, the persons are delighted by one another[10].

One of the significant elements given through the theology of beauty, that is gradually deepened, is the understanding that beauty is a fundamental category of theology. Talking about beauty existing in the world means also reference to the Holy Trinity, who is the source of beauty. Through the theology of beauty the Church explains, in todays' language, the truth of God. In order to communicate the message entrusted to Church by Jesus Christ, the Church needs visual signs, gestures, symbols and art. Beauty has the capacity to take one or another facet of the message and translate it into forms, figures, colours, shapes.

In addition to portraying knowledge about the mystery of Jesus Christ, Christian art allows the believer entry into the mystery of creation, redemption and sanctification. Thanks to Christian art, the believer is able to get intellectual and aesthetic impulses, but, above all, a chance to recognise God as the eternal beauty and glory. There are so many examples of art presenting Jesus Christ in various ways, but many of the pictures from the first centuries are still having direct or almost direct connection with the living Jesus. So, besides the aesthetic perspective, we also have to remember about the notion of the glory and holiness of God. Some theologians remind that in the biblical language the word 'beauty' means 'glory'. Some Hebrew and Greek terms directly translate the connection between beauty and glory of God.

2. The way of beauty

Looking for new ways to God, the Pontifical Council for Culture suggested the 'way of beauty', as both an effective means of evangelization and also of dialogue with a religious, indifferent and non-believers. Discussing transmitting the faith to various cultures, pointed to the urgent problem of evangelization: "The Church accomplishes her mission of leading people to Christ the Saviour by sharing the Word of God and the gift of the sacraments of Grace. In order to reach people with an apt *pastoral approach to culture*, in the light of Christ contemplated in the mystery of the Incarnation (*GS* 22), the Church examines the *signs of the times* and draws pointers from them to develop "bridges" which lead to a meeting with the God of Jesus Christ through an itinerary of friendship in a dialogue of truth… Beginning with the simple experience of the marvel-arousing meeting with beauty, the *via pulchritudinis* can open the pathway for the search for God, and disposes the heart and spirit to meet Christ, who is the Beauty of Holiness Incarnate, offered by God to men

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[10]   Cf. W. Kawecki, *Theology of Beauty*, p. 54-56.

for their salvation" (*The Via Pulchritudinis, Privileged Pathway for Evangelisation and Dialogue* II.1.)

The *via pulchritudinis* is considered as a way, that may touch people's hearts, a pathway for people who already know beauty, but search for something more beyond beauty and art. Through the beauty of nature and arts, every man and woman is able to admire a direct creator, but can also get to know the First Creator ontologically. Focusing on beauty may lead a person to the moment, in which the act of admiration will become a religious and mystical act[11]. Beauty is the gate for spiritual experience.

The Pontifical Council for Culture shows three dimensions of the beauty: the beauty of the creation, the beauty of art and the beauty of Jesus Christ. Even in the age of ICT, nature is still regarded as the source of all beauty. Many people see in nature and in the universe just the visible, empty materiality, the source of their needs and pleasures. So to avoid the risks of reducing it to ecological or a pantheistic vision, Religious Education may help the young generation to be more sensitive to the nature and be a better observer of the process going in the surrounding world. The second dimension refers to the beauty of art. If beauty is to speak to the 21st Century generations, especially the young ones, they need to learn the language of emotion, admiration and appreciation. With the language of beauty, works of art may not only transmit the message of the artist, but also the mystery of God. Art makes sense, since it is not confined to aesthetic beauty, but it refers to the transcendent.

But "the absolutely original and singular beauty of Christ, *model of a truly beautiful life*, is reflected in the holiness of a life transformed by Grace. Unfortunately, many people perceive Christianity as a submission to commandments made up of prohibitions and limits applied to personal liberty... The joy of being Christian is beauty, and it is right to believe it." (*The Via Pulchritudinis* III.3.A.) Therefore, simple signs and symbols of Jesus Christ are depicted in early Christian art. To spread the message of salvation, Christianity created a vivid language of images. This developing trend is called Christo-morphism, because is representing God by means of Jesus Christ: *Who sees me, sees my Father, too* (Jhn 14:9). In the first centuries, Christians treated the catacombs as an environment and space for presenting visual signs, paintings and other items depicting Jesus Christ. The new message emerged through the very simple pictures, drawings or sketches. These simple catacomb paintings of Jesus Christ are still relevant to contemporary Religious Education. The message is highlighted in its purposes, functions and content, especially indicating

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[11] Cf. J. Królikowski, Zobaczyć wiarę. Obraz i doświadczenie wiary w Kościele [To See Faith. The Image and Experience of Faith in the Church], in: *Wierzyć i widzieć*, ed. K. Flander, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasio, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J. S. Wojciechowski, M. Wrześniak, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Sandomierz, 2013, p. 127-129.

that the image helps awaken and strengthen Christian faith. Thus, it fulfils the principle of faithfulness to God and man. Through the perception of the content of Christological paintings and symbols in the catacombs, even today's believer is able to recall or discover Jesus Christ's passion, death and resurrection, His acts and preaching, and then form attitudes consistent with the Gospel. "Confirming his words by miracles and by his resurrection from the dead, Christ proclaimed himself to be the Son of God dwelling in intimate union with the Father, and was recognized as such by his disciples. The Church offers mankind the Gospel, that prophetic message which responds to the needs and aspirations of the human heart and always remains *Good News*. The Church cannot fail to proclaim that Jesus came to reveal the face of God and to merit salvation for all humanity by his cross and resurrection" (*Redemptoris Missio* 11). The beauty of life of Jesus Christ is a direct calling to those who search for the meaning of life, for values, for something invisible, but Holy, for the Truth above other truths and Overwhelming Love. If they find this Beauty they also find the power of new life in a distressed world.

3. Beauty and the meaning of life

The works of religious art in early and medieval Church were presenting the religious story via signs and symbols, so they helped followers of Jesus Christ, Christians, to receive their religious cues from them. Art also reminded people of their shared Christian beliefs, Tradition and community. The religious communities reinforced the social, political, cultural and religious stratification of society. Everyone had their place from birth – their station in life; and relatively few could change their position in that network. The visual religious art called on the faithful to reflect on their special place in the divine universe and in the Christian Church. This pointed them towards a deeper meaning to life beyond its surface[12].

While the images to which people are exposed today include much that is informative and educational, here, attention is given only to the imagery concerned with lifestyle. Because it looks towards the potential problems with excessive and naïve responses to meaning-making imagery, this analysis can appear negative and biased. A contemporary human is more surrounded by signs related to the everyday life than a religious one. Today's visual imagery appeals rather to individuals and his/her subjective preferences that are highly prized. But at the same time, 21st century people want to feel connected with the group / elite / celebrities

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[12] Cf. G. Rossiter, Decoding the iconography of contemporary lifestyle: Uncovering and evaluating the spirituality in consumerist culture Part 2. Contrasting the mise-en-scène of medieval Christian spirituality with that of contemporary consumerist lifestyle: Sociological and educational implications, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa, 2014, p. 151-188.

that identify themselves through certain brands they share and present the higher status in society, and cachet that goes with these brands. Very often, young people think that the 'success' of their identity is measured by the labels of what they possess. Consumerism, as reflected in media iconography, conditions them to seek the visual attribute of 'high society'. So the search for 'Transcendence' is often replaced by 'personal exhilaration'[13].

Every man and woman, even in contemporary society is faced with questions about the meaning of his/her life, the aim of his/her activity, the end of life or possibility of eternal life. The issue of meaning of life, for the individual and also in a social perspective, is the human experience and the driving force of human activity[14]. From this perspective, visual imagery and art can have a significant shaping influence on people, even if they act sometimes unconsciously. According to G. Rossiter there are two factors that are highly influential on people's response to the search for meaning of life: the human need to *feel good* and for a *sense of belonging.* In mainstream media, young people see celebrities in branded clothing and so, almost unconsciously want to feel good just by following that new trend. The 'Feel good' factor and the sense of belonging are associated; the first one helps the individual feels comfortable in private situations whilst the second helps in the public sphere. While Christianity provides young people with the response to questions about meaning for life, some still feel, that they need to construct a DIY (Do It Yourself) system of personal meaning[15]. Lack of balance in the pursuit of feeling-good and sense of belonging can generate unhappiness which, in turn, fuels the pathology.

The postmodern visual art and ICT imagery often projects possibilities for life. Some people try to evaluate the visual culture, but others are just slavish conformists living in the illusion of personal freedom. In this context, an important purpose of Religious Education is to help young people *stop and pay more attention* to the visual media imagery that are being offered for consumption[16].

In this age of visual art, mostly presented through a computer icons and computerized pictures, it can be a good idea to go back to the everyday sights which, in Christianity, received a new liturgical function connected with the history of salvation. Simple signs, such as water, wine, grapes,

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[13] Cf. Rossiter, Decoding the iconography of contemporary lifestyle, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa, 2014, p. 154-155.

[14] Cf. W. Kawecki, *Theology of Beauty*, p. 92.

[15] Cf. M. Crawford, G. Rossiter, *Reasons for living*, p. 215.

[16] Cf. G. Rossiter, Decoding the iconography of contemporary lifestyle, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa, 2014, p. 187; E. Osewska, L'educazione oggi in un Europa diversificata, in: *Europa, scuola, religioni. Monoteismi e confessioni cristiane per una nuova cittadinanza europea*, ed. F. Pajer, Torino, 2005, p. 47-64.

bread, food, light, darkness, the lamb or fish can seldom be viewed as only literal but communicate the deeper, hidden meaning: the truth about salvation in a mystical way. These signs and symbols, found in catacombs, reminded Christians of the history of salvation. Simple sketches and paintings carry their own theological meaning. This approach is very fruitful also for contemporary education, both for the teacher and the pupil. The natural signs may be potentially very influential, but they have to be treated not just as products, but as culturally and socially important processes and mediators, which helps children and youngsters to find meaning in life, in an increasingly secularized, post-modern society.

Focusing on the beauty of the surrounding visual signs may lead a child or youth to the moment, in which the act of admiration will become a spiritual one. The special nature of arts consists in that visual beauty refers to the human ability to see[17]. The experience of faith arises from listening to the word, but also from looking at God's work. For a person who lives in a postmodern society, reason is no longer *capax Dei,* so we need to search for new ways.

4. Beauty and virtues

Beauty is the theological object, based on the mystery of God's existence; but it is also connected with the complex human reality: processing sensory inputs, attention, thinking, feelings and imagination. From this perspective, beauty may be associated with the theological virtues of faith, love and hope.

Pope Benedict XVI regarded the present individualism as a sign of loosening not only social ties among its members, but also virtues: "Day by day, man experiences many greater or lesser hopes, different in kind according to the different periods of his life. Sometimes one of these hopes may appear to be totally satisfying without any need for other hopes. Young people can have the hope of a great and fully satisfying love; the hope of a certain position in their profession, or of some success that will prove decisive for the rest of their lives. When these hopes are fulfilled, however, it becomes clear that they were not, in reality, the whole. It becomes evident that man has need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for him, something that will always be more than he can ever attain. In this regard our contemporary age has developed the hope of creating a perfect world that, thanks to scientific knowledge and to scientifically based politics, seemed to be achievable. Thus Biblical hope in the Kingdom of God has been dis-

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[17] Cf. J. Królikowski, Zobaczyć wiarę, in: *Wierzyć i widzieć*, ed. K. Flander, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasio, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J. S. Wojciechowski, M. Wrześniak, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Sandomierz, 2013, p. 127-129.

placed by hope in the kingdom of man, the hope of a better world which would be the real 'Kingdom of God". This seemed at last to be the great and realistic hope that man needs. It was capable of galvanizing – for a time-all man's energies. The great objective seemed worthy of full commitment. In the course of time, however, it has become clear that this hope is constantly receding. Above all it has become apparent that this may be a hope for a future generation, but not for me" (*Spe Salvi* 30).

A human being is oriented towards hope, so losing hope means also losing the meaning of life, like in the case of depression when someone hopes for closeness and total acceptance, but in not fulfilling this hope tends forgets about everything and does not know how to live and trust others. The real life of every Christian is the vocation to hope and the hope of eternal life (Tts 1:2). Followers of Jesus Christ hope, because they trust the Master from Nazareth, who offers up Himself as the salvation, resurrection and life. In Jesus Christ, God makes Himself the hope to a human being. Through His suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and the paschal victory of life over death, Jesus Christ brought hope to every man and woman.

In the documents, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council highlighted the value of art and virtues in human life: "This world … in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. Beauty, like truth, brings joy to the human heart and is that precious fruit which resists the erosion of time, which unites generations and enables them to be one in admiration!" (*Gaudium et Spes* 19). The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* reminds of the relationship of the Church towards art and, referring more specifically to sacred art, the "summit" of religious art, did not hesitate to consider artists as having "a noble ministry" when their works reflect in some way the infinite beauty of God and raise people's minds to him (20).

The Church needs art, so the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God, can be translated into meaningful terms that are in themselves ineffable. The faith of Christians can be nourished by art, literature, music and architecture. However, even art needs the Church, because artists are people, who search for the hidden meaning of things and Christianity gives artists deep inspiration. Pope John Paul II in his *Letter to Artists* said: "I turn to you, the artists of the world, to assure you of my esteem and to help consolidate a more constructive partnership between art and the Church. Mine is an invitation to rediscover the depth of the spiritual and religious dimension which has been typical of art in its noblest forms in every age. It is with this in mind that I appeal to you, artists of the written and spoken word, of the theatre and music, of the plastic arts and the most recent technologies in the field of communication. I appeal especially to you, Christian artists: I wish to remind each of you that, beyond functional considerations, the close alliance that has always existed between

the Gospel and art means that you are invited to use your creative intuition to enter into the heart of the mystery of the Incarnate God and at the same time into the mystery of man" (*Letter to Artists* 14).

Since Second Vatican Council there has been a renewed emphasis on the relationship between the Church and art, which has been long present in teaching in Catholic schools and an impressive number of books, articles and websites. Ironically, very often, schools kill this relationship mainly by operating from a partial and incomplete understanding of the nature and function of human being, intelligence and education. The educational systems are heavily influenced by Enlightenment thinking and tend to promote a restricted view of knowledge and intelligence that is dominated by deductive reasoning[18]. Thus, Catholic schools may have diversified approaches to beauty and art, yet, having the responsibility and task to prepare new generations for the future, must help pupils to discover the invisible God via visible art. Not only sacred art, but real art can be the way to touch children and youngsters awakening initial faith and nourishing it day by day to its fullness.

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A systematically developed relationship between beauty and spirituality stimulates and supports human's functioning. Moreover, it enables one to achieve full maturity. Thanks to art, every person is encouraged to search for hope, love and the sense of life. Consequently, looking for the sense of life and slowly responding to this sense enable us to find the invisible God. So, beauty is a pathway towards God. The author hopes, that education, and religious education, in particular, can help in developing this pathway for young people so that they can better interpret and evaluate the visual sights, learning how it can affect their meaning, identity and values. The author also believes that this article can contribute to further research in approaching beauty as the pathway towards God.

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[18] Cf. P. Kieran, Divine Creativity and the Creative Art of Catechesis, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa, 2014, p. 94-98.

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FLUID AND FRAGILE, OR IN BETWEEN: CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN CRISIS?

Perspectives from Pastoral Psychology

Abstract

To be alive means to struggle with and to balance between identity and difference. In today's society this process seems to be even more difficult and risky for the individual. The rise of 'identitarian' political movements indicates that the question of identity has not yet passed its zenith. Young adults still struggle to find their place in society while figuring out their norms and values. Pastoral Theology and Religious Education need to understand how people construct their identity, whether and how this implies religiousness and religious values. Since identity is a psychological term, the viewpoint of Pastoral Psychology is relevant. Narrativity and aestheticization have emerged as two broader directions regarding conceptualization of identity during the last decade.

In this article, two models of identity construction will be presented: the social psychological model of procedural identity (Keupp et al. 2006) and a model of identity as a process of formation (Pirker 2013) which summarizes various theoretical and empirical identity theories from different backgrounds. From there on, the connection between religion and identity as of inner religiousness and exterior ties will be discussed and related to research projects in Psychology of Religion (Verhoeven/ Hutsebaut 1995; Zehnder Grob /Morgenthaler 2013). The proposed contemporary metaphor of identity as fluid and fragile contains psychological, anthropological and theological sensitivity. Within this framework, the current processes of narrativity and aestheticization will become better understandable for matters of Religious Education.

Key words: *identity; identity process, identity formation; religious education; psychology.*

Introduction

The study of identity that was for a long time considered a key focus in Developmental Psychology, Pedagogics and Sociology, seems to have passed its zenith after the 1990s. Especially pedagogical thinking has

turned its back on the problem of identity in favour of negotiations of difference, diversity and ambiguity and the question of whether, and how, an understanding of the latter aspects might be developed in a better and more supportive way. Processes of identity got out of sight – only to make their vengeful return in the political language of recent years, e.g. in young political movements like "les identitaires" in France, the "identitäre Bewegung" in Austria and Germany and various other European countries: barely disguised, by their smooth talk about ethnopluralism, ethnoculturalism, regionalism and defence, their generally racist, discriminatory and nationalist ideology surfaces. The concept of identity, it seems, has been hijacked!

It would be easy to turn one's back entirely on the barely recognisable and ill-used term of "identity". Arguably, however, it may be high time to do the opposite. The lesson to be learned from the new 'identitarian movements' might well be that the psychological and social needs of "Selbstvergewisserung" must not be ignored. Also in light of, and in spite of its being held hostage by ill-inclined interest groups, the benefits of a solid psychological concept of identity have to be put in focus once more.

As a concept of personality, identity was originally related to notions of stability and finding a status of identity. The varying discourses on identity have gradually shifted towards an understanding of procedural identity. In the current political and social climate, the notion of fixed identity positions surfaces once more.

Religious education within families, communities and schools faces multiple challenges in present-day societies. To inquire into identity in the context of Religious Pedagogics implies inquiring into, and reflecting on, the development of social interaction and individual experience within the horizon of religious practice.

From the perspective of Pastoral Psychology, this article focuses on aspects related to both individual identity development and religious connectedness. A general model of identity gathers its understanding of identity from various theories, most of them psychological. This generalization from the viewpoint of Pastoral Psychology reveals the way people construct their identity and the part religion takes in this process.

The question of religious identity has to be asked in the context of a secular society, but within its scientific context: religiousness is just as fluent as many other aspects of identity. It cannot be relied on as exclusive provider of value or certainty any more.

Conversely, Christianity's manifold influences on societies and their values are currently questioned and debated. But in these debates, the individual aspects have increasingly gotten out of sight. In what follows, I will not inquire into the relationship between Christian values and their cultural and moral implications. Rather, I will retrace these values once more within the individual.

Thus, I establish religious education as an ongoing identity formation that can be considered as empowerment strategy, i.e. a strategy of building one's life based on the principle of hope and change rather than sticking to supposed securities and certainties. Focussing on personal identity processes does not imply neglecting or discarding their relevance for national and global processes. On the contrary, the focus on the individual can help us understand and intervene in the current political processes that impact on the question of identity.

1. Identity in focus – viewed from pastoral psychology

Discourses in Sociology, Philosophy, Psychology, Pedagogics, and also Practical and Empirical Theology in the former decades usually relate identity to questions of identity development, self-awareness and self-concepts, role-taking and role-making, ascriptions, identifications and interaction, recognition, identity diffusion and identity disorder.

Even though the concepts of identity vary widely in all these discourses, they share an understanding of identity as a concept that is continuously marked by the present: in all these concepts the individual mirrors the broader social situation. This implies that such surrounding features as pluralism, globalization, fragmentation or intercultural experience inevitably play their part in conceptualizations of individual identity.

Over the last decade two broader directions regarding conceptualization of identity have emerged: 1. *Aestheticization*, an aspect of practical philosophy, expands the goal of a succeeding identity process to the broader idea of the "Lebenskunst"[1].This idea influenced Social Psychology and its idea of a well-formed identity.[2] Equally, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman looks at the present-day topic of the "art of life"[3]. 2. *Narrativity* implies that identity concepts are continuously generated from individual narratives which can change throughout the lifespan. They will never be terminated or finalized. Identity development theories discuss the question of whether a status of identity can be claimed at all. Identity grows and develops in and alongside narrations. The construction of identity turns out to be a highly individualized project carried out freely. On the other hand, the individual and its storytelling depend to a great extent on exterior conditions and relations.

Understanding how individuals construct their identity and tell their narratives is of great interest for all those working within the field of pastoral care and counseling. Pastoral Psychology, as a branch of Practical

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[1]   W. Schmid, *Philosophie der Lebenskunst. Eine Grundlegung* Frankfurt/M., ⁵1999.

[2]   Cf. H. Keupp et al., *Identitätskonstruktionen. Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, ³2006.

[3]   Z. Bauman, *The Art of Life*, Hoboken, 2008.

Theology, is responsible for providing and discussing in-depth analyses of changes and challenges in these fields. It is strongly related to psychological and psychotherapeutic knowledge and research, yet in its academic outreach it is mainly perceived as the theological field. Its priority lies in the encounter of pastoral care and psychotherapy, spiritual formation and supervision. Pastoral Psychology can be understood as a transdisciplinary approach to the individuals interacting in these fields, as shown in Figure 1.[4] Its research and reflection keeps up to date with current findings. How do people see themselves in the present, which obstacles do they encounter? What can be said about their struggles regarding the way they make sense of their lives?
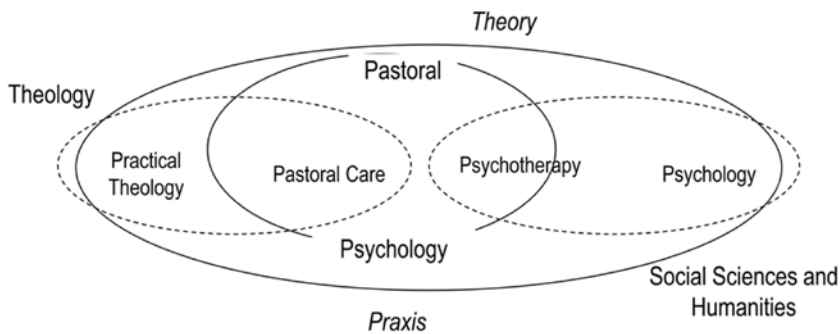

Figure 1. Pastoral Psychology between Practical Theology and Psychology

During the twentieth century, identity arose as a topic in Psychology in diverse schools and perspectives. It is related to the fundamental question: 'Who am I – for myself and for the others, through time, relations and situations?' In Social Psychology, the relation of Self, Ego and Identity has been seen through the eyes of George H. Mead[5] and his social behaviorist perspective. Erik H. Erikson introduced this question into Developmental Psychology as part of his psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development comprising eight stages from infancy to adulthood.[6] Erikson understands the psychosocial development in eight crises, which a person has to overcome. One of them is the so-called 'identity crises' between identity and identity diffusion. Erikson's assumption, that individuals have to reach a stable identity status in work, ideology and family roles by the end of adolescence, have turned out to be untenable. In fact, the iden-

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[4]   Cf. V. Pirker, *Fluide und fragil, Identität als Grundoption zeitsensibler Pastoralpsychologie*. Ostfildern, 2013, p. 307-320.

[5]   Cf. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Chicago, 1934.

[6]   Cf. E. H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and crisis*, New York, 1968.

tity status is much more multifaceted and reversible. James E. Marcia[7] has distinguished four identity statuses along the individual's current self-assessment to crisis and commitment. Identity might be formed as foreclosure, identity diffusion, moratorium and identity achievement. In Germany, Lothar Krappmann[8] created a synopsis of both, Erikson and Mead, in order to develop a pedagogical orientation. All these theories point explicitly towards the individual, their inner motion and their sense of self, rather than focusing on relations to group processes and social affiliation. Centering on the individual provides a common ground for these diverse identity theories. Since identity emerges from the interplay between an individual's interior and exterior world and from the interactions a person grows up with (in Mead language: The 'I' vs. the 'Me'), identity can be related to terms such as visibility, continuity, coherence, recognizability, authenticity. Not surprisingly, the term identity is also used in the description of collectives, for example cultural, ethnic, gender or national identity.

1.1. Procedural identity

The Munich-based longitudinal study "Identitätskonstruktionen. Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne" by Heiner Keupp and his team received much attention over the last decade.[9] From the viewpoint of Social Psychology, the researchers tried to figure out how people construct their identities to a greater extent. Figure 2 shows the identity process of the Keupp's model.

Keupp's theory of "Construction of identities in late modernity" is built around the idea of a patchwork identity. He shows that the identity process continues throughout a person's life. From the mental health perspective, psychic stability implies a minimal degree of consistence regarding one's sense of identity. It points out the high complexity and dynamic of a continuously growing and changing identity process, which derives from short moments of interaction and self-reflection. From this "level of situational self-experience", some aspects converge on the "level of partial identities", such as work, family, body, culture, politics, gender. Again, some components of the latter can rise to the level of meta-identity, which includes biographical core narratives, "dominant partial identities" and the inner "sense of identity". Religiousness is not an explicit

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[7]   Cf. J. E. Marcia et al. (eds.), *Ego identity. A handbook for psychosocial research*, New York, 1993.

[8]   Cf. L. Krappmann, *Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität. Strukturelle Bedingungen für die Teilnahme an Interaktionsprozessen*, Stuttgart, 1971.

[9]   Keupp et al. 2006; for an overview see Katharina Hametner / Amrei C. Joerche: Reflexive and Nonreflexive Identity Perceptions: Finding a Balance, in, Psychology&Society, 2,1 (2009), p. 22-28.

aspect of the Keupp's model; it is understood as an aspect of ideology. However, it can clearly be seen as an identity component in its own right, albeit among others, and may also be found on the level of meta-identity.
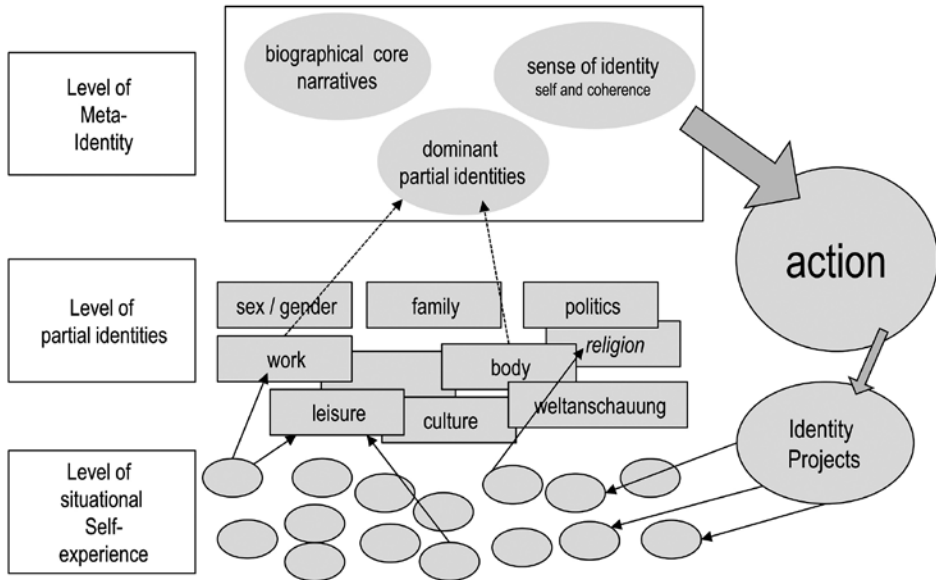
Figure 2. Procedural Identity (Keupp)

Keupp describes the whole process of "working on one's identity" (Identitätsarbeit) as an active, ongoing, constructional process. It is inevitable for each person growing up to work through certain identity-forming issues, which might also reoccur throughout the lifetime. The continuous process of identity is situated in the intra-individual perspective. From the outside, it can only be perceived in a person's behavior and actions, which include their narratives and other forms of expression. According to Keupp's model, these are displayed in the person's identity projects, which in turn derive from actions and are again being reflected in the multiple moments of everyday situational self-experiences.

1.2. Identity as process of formation

Keupp offers insights into the question of how the identity process can be understood intra-individually. Yet, the model does not include the forces and interests which affect this process. So it is necessary to extend the model so that it fits a broader context (Figure 3). My considerations involve various influences, resources and intentions an individual has to deal with while processing his/her own identity. The following model has emerged from close-readings of numerous psychological, sociologi-

cal, pedagogical, psychiatrical and psychotherapeutic approaches to the topic of identity in the twentieth century.[10]
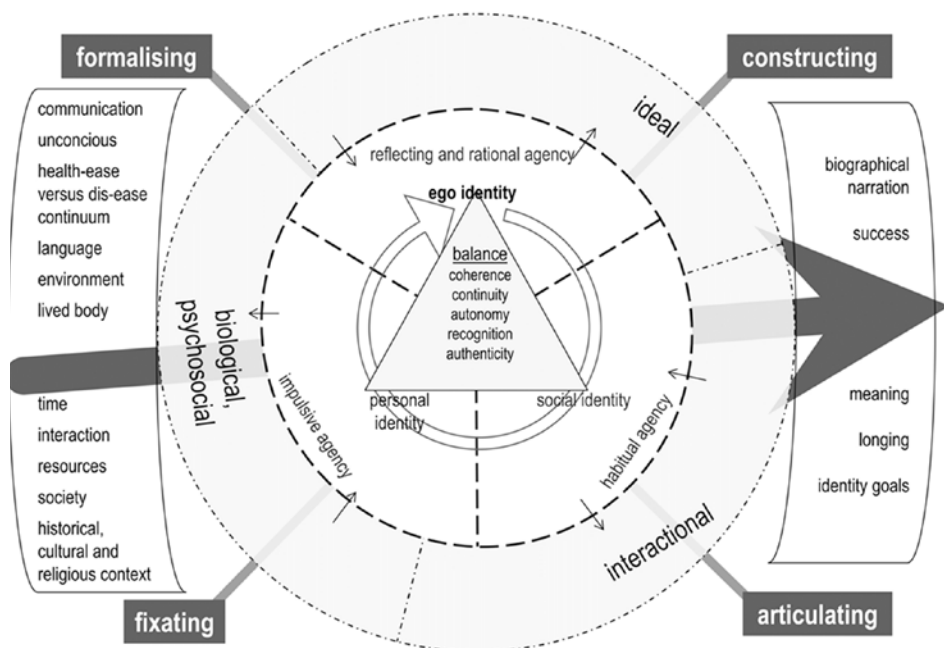
Figure 3. Identity as Process of Formation (Pirker)

The exterior level of narrativity and aestheticization as a principle expression of the identity process is located within and between the dynamical poles of fixating / constructing and formalizing / articulating. Between these coordinates, the inner process of identity is formed by influences (left column) and heads towards the direction of identity goals (right column).

The exterior circle stands for the mental horizon, within which individuals create their identity, the interior circle for the focus of their respective ability to act. Its trisection derives from the psychoanalytical model of Freud's second topic, a topographic representation of the psychic apparatus, which consists of three agencies: *id, ego and superego*. Biological and psychosocial aspects are mainly driven by the impulsive agency. To the interactional aspects, the individual relates its habitual agency. The identity process touches the ideal dimension via the reflecting and rational agency.

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[10] This figure is elaborated in Pirker 2013, p. 57-248.

The inner triangle shows the ongoing development of the ego-identity within this reflecting and rational agency, since this is the part an individual is able to reflect upon and talk about. The ego identity derives from and is balancing between personal and social identity. It is influenced mainly by the factors coherence, continuity, autonomy, recognition and authenticity. The inner triangle pictures Keupp's model as shown above.

This model of identity includes several centrifugal and centripetal dynamics in every single person. On one hand, every person is working on his/her ego identity, but is always also under the influence of external factors. On the other hand, a constructive and positive feedback from the exterior world is indispensable. To be alive means to struggle with and to balance between identity and difference. In today's society this process seems to be even more difficult and risky for the individual. Therefore it seems to be easier to continue using fixating and formalizing elements and not to go into the dynamics of constructing and articulating. To avoid the individual risk and effort is a possible option, but it goes hand in hand with subordinating oneself under alien constructions.

From the synopsis of various identity theories, several assumptions can be made:

- Each individual construct their own identity, for themselves and in interactional co-construction with social relations and contexts.
- Each individual construct their identity through narration and interaction.
- Identity is reflexive: The individual develops an inner sense of identity.
- The felt sense lies within the individual. Therefore, the main perspective of identity is the first-person perspective: For other persons, identity is only visible in action.
- Identity must be seen as constantly in motion: Rather than about outcomes and statuses, it is about processes.
- Individuals seek for a consistent and balanced identity, which is marked by continuity, authenticity and coherence.
- Identity is a descriptive, not a normative concept. An individual needs intentional, often normative goals (such as success, meaning, belonging) to construct its identity. Importantly, these goals are extrinsic in relation to any meaningful understanding of identity.

2. Is Christian identity in crisis?

Thinking about religious identity means to place religion and religiousness in their various understandings within the scope of identity models as presented above. Since religion includes interrelating individual and collective aspects, the understanding of religion and religiousness in their relations to concepts of identity must be distinguished (– due to

constraints of space –) at least in a rough scheme and within a Christian understanding of religion.[11]

Religious Identity

individual aspects	collective aspects
religious experience	Rituals, e.g. mass attendance
inner feeling	church commitment (sacraments)
performance	denomination
belief in God	religious practice
internal dimension of religion	external dimension of religion
religion as religiousness	**religion as institution**

Figure 4. Religion and Identity: between Inner Religiousness and Exterior Ties[12]

Religious identity is frequently referred to collective aspects such as belonging to a certain community, sharing a denomination or passing a rite of initiation. Seeing the term as such, there is always the danger of missing the first-person perspective, which has turned out to be mandatory for a psychological understanding of the identity process. 'Religiousness' seems to be more rooted in the individual's identity process: it touches the central narratives and experiences as well as the sense of self. By contrast, religion as an institution belongs to the interactive surrounding individuals relate to. The first-person perspective can also be used to investigate the institutional dimension of religion and its interrelations with the inner identity process.

2.1. Religion within the model of procedural identity

Within the Keupp model of procedural identity (figure 2), religion can leave its marks on every level. On the level of situational self-experience, this could be for instance a grandmother praying at night; a discussion in school with a teacher of religious education; the moment of entering

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[11] As stated above, social sciences also use the term identity to describe group processes. This transfer of individual aspects on a collective brings along some difficulties. For a short view into this discussion see, p. 152-164. Considering collective identities, questions rise about who we are, who belongs, what keeps a group together, where lies continuity and how do we find coherence within a social dimension? Exclusivist and inclusivist strategies shape group processes around identity. In this article, the groups identities of Christianity (cf. church, communities) cannot be discussed extensively, see B. Giesen, Codes kollektiver Identität. in: W. Gephart / H. Waldenfels (eds.): *Religion und Identität. Im Horizont des Pluralismus,* Frankfurt/M., 1999, p. 13-43.

[12] This figure is inspired by D. Verhoeven / D. Hutsebaut, *Identity Status and Religiosity. A research among Flemish University students*, Journal of Empirical Theology, 8, 1 (1995), p. 46-64, here p. 50-54.

a church and making the sign of the cross; marveling at the beauty of nature or the miracle of birth; grief after a loved one passes-away: such moments can be used as an expression or a demarcation of faith.[13] On the level of partial identities, religion is usually understood as ideology – which implies the inner connectedness with a special conviction and form of expression. A "religious identity" can take the form of a group membership, of attending religious services, of receiving a sacrament or of sharing religious rituals with the family. As partial identity, religious identity does not necessarily have a strong impact on other parts of the identity process. On the level of meta-identity, religion might enter all three aspects: biographical core narratives (which can be religious, e.g. the decision to become a teacher of religious education, or to join a religious community), the dominant partial identities, e.g. when an individual's gender identity stands in contrast to the religious community's common understanding of gender roles; another example would be the case in which someone has to rely on biblical or community-related narratives in order to support their inner stability. Religion can also become an important part of the sense of identity, e.g. in the certainty of being cared for and loved by God; or in the sureness of carrying a cross within one's own life. If religion and religiousness can be placed on this third level of meta-identity, it requires a certain visibility in both, a person's actions and narratives, and will permeate their identity projects: Religiousness, this implies, requires a certain degree of saliency[14].

2.2. Religion in the model of identity as process of formation

In the model of identity as process of formation proposed here (figure 3), religion, religious experiences and religious narratives can be part of different influences such as language, interaction, religious context or society. These influences converge with certain values and role models, which can be motivated by a religious context.

Within the trisection of the identity model, religion has to be located presumably within the ideal and the interactional section of identity. It is the ideal section, since religion is usually related to moral and rational agency. In many religious contexts, religion and morality are strongly intertwined. The interactional section includes all kinds of group processes or group experiences and relations. In Christianity, the personal

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[13] See S. Zehnder Grob / C. Morgenthaler: Religiöse Sozialisation in Familie und Unterricht, in: C. Käppler / C. Morgenthaler / K. Brodbeck (eds.), *Werteorientierung, Religiosität, Identität und die psychische Gesundheit Jugendlicher,* Stuttgart, 2013, p. 81-100, here p. 90 for the meaning of situational self-experiences in the broader view of religious socialization.

[14] Verhoeven, Hutsebaut 1995, p. 51 show that the saliency of religion in daily life even of religiously committed students is not very strong.

relation to the Trinitarian God as a significant other can be located on this interactional level. Locating religion in the bio-psychosocial section touches on current theological questions, e.g. the question of whether human beings are religious by nature, but also current theological discussions about embodiment and incarnation.

The inner process of balancing the ego identity relates to religion and religiousness, and ties in with Keupp's model. Religious narratives can influence identity goals, especially in the dimensions of theological-anthropological *Existenzialien* (i.e. factors of existence), which are elaborated below.

In both models, religion and religiousness can assume important functions in the identity process. But they are not indispensable: identity can be constructed without any religious impacts. This bears implications for religious education.

2.3. Religiousness and identity: an inner connection?

Is there a link between religion, identity and the "identitarian movements" in Europe? The opening question of the article has not been answered so far. Connecting the proposed issues with two empirical projects in the Psychology of Religion may provide an instructive approach. In a survey with students at the Catholic university of Leuven (n=1333) Verhoeven/Hutsebaut showed that interior and exterior aspects of religiosity correlate significantly with different identity statuses from Marcia's model. "Students with an achievement status score relatively high on the moral internal dimensions of religion, i.e. belief, saliency and religious experience, as well as religious commitment beyond mass attendance."[15] Students with a foreclosure status, which "facilitates the socialisation process within the family"[16], tend to copy religion-related behaviour within their families. They reproduce social forms and rituals without questioning them. The achievement status includes commitment as the outcome of a 'crisis', or a process of elaboration and deliberation between alternatives. Students within the diffusion status are less religious: neither do they come to clear decisions, nor are they particularly interested.

Käppler/Morgenthaler explored relations between identity construction and religiosity among Swiss and German adolescents aged 14 to 16. They applied Keupp's model with an interest in relations to religiousness.[17] The operationalization does not only inquire into *how* adoles-

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[15] *Ibidem*, p. 56.

[16] *Ibidem.*

[17] T. Christl / K. Brodbeck: Identitätsentwicklung von Jugendlichen und ihr Zusammenhang mit Religiosität. In: C. Käppler / C. Morgenthaler / K. Brodbeck (eds.), *Werteorientierung*, p. 125-148 offers the analysis of identity development of the VROID-MHAP-Study – "Values and Religious Orientations in relation to Identity Development and Mental

cents construct their identity. Rather, it asks *how successfully* they do it.[18] Authenticity and "ability to integrate" have turned out to be discriminating factors, which offer three different clusters of identity construction.[19] Authenticity is understood as an ability to be oneself in a variety of challenging social situations, while the ability to integrate implies the ability to cope with outer expectations. The three divergent groups can be described as follows[20]: (1) *Highly authentic and highly integrated*: These adolescents show a "healthy" balance of authenticity and adaptation. It is the smallest group in the survey (n=288): Only around 1/4 of the population are able to adapt to the challenges of identity construction in a way which seems to be successful. (2) *Highly authentic but integrated on a low level*: These adolescents are not balanced: there is a strong difference between inner world view and outer expectations (n=326). Around 1/3 of the adolescents have a high self-esteem and understanding of themselves, but are in a considerable struggle with the expectations of their surroundings. Highly religious adolescents tend to appear in this cluster, but the data is not significant. (3) *Authentic on low level and integrated on a medium level*: These adolescents are considered to be unbalanced: they lack inner confidence, and are mainly oriented towards outer expectations. It is the largest group in the survey (n=488). Nearly 1/2 of all respondents display doubt and a lack of confidence regarding themselves, but try to integrate the expectations and values of the world around them. Since the interrogated adolescents are rather young, they have not been concerned with the identity aspect referring to 'finding their place in society' yet. The empirical approach, however, pushes the contextualization of identity construction and religiousness a step further.

Health – Adolescents' Perspectives". The level of religiousness is tested with the model from H. Streib / C. Gennerich, *Jugend und Religion. Bestandsaufnahmen, Analysen und Fallstudien zur Religiosität Jugendlicher*, Weinheim, 2015. In their mixed-methods-setting, Christl/Brodbeck use qualitative interview analyses to enrich the quantitative data. The latter offer an insight into the process of identity construction, while the interview analyses offer an insight into the ability to act – or, to be exact, into the adolescents' arguing about their possible acting in the discursive, theoretical setting of the interview. Talking about acting is not the same as acting itself.

[18] This is related to Keupp's aspects of successful identity construction: coherence, recognition, authenticity, ability to act; in this article, they entered the center of the model of procedural Identity as described in Figure 2. The operationalization translates them into several dimensions: life coherence, authenticity, acceptance, and integration achievement.

[19] Cf. Christl, Brodbeck, 2013, p. 135-136.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 148.

3. Current contemporary metaphor: fluid and fragile identity

After Vatican II, theology opened up more and more to secular approaches. Notions of identity as a psychological concept have entered the theological thinking in many ways.[21] Theological approaches to psychological identity concepts refer mainly to the work of Erikson and Mead. Some approaches, such as Wolfhart Pannenberg's, have used and bent these concepts so that they fit their idea of God at the center of a fully functioning identity process. From a religious perspective this might seem obvious. But psychology and the adjacent discussions on identity operate from a fully secular understanding and cannot be simply used to serve theology. They have to be understood in their own terms. There might be room for a conception of God in the ideal dimension and rational agency of a person, but it does not necessarily have to be part of a full identity process. Indeed, the vivid and ongoing discussions around varying identity theories have not left many traces in theological thinking so far, with some exceptions in Psychology of Religion and Practical Theology.[22]

My research on identity from the viewpoint of pastoral psychology displays awareness of and respect towards the secular background of identity theories. Identity has to be understood as a fully immanent anthropology, although it includes the possibility to open up to the transcendental. The

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[21] To point out some examples from the German discourse, the following theologians related their approaches to anthropology with psychological perspectives on identity: in Systematic Theology T. Pröpper, *Das Faktum der Sünde und die Konstitution menschlicher Identität. Ein Beitrag zur Aneignung der kritischen Anthropologie Wolfhart Pannenbergs*, Theologische Quartalsschrift, 170 (1990) p. 267-298 (referring to the protestant theologian W. Pannenberg, *Was ist der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie*, Göttingen ⁴1972); in Fundamental Theology J. Werbick, *Gott gehören. Theologisches zur Identitätsproblematik*, Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie, 97 (1975) p. 441-462; in Religious Pedagogics N. Mette, *Identität in universaler Solidarität. Zur Grundlegung einer religionspädagogischen Handlungstheorie*, Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik, 6 (1989) p. 27-58; R. Englert, *Glaubensgeschichte und Bildungsprozeß. Versuch einer religionspädagogischen Kairologie*, München, 1985; H.-G. Ziebertz, *Im Mittelpunkt der Mensch? Subjektorientierung der Religionspädagogik*, Religionspädagogische Beiträge, 45 (2000) p. 27-42; G. Büttner / V.-J. Dieterich, *Entwicklungspsychologie in der Religionspädagogik*, Göttingen, ²2016.

[22] A few started to read deeply into the work of Heiner Keupp, recently Jochen Sautermeister, Identität und christlicher Glaube Option für lebensbejahende Humanität und selbstbejahende Authentizität. In: M. Felder / J. Schwaratzki / L. Karrer (eds.), *Glaubwürdigkeit der Kirche. Würde der Glaubenden; für Leo Karrer*, Freiburg/Br. u.a., 2012, p. 292-305, C. Käppler / C. Morgenthaler / K. Brodbeck, eds.: *Werteorientierung, Religiosität, Identität und die psychische Gesundheit Jugendlicher*. Stuttgart, 2013. M. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*. Nashville, 1996 has to be named as a theological approach to Christian identity from the viewpoint of postmodern French philosophy which converges with procedural identity theories.

integration of multifaceted identity theories collates metaphorically in the expression *"fluid and fragile identity"*.[23]

Fluid implies that there is a permanent process which goes on in the "subjective stream of consciousness"[24]. It also implies an extroverted dimension as it originates from the word "fluidum", which means gaseous, auratic. Narrations and aesteticizations of the identity process can be understood as a fluent and meandering process, wherein identity turns outwards in a fluid movement. This idea derives from two main arguments in the identity debate. From the viewpoint of social psychology there is Keupp's notion of a procedural and continuously changing patchwork identity as described above.[25] From the perspective of sociology Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity" is highly relevant.[26] It emphasizes the need to include the factors of proceduralism, development and time flowing in every description of individuals, society and their relations.

Fragile implies that although individuals seem to be stable and consistent, their experience of themselves is as vulnerable beings not only regarding their boundaries, but also the deeper layers of their soul. Henning Luther's idea of "identity in fragment"[27], from the perspective of pastoral theology, is central here. With this, he positioned himself against the notion of possibility to finalize the processes of formation. As an aesthetic concept, the notion of fragment implies that there is always something missing, that there can never be completeness within life and within the identity process. Theologically, Luther sees that identity goals of individuals need to rely on ideas and concepts which lie out of reach. Thus, the immanent scope is widened and the option of transcendence included a liberating intervention in a steadily ongoing process of identity. Fragility is close to 'fragment', but it implies the possibility of congruent and positive individual narratives. I follow Paul Ricoeur's concept of "fragility"[28], derived from his understanding of narrative identity. The metaphor "fragile" goes hand in hand with the theological debate surrounding "vulnerability".

The process of identity formation can be seen as fluid and fragile at the same time. Through the identity process, individuals raise their inner coherence and continuity onto their own visible surface, while at the same

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[23]   The following perspectives are fully explicated in Pirker, 2013, p. 362-367.

[24]   W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*, New York, 1890.

[25]   Keupp et al 2006.

[26]   Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity,* Hoboken, 2002.

[27]   H. Luther, Identität und Fragment. Praktisch-theologische Überlegungen zur Unabschließbarkeit von Bildungsprozessen, in: *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer praktischen Theologie des Subjekts*, Stuttgart, 1992, p. 160-182.

[28]   P. Ricœur, *Respect de l'Autre et identité culturelle. Identité fragile. publiée dans: Les droits de la personne en question* 2000.

time, outer interactions and movements flow inside. In this process, the interior and exterior are inextricably intertwined. It would be wrong to understand this process as a simple movement of action and reaction. Rather, it causes mutual dependency and interpenetration for both, individuals and their environment. In the following sections, some theological notions to the question of identity will be added. It is a theology in fragment: These notions provide a number of starting points for further approaches in systematic theology.

The terms "fluid and fragile" can be adapted to a religious argument in the tradition of post-Vatican Theology, i.e. liberal theological thought, which is based on the 'anthropological turn'.[29] Secular theories as characterized above are theories in their own right and of their own generativity. Theology must accept their particularity with all implications. Theology might ask for limitations and may warn of any implicit anthropology which is against humanity. Several dimensions of theological-anthropological *Existenzialien* as proposed by Karl Rahner can be related to the identity model: All individuals strive for meaning, freedom, love and hope. They long to succeed in the process of balancing different identity aspects and to fill these with special meaning. They seek autonomy and recognition at the same time, with their freedom being situated somewhere in between. Individuals need positive interactions; they need love for themselves and for the other. They need hope for a positive future. To be able to believe in this, they need minimum confidence. The fifth dimension is failure – it threatens the other *Existenzialien*. The possibility of failure brings to mind the *theologia crucis*. The cross is the strongest symbol within Christianity. It shows that there is always a tentativeness, which can only be conquered by confidence and hope. Importantly, this also converges with a dominant idea of a secular identity theory: "Without any trace of hope that confidence into the recognition of expectations is not threatened; without an opportunity to take responsibility for one's action; without the experience that special needs can become a part of a just and satisfying agreement, any attempt of keeping up identity would be absurd and self-destructive."[30]

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[29] Cf. K. Rahner, Grundentwurf einer theologischen Anthropologie, in: F. X. Arnold / K. Rahner / V. Schnurr / L. Weber (eds.), *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie. Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart,* Freiburg/Br. u.a., 1966, p. 20-38.

[30] L. Krappmann, Identität, in: D. Lenzen (ed.): *Pädagogische Grundbegriffe.* Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1989, p. 715-719, here p. 718, original: "Ohne die Spur einer Hoffnung, daß Vertrauen auf die Anerkennung von Erwartungen nicht enttäuscht wird, ohne die Gelegenheit, für Handeln Verantwortung zu übernehmen, ohne die Erfahrung, daß mitgeteilte Eigenheiten in eine gerechte, befriedigende Übereinkunft eingehen können, wäre der Versuch, Identität aufrechtzuerhalten, sinnlos und selbstzerstörerisch."

Conclusion

In a time which has turned identity into a fluid and fragile process, it is not easy to raise a good story and a proper picture of one's self. Considering narrativity and aestheticization as key factors for finding and telling your own identity in today's society includes the fact, that failure, illness, lack of beauty, lack of succeeding, or secret dark moments in one's past seem to be stories-better-untold in a world that asks for a strong individual. So, it seems to be easier to hide such things and get strength from the outside. Current individual and social movements show the desire to hold on exterior stabilities. If the individual loses its inner anchor, it is a challenge to find a role model and to establish a new stability inside. One will start to look around where to attach their own identity projects. Being committed to a larger movement, being part of a strong group forms influential aspects on the identity process: the outer anchor replaces the inner. Success is transferred to the others, while the individual can take their part within this successful story. If people define their identity around strong commitments without questioning them, they are not forced to act individually. But strong outer identities are not necessarily steady for a long time. They may grant a part-time identification. They might change and they might lose their adhesive.

Identity is an anti-essentialist concept. Rather, it shows a continuous process of formation and opens up possibilities to get in touch with the individual within their own concepts. The 'identitarian' political movements do not have a lot in common with Christian values, even though they scream for the 'Christian Occident'. Constructing a religious, Christian identity today can only be seen within the difficult and demanding, fluid and fragile process of narrativity and aesteticizations. Religion in its social dimension seems to offer stability, but getting onto the interior level of religiousness, it includes severe challenges for the individual. Religion is *crisis* – the meaning of the word of Greek origin is – decision. The strongest Christian value is perhaps a spiritual understanding of individuality. It is the Trinitarian God's own call to a single person; it is the Trinitarian God becoming human with and within each person. Are these key concepts visible within current religious education? One should put a strong emphasis to honor and to strengthen the first-person perspective on religiousness, also within a rational argumentation. In order to develop the individual's commitment in an achievement status and in order to augment authenticity, religious education should put religion as a crisis.

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SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SPLIT-MAKARSKA

Abstract

Immersion of the Church in a particular cultural context and social life is a specific way of spreading the Kingdom of God on earth. If it was not recognized in the concrete social life and did not seek to gain social relevance, the Christian faith would turn into self-sufficiency and an emphasized subjectivism. Taking into consideration the needed social incarnation of Christian faith as one of its essential elements, this paper aims to explore, present and analyse the engagement of Religious Education (RE) teachers in the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska in order to evaluate their role in modern society. Divided into three parts, this paper deals with the social sensitivity, awareness and involvement of RE teachers into various fields of social life. In the first part of the paper, the authors describe of the lay faithful's position and role throughout history and their mission in the Church and in society on the basis of the Conciliar documents. The second part focuses on the role of RE teacher as an outstanding layperson in modern society. The third part provides the survey findings referring to a concrete engagement of RE teachers in extracurricular activities at their schools i.e. in different areas of life such as culture, social work, political life and the media, according to personal preferences. The authors applied theological-pastoral approach and the Web-based survey.

Key words: *layperson, religious education teacher, social engagement, Archdiocese of Split-Makarska.*

Introduction

This work focuses on the social engagement of RE teachers in the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska and the perspective in the different areas of social and public life. The issue of the Catholic laity was dealt with at the Second Vatican Council which, contemplating about the Church, starts from its mystery that calls up all members of the mystical body of Christ to actively participate in the mission and the shaping of God's

people, according to the gifts and ministries entrusted to them. This call echoes in various initiatives, attempts and efforts made in order to follow the guidelines outlined in the Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents.

The engagement of the lay faithful in Croatia was abruptly interrupted after World War II and forcibly hampered almost fifty years. The fall of the communist regime and the democratic changes in the nineties had impact on many previously banned Church activities which began to renew such as the integration of religious education in the educational system of the Republic of Croatia. It is to highlight that despite all the difficulties, the Catholic Church responded to this challenge successfully due to the integration of religious education and upbringing into the contemporary Croatian society. A considerable number of 219 RE teachers have been employed in the primary and secondary schools of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska, in the academic year 2016/2017. They contribute to the growth of ardent Catholic faithful in the local church.

In order to make their faith visible and recognizable along with the call of the laity to live in the world and permeate it as a leaven of the Gospel spirit, RE teachers of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska seek to contribute both to their parishes and the wider community through their profession of teaching and engagement in extracurricular activities. This article presents their endeavours and offers new perspectives on enhancing their contribution to the local Church.

1. The role and mission of the lay faithful in the Church

A *layperson* is an ambiguous concept[1] because it denotes both to an active Christian faithful and a person without professional or specialized knowledge in a particular subject. In the Church, a *layperson* is defined as a member of the People of God who neither belongs to the sacred order nor the clergy, but through the baptism and the universal priesthood participates in the mission of the Church.[2] Obviously, it conveys different meanings in different contexts. However, due its historical and theological grounds, the meaning of the word *layperson* in the ecclesial and theological discourses is clear and unambiguous.

In the whole of its two-thousand-year history, the Church evaluated the role and mission of the lay faithful which were often neglected and marginalized due to the precedence of the hierarchy over the laity and the hierarchical vision of the Church. It was only in the 20th century, after the Second Vatican Council, when the Church's awareness of the role and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in society thoroughly

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[1]   Cf. B. Klaić, *Rječnik stranih riječi*, Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1988, p. 780-781.

[2]   Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965), 31 (hereinafter: GS).

changed. For the sake of better understanding, a brief overview of the role of laity in the past was presented, followed by the Conciliar teaching on the laity.

1.1. A brief overview of the role of laity in the past

The early Church that was established on the day of Pentecost and grounded its faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, was unfamiliar with a clergy-laity distinction. The early Church believed that its constitution was the work of God. It is evident through many names it was given: the People of God (1Pt 2:9-10), a holy people of God (Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 2:11; 10:14), and God's chosen people (Rom 1:7; Col 3:12; 1Pt 1:2). Having realized itself in the past as the community, the Church should have been organized. Thus, first presbyters appeared in the Church (Acts 11:30, 20, 17:28; James 5:14; 1Pt 5:1; Tit 1:5-7), followed by hierarchical degrees of priesthood and services: deacons, priests and bishops. They have made the Church a stable institution throughout the time (cf. Pastoral Letters).

This process coincided with the distinction between the two linguistic items the *cleric* and the *layperson* that were first mentioned by Clement of Rome, whereas Tertullian wrote about the Church government that introduced the division between *clergy* and *people*. This division was greatly supported by Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria and St. John Chrysostom.[3] Over time, it grew into a gap between the clergy and laity that led to a gradual weakening of the role of the lay faithful in the Church. It resulted in the two types of the Church memberships: one devoted to God and the other dealt with secular issues[4]. Thus, the priesthood performs all sacred ministries associated with wisdom, education, spirituality, devotion, the sacred liturgy and ecclesiastical authority, whereas the laity was regarded as bearer of sinful human weakness and it was entrusted less important secular issues to deal with.[5]

The gap continued throughout the Middle Ages when the Christian faith became a privileged religion of the new European nations and states which, unfortunately experienced forced conversion to Christianity. Since, the Church was a powerful social force in the medieval time, pagans that were baptized overnight became members of the Church and citizens of a Christianized society due to their mere assimilation and socialization. Thus, it is quite understandable that only priests were considered genuine Christians because people that were not adequately initiated into the

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[3]   Cf. Y.-M. Congar, Jalons pour une theologie laicat, Paris, 1953, p. 27, cited in: J. Jukić, *Vjernici laici u hrvatskoj Crkvi – I.*, Bogoslovska smotra, 70 (2000) 3-4, p. 830.

[4]   Cf. T. Ivančić, *Uloga laika u Crkvi prema II. vatikanskom saboru*, Crkva u svijetu, 13 (1978) 1, p. 8.

[5]   Cf . J. Jukić, *Vjernici laici u hrvatskoj Crkvi*, p. 830.

faith often believed in magic and superstition, and expressed their faith and adherence to the Church through a mere outward obedience to hierarchy. This led to a loss of the privilege that the laity had been given, and due to the increasing involvement of the clergy in the secular world, the role of the laity in the Church became quite insignificant.

The tragic breakdown of religious unity, which the Church experienced during the Reformation, was a kind of rebellion of a disempowered laity against the spiritual and secular power of the clergy. In fact, the Reformation emerged as a reaction against hierarchy and went to the other extreme, restoring the laity's mission within the Church. Moreover, it motivated the lay leaders to become as relevant as the Church, imposing themselves as important protagonists in the fight against the Reformation. Since the Protestant Reformation put the lay faithful in the center of its reform, the Council of Trent was the reply of the Catholics to the ongoing Reformation and it insisted on the consolidation of the Church as well as on the spiritual and theological renewal of the clergy. Consequently, the clergy felt fear and caution to entrust certain ministries or authorities to the laity because their mission in the Church was considered as an indirect submission to Protestantism. Thus, historical reasons of the centuries-long mistrust of the Catholic Church towards the laity should be sought in it.[6]

Although during the history of the Church, some theologians and ecclesiastical dignitaries opposed to the subordinate role of the laity and emphasized their belonging to the Church, unfortunately their efforts did not result in an important change of attitude towards the laity "who remained a necessary evil in the Church, its funding source and obedient children without the right to vote".[7] This gap and the polarization between clergy and laity lasted for centuries, until the Second Vatican Council, due to the social and political circumstances and difficulties that affected the Church and especially because of the symbiotic relationship between temporal and spiritual.

1.2. Conciliar teaching on the laity

The Second Vatican Council is the central event for the Catholic Church in the 20th century since its changes referred to the overall reconstruction of theological thinking and church life. Due to the Council, the Church started to open to the modern world through a dialogue and at the same time it has undergone internal renewal at all levels. Due to its importance, the Second Vatican Council represents today "a guiding prin-

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[6]   Cf . J. Jukić, *Vjernici laici u hrvatskoj Crkvi*, p. 831.

[7]   T. Ivančić, *Uloga laika u Crkvi prema II. vatikanskom saboru*, p. 9.

ciple for the current manifestations of the Church which, as everlasting task, requires a decisive continuity at the present time".[8]

One of its tasks certainly refers to the fulfillment of the role and mission of the lay faithful in line with the guidelines of the conciliar documents. Contemplating on the role of the laity in the Church, the Council refers to the image of the Church as the mystical body of Christ[9], which renders the same dignity, but also various functions of its members. All conciliar documents deal with the laity, especially the fourth chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*[10] and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*[11] that define the role and mission of the laity within the Church community.

The lay faithful are specifically characterized by their secular nature because they live in the world and deal with temporal affairs, but they do that as Christians. The presence of the laity in the world refers primarily to their faithful testimony and commitment in the world in which they live. "They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and love".[12]

Furthermore, the Council repeatedly emphasizes the same dignity of all members of the Church who make up a people of God. Since all the faithful are members of the same Body of Christ, they share the same dignity which is based on the equality of all people due to their same human nature, but also all those who are baptized in Christ are equal. "Thus, there is no inequality in Christ and in the Church with regard to the origin and nationality, social status or gender, because 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28; cf. Col 3:11)".[13]

The lay faithful have become sharers in the priestly, prophetic and the royal office of Christ through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation from which they derive the right and duty of proclaiming the good news to all people throughout the world so that they have the opportunity

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[8] N. A. Ančić, *Kako danas čitati i razumijevati Drugi vatikanski sabor*, Bogoslovska smotra, 75 (2005) 3, p. 667-686.

[9] "Just as each of us has various parts in one body, and the parts do not all have the same function: in the same way, all of us, though there are so many of us, make up one body in Christ, and as different parts we are all joined to one another." (Rom 12:4-5).

[10] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), (hereinafter: LG).

[11] Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuostatem* (28 November 1965), [hereinafter: AA].

[12] LG, 31.

[13] LG, 32.

to know the Gospel and accept Jesus Christ.[14] This duty becomes a far more extensive in those places and circumstances where, only through the laity, the Church can become the salt of the earth.[15] Therefore, the Council points out that "For besides intimately linking the laity to His life and His mission, He also gives them a sharing in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne-all these become "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".[16] The Council also states that Jesus Christ continually fulfills His prophetic office not only through the hierarchy, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and proclaimers of the word of God so that "the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life".[17] Referring to the Kingdom of God and the king's service, the Council points out that the lay faithful are called by the Lord to spread His kingdom. They do it due to their "competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, (…) by human labor, technical skill and civic culture".[18]

Through the power of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation all lay faithful, living authentic Christianity and aligning their profession with their religious beliefs, contribute to the internal and external growth of the Church. However, the Second Vatican Council discerns this common apostolate from the apostolate of the Hierarchy, i.e. the capacity of the laity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions.[19] The mandate for such lay apostolate requires special licensing by the local bishop because the entrusted ministry should be carried out on behalf of the Church.

The relationship between the laity and the hierarchy should be built and developed in the spirit of family relationships enriched with their mutual giving and receiving. The lay faithful have the right to receive the spiritual goods from the shepherds of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments. They are also invited to respond to the call of the shepherds of the Church trustworthily and participate actively in the Church's services offering their advices and opinions to the shepherds, praying for them and providing them material support. On the other hand, the shepherds are invited to promote

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[14] Cf. AA, 2-3.

[15] Cf. LG, 33.

[16] LG, 34.

[17] LG, 35.

[18] LG, 36.

[19] Cf. LG, 33.

the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church, to rely on their prudent advices, confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church and allowing them freedom and room for action so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative.[20]

Based on the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican Council II, *synodality* encompasses: the secular nature and dignity of the lay faithful; their share in the universal priesthood and the call for their cooperation and co-responsibility in the Church's mission. Vatican II was the beginning of a greater synodal understanding of Church and promotion of a synodal culture. The Council clearly noted that the centuries-old superiority of monologue over dialogue should be changed. Synodality denotes a specific ecclesial style, a strengthening and deepening of appreciation of the Church's hierarchical principle by underlining all aspects of ecclesial life and the contribution of all members of the People of God that promote greater participation in the life and activity of the Church.[21] Synodality serves as a necessary correction, enriching accompaniment, an expression of relational thinking that allows the faithful to experience the ecclesial community as their spiritual homeland in which they all try to answer the question of the Gospel living in today's world.[22]

2. Religious education teacher in contemporary society

In the light of the conciliar thinking and the guidelines on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church, it is possible to evaluate and define the vocation and mission of religious education teachers. Catholic religious education teachers are employed in primary and secondary schools in Croatia and represent a new category of the laity in the Church. During the communist regime, the clergy could carry out their ministry only within their Church buildings and since their public activities were prohibited, thus the role of the laity was neglected too. Regardless of the past twenty-five years of freedom, the potential and participation of the laity have not been fully realized. As believers and public figures, they can contribute to the common good of their people, but it seems that their potential is still invisible and underused, and as such represents a hidden treasure that should be revealed, supported and focused on the good of the Church and the Croatian people.[23]

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[20] Cf. LG, 37.

[21] Cf. N. Vranješ, *Ostvarivanje sinodalnog stila pastoralnog djelovanja na župnoj razini. Djelovanje kao autentičan izričaj zajedništva Crkve*, Bogoslovska smotra 80 (2010) 4, p. 1232.

[22] Cf. N. Bižaca, *Sinodalnost preduvjet uspjeha nove evangelizacije*, Crkva u svijetu, 47 (2012) 3, p. 297-298.

[23] Cf. S. Baloban, *Vjernici laici: neiskorišten društveni i crkveni potencijal u Hrvatskoj*, Bogoslovska smotra, 82 (2012) 4, p. 1027-1028.

The lay faithful and especially those theologically educated are challenged by their manifold apostolates both in the Church and in society. They are called to cope with the issues, values, unrests, hopes, victories and defeats[24] that affect their lives and renew "the Christian fabric of human society".[25] Regardless of all the difficulties and challenges of contemporary society, the lay faithful and especially RE teachers are called to live in this world being their vineyard, a field in which they are called to live their apostolate, and there they must be the salt of the earth and light of the world.[26]

2.1. RE teachers in the life of the parish and the local Church

Due to their theological and catechetical education and ecclesial mission of transmitting the faith in schools, RE teachers should be the most distinguished and the most engaged lay faithful in the local Church. In addition to their teaching profession, they are also invited to participate in the life of the parish community because without their participation "the apostolate of the shepherds, in most cases is not fully effective".[27] Therefore, the laity entrusted by the canonical mandate of the Church, should be aware of the meaning of their apostolate in the parish community, and especially of their role in flourishing of the ecclesial communion which finds its most immediate and visible expression in the parish.[28]

One of the important tasks of RE teachers is to promote partnership of the school and parish communities. RE teachers as ambassadors of the Church and school employees are called to contribute to the coordination of various activities between the school and the parish community, especially in connecting students, parents, teachers and the pastor; introducing students to the life of the parish community and encouraging their participation and active involvement. They can participate in a wide range of activities such as e.g. reading, singing, editing of parish newsletter or running a parish website, membership in the parish pastoral council or in the parish economic council; coordination of the charity program, catechetical instruction, religious celebrations, prayer, charity or in other evangelization efforts.[29]

Religious education in schools provides the parish community access to the public space and effective pastoral work in a school as one of the

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[24] Cf. John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), KS, Zagreb, 1990, 3 [hereinafter: CL].

[25] CL, 34.

[26] Cf. CL, 3.

[27] AA, 10.

[28] Cf. CL, 25-27.

[29] Cf. Hrvatska biskupska konferencija, *Za život svijeta, Pastoralne smjernice za apostolat vjernika laika u Crkvi i društvu u Hrvatskoj*, Glas Koncila, Zagreb, 2012, 94-110.

most important places of the first evangelization.[30] Since the school is an important place for instruction and on the basis of principle of dialogue and different areas of human knowledge, the Church can actively participate in the formation of man and the world in which we live. So, religious education promotes the vision of the Church which is the subject matter of all documents of the Second Vatican Council, particularly Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, and refers to the integration of religion into contemporary society and the integration of modern culture and social life into religious theory and practice.[31]

In addition to their engagement in the parish community, RE teachers are called to extend their activities to the diocesan, inter-diocesan, national and international field and to participate in the work of various diocesan councils and diocesan synods, etc. In this context, the Episcopal Conferences are called to evaluate "the most oportune way of developing the consultation and the collaboration of the lay faithful, women and men, at a national or regional level, so that they may consider well the problems they share and manifest better the communion of the whole Church".[32]

All the faithful are invited and obliged to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state[33] in order to contribute, with their life and work, to the growth of the whole Church. In addition to the apostolate exercised by the individual-which flows from a truly Christian life,[34] the ecclesial communion, which is already present and at work in the activities of the individual, finds its specific expression in the lay faithful's working together in groups, i.e. in their responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church. Forming of the lay associations relfects how great is the capacity and the generosity of the lay people as well as the diversity of their initiatives and objectives through which they participate in the renewal of the Church and society. This formation itself expresses the social nature of the person, but, above all, in a secularized world, the lay associations can represent for many a precious help for the Christian life in remaining faithful to the demands of the Gospel and to the commitment to the Church's mission and the apostolate.[35]

2.2. RE teacher in society and culture

The role and apostolate of the laity, Christ's faithful, members of God's people who participate in the mission of the Church and are co-responsi-

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[30] Cf. Hrvatska biskupska konferencija, Nacionalni katehetski ured, Župna kateheza u obnovi župne zajednice, Plan i program, Nacionalni katehetski ured Hrvatske biskupske konferencije – Hrvatski institut za liturgijski pastoral, Zagreb – Zadar, 2000, 100-102.

[31] Cf. Š. Marasović, *Vjeroučitelj i vrednote hrvatskog društva*, Kateheza, 30 (2008) 3, p. 185.

[32] CL, 25.

[33] Cf. GS, 42.

[34] Cf. CL, 28.

[35] Cf. CL, 29.

ble for the world in which they live is not primarily to establish and develop the ecclesial community, but to focus their evangelizing efforts to the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, the world of culture, the sciences and the arts, international relations, the mass media as well as other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, human suffering, etc.[36]

As all Christ's faithful, so RE teachers are called to witness to the faith which is the only true answer to the problems and objectives of man and society. Having received the responsibility of manifesting to the world the mystery of God that shines forth in Jesus Christ, the Church is made the "servant of all the people". In her the lay faithful should participate in the mission of service to the person and society, through revealing one person to another, a sense of one's existence, the truth about each person's final destiny.[37] But this will be possible only if the unity of the Church is accomplished, if the lay faithful advocate for the dignity of every person, human rights, especially the right to life and religious freedom, and if they promote family life and participate actively in politics and culture.

Due to their secular character which obliges them to the Christian animation of temporal order, the lay faithful are called to participate in the Church's serving to human person and society.[38] In the modern world in which everything is measured through success and efficiency, in which human relations are increasingly determined by a principle "give in order to receive", Christians are required to provide volunteer service especially to the needed, and to warn about the fact that people live rather of what they have received, than of what they have deserved.[39]

Therefore, the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in "public life", that is, in economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good. In fact, no area of life should be disregarded by the lay faithful's participation and the mission of the New Evangelization. It is necessary to evangelize a broad and complex world of policies, to respect the autonomy of earthly realities, to serve the people taking the burden of respective responsibilities. The lay faithful should not be discouraged by the criticism, but should strive to the political power imbued with a spirit of service, the required competence and responsibility, so that their action is really transparent and clear as it is expected by people.[40]

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[36] Pavao VI., Apostolski nagovor o evangelizaciji u suvremenom svijetu *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8. prosinca 1975.), KS, Zagreb, 2000, 70.

[37] Cf. CL, 36.

[38] Cf. *Ibidem.*

[39] Cf. Hrvatska biskupska konferencija, *Na svetost pozvani. Pastoralne smjernice na početku trećeg tisućljeća*, GK, Zagreb, 2002, 94.

[40] Cf. CL, 42.

In the light of their apostolate, the lay faithful are called to be present as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture, that is, in the world of education-school and university-in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities. Such a presence is destined not only for the recognition and possible purification of the elements that critically burden existing culture, but also for the elevation of these cultures through the riches which have their source in the Gospel and the Christian faith.[41] In a word, they are called to permeate the complex world of today's culture with the values of the Gospel and to be the protagonists and the "creators of a new, more humane culture".[42]

3. Emprical research: social engagement of RE teachers in the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska

At the end of 2016, the Catechetical office of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska carried out survey research on the social engagement of RE teachers in the territory of the Archdiocese in order to have deeper insight into their activities, both in the Church and in society. The research was supported at a regular meeting of the catechists in November 2016, and was conducted in December 5–19, 2016, through the use of web-based questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 262 e-mail addresses of all the RE teachers registered with the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska. 133 catechists responded to the questionnaire or 50.76%. The survey was conducted anonymously because the questionnaire design software does not collect data on the electronic addresses. The scope of the questionnaire is much wider than the following analysis and results. In our opinion, the analysis includes only more important aspects of the social engagement of RE teachers.

3.1. Research outcome

Concerning information about the gender and age of RE teachers who took part in the study, it is evident that RE teachers of all ages participated equally. However, a disproportionate share of the male participants (81% women, 19% men) was expected if we take into account a high percentage of female catechists (80% of the women) in their total number.(cf. Table 1).

Regarding to the qualifications of RE teachers, the number of the catechists is significantly higher (76%) than that of theologians (24%), though this ratio corresponds to their employment in primary and secondary schools of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska.[43]

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[41] Cf. CL, 44.

[42] CL, 5.

[43] Data taken from the Archives of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska.

Table 1. Data on the gender and age of RE teachers

	GENDER		AGE					MARITAL STATUS	
	M	F	under 30 years	30–40 years	40–50 years	50–60 years	over 60 years	married	married
N*	25	108	19	33	46	31	4	98	35
%	19	81	14	25	35	23	3	74	26

*N stands for the number of survey participants

Furtherly, since a great majority of the catechists (79%) are full-time employees, the results of this study are relevant. Concerning their work experience, RE teachers who have less work experience as well as those having many years of work experience are almost equally represented, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Qualifications and experience of RE teachers

	DEGREE PROGRAM		EMPLOYED IN			EMPLOY-MENT STATUS		YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE				
	Theol. cateh.	Philo. teol.	pri-mary	high	Prim./ High	Full-time	Part-time	under 5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21 and over
N	101	32	98	24	11	105	28	23	25	22	22	41
%	76	24	74	18	8	79	21	17	19	16,5	16,5	31

It is worth mentioning that 28% of RE teachers have two degrees, most-ly in the field of humanities, and 39% of them have completed additional training or course e.g. informatics, supervision or foreign language, and 5% of them have a doctoral degree (cf. Table 3). Interest in attending vari-ous courses and skill acquisition reflect the RE teachers' involvement in activities other than teaching religious education in schools. They also attend additional teacher training programs especially those aimed to RE teacher training for students with disabilities.[44]

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[44] The Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation, University of Zagreb provides the one-year Continuing Education Program offering 100 hours of lectures, seminars and exercises. Six RE teachers from the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska completed this program. Their acquired knowledge and skills are put into practice through teaching religious educa-tion in the Upbringing and Education Center for Persons with Disabilities.

[45] Since this is a multiple choice question, evidently some RE teachers have completed different trainings.

Table 3. Additional training of RE teachers

	ADDITIONAL TRAINING[45]	
	N	%
Training or course (informatics, super-vision, foreign language, etc.)	53	39
Two degrees:	38	28
A doctoral degree:	7	5
Something else:	5	4
None of the above :	45	33

3.2. Extracurricular activities of RE teachers

Before we proceed to the analysis of the RE teachers' extra-curricular activities, it is important to point out that the Catholic religious education in school is definitely a social science subject.[46]This is evident in the programs of Catholic religious education for primary and secondary schools which encompass social topics and issues such as education for peace, caring for creation, freedom, social justice, human labor and creativity, solidarity, protection of marriage and family, the rights of the child and so on. The contents of these programs highlight the RE teachers' social sensitivity and responsibility for transferring social values to students of all ages in line with the Christian principles.

On the basis of the research results, in addition to the regular education classes, 74.5% of RE teachers often or regularly take part in various extra-curricular activities in their schools (cf., Table 4). The goal of extra-curricular activities is primarily the deepening of the content of religious education, developing sense of solidarity with the needy, learning about and preserving the national cultural heritage and the protection and promotion of human rights, especially the rights of the child and the protection of the family.

Extra-curricular activities in which RE teachers regularly take part are public holidays and social events, such as the Days of Bread and Thanksgiving, All Saints, St. Nicholas, Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter,

[46] This assumption is supported by the fact that many meetings on social issues were held at the level of the Archdiocese and national level: *Vjeronauk kao mjesto odgoja za društvenost* (KLJŠ, Split, 23-25 August 2004), *Vjeronauk u školi kao doprinos dijalogu vjere i kulture* (KLJŠ, Split, 28-30 August 2006), *Vjeronauk u školi u društveno-religijskom kontekstu* (KLJŠ, Split, 21-23 August 2008), *Vjeronauk i vjeroučitelj pred društvenim izazovima* (Split, 28 November 2009), *Vjeronauk i nacionalni identitet* (Split, 3 March 2012), *Građanski odgoj i obrazovanje i Vjeronauk* (Split, 8 March 2014), *Odgoj za mir* (KLJŠ, Split, 24-25 August 2015) i *Uloga medija u odgoju i obrazovanju djece i mladih* (Split, 21 November 2015).

Mother's Day, the Anniversary of Fall of Vukovar, Homeland War Anniversaries, School Annual Day Celebration, City's /Municipality's Anniversary Day etc. They are also active in different groups such as charitable, volunteer, liturgical prayer, missionary, Bible study, drama, literary, art, film, ecological, ethnological, cultural heritage, etc., as well as activities related to the participation of students in the Religion Olympics and school competition. RE teachers actively participate in various school projects at local, regional, national or international levels such as Education in Solidarity Project, Stop the Violence Project, Eco School Project, Peer Support Learning Project, The Chakavian Word Evening Project, The Schools for Africa Project, Erasmus plus etc.

Social sensitivity among students and helping low-income students are often and regularly promoted by 84% of RE teachers, and 69.5% of them often and regularly assist the most vulnerable people (cf., Table 4). These activities mostly refer to the provision of food, clothing, money for the poor and vulnerable, purchase of handmade souvenirs and decorations aimed at donating money to the needy, especially at the time of the most important Christian feast days, on Christmas Eve and Easter Eve, and organizing charity concerts, performances and exhibitions. Also, 58% RE teachers along with the students visit elderly persons at care homes, children at the Centers for Children with Disabilities, drug rehab facilities and institutions for children and young adults without parental care (cf. Table 4).

RE teachers especially collaborate with various humanitarian and charitable associations such as Caritas, Social supermarket, The Well Association, Mary's Meals, Student Catholic Center (SKAC), Franciscan Youth (Frama), NGO Most, non-profit organization MI, Red Cross, White Cane Association and other local associations which primarily provide assistance to persons with disabilities and children who are suffering from various malignant diseases. 49% of RE teachers often and regularly participate in volunteering activities (cf., Table 4). A great majority of them volunteer in the parish community, church associations, civil society organizations and social welfare institutions in the local community.

However, that results referring to the ecumenical and interfaith sensitivity of RE teachers are rather satisfactory, but it is due to the prevalence of Roman Catholic population in the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska and the fact that other religious communities are under-represented and are mainly concentrated in the city of Split. 70% of RE teachers encourage students to participate in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and 15.5% of them participate in such dialogue in the parish community and the Archdiocese, and 10.5% of RE teachers organize ecumenical and interfaith meetings for their students (cf. Table 4). RE teachers usually organize ecumenical and/or interfaith meetings with representatives of the Orthodox and Protestant churches and the Jewish and Islamic communities.

Table 4. Extra-curricular activities of RE teachers

	never		sometimes		often		regularly	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In addition to regular classes I participate in other school activities:	2	1,5	29	22	38	28,5	64	48
I encourage students to help those coming from low-income families:	0	0	21	16	30	22,5	82	61,5
I support student- teacher participation in activities aimed at assisting the most vulnerable people:	2	1,5	39	29	34	25,5	58	44
I participate in volunteer activities:	21	16	47	35	39	29	26	20
I encourage students to volunteer:	4	3	31	23	57	43	41	31
I participate in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue in the parish community and the Archdiocese:	65	49	50	37,5	8	6	10	7,5
I encourage students to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue:	2	1,5	38	28,5	35	26	58	44
I organize ecumenical and /or interfaith meetings:	82	61,5	37	28		4,5	8	6

3.3. The engagement of RE teachers in the parish community

Apart from teaching religious education, RE teachers actively participate in their parish communities. According to survey responses, the parish catechesis is often and regularly performed by 48% of RE teachers, whereas 80% of them are involved in various forms of both parish and the Church lives, e.g. readers, members of the parish choir, animators, members of pastoral and economic councils, Parish Caritas and the like. Moreover, 40% of RE teachers are active in communities of adult believers and various ecclesial associations and movements of their parishes (cf., Table 5). They are involved in liturgical prayer group, charismatic prayer group, family group, charitable community, the Bible study group and community of the young. In regard to the ecclesial communities or movements, they are mostly involved in the Association of Salesian Cooperators, the Secular Franciscan Order, Friends of the Infant Jesus, the Legion of Mary, the Neocatechumenal Way, the Community *Prayer* and *Word* and the various fraternities within parish communities.

Although the results related to the engagement of RE teachers in the parish community are satisfactory and promising, bearing in mind the guidelines of the Church documents referring to their spiritual and faith-filled professional identity, their active involvement in the parish commu-

Table 5. The engagement of RE teachers in the parish community

	never		some-times		often		regu-larly	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In addition to teaching RE, I am active in the parish catechesis:	27	20	42	32	19	14	45	34
I participate in a community of adult believers in my parish:	50	37,5	30	22,5	14	11	39	29

nity should be a constant concern of the Church. Of course, this concern should not be interpreted as a hierarchical control, but as the outcome and expression of an authentic vocation and mission of RE teachers who should be deeply immersed in the life of the Church community.

3.4. Social engagement of RE teachers

The research results indicate to a significant engagement of RE teachers in a broader social context. 28.5% of RE teachers often or regularly participate in the social life of their town or the town quarter. Most of them are engaged in the area of culture (39%), politics (16%), media (10%) and other (13%) as shown in Table 6. In the area of culture, they participate or organize music and poetry nights, debates and lectures, visits to galleries and museums, and other cultural and sports events organized to celebrate the patron of the city or parish. In the area of politics, they regularly participate in elections and are actively engage in the political parties and democracy-promoting initiatives[47] in civil society. In the area of media, RE teachers are engaged as cooperators or editors in local newspapers, television and radio shows and websites. As distinguished and deserving members of the school staff, they are also appointed school principals.[48]

In order to be truly recognized in the community, RE teachers should be "men and women of their time, fully identified with their people, open to the real problems and sensitive to the culture, society and politics. RE teachers do not perform their task well if they are very generous, pious and devoted to the Church, but in some way tend to lose sight of the social and cultural life. Only the men and women deeply immersed in the reality of the world can be qualified for faith formation in line with the current

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[47] Currently, RE teachers hold the following positions: Member of Parliament, mayor, deputy mayor, county, city and municipal councilors.

[48] Recently, five RE teachers have been elected principals.

[49] Since this is a multiple choice question, consequently some RE teachers participated in a few areas of social life, though there were 56 (42%) of them who were not involved in any area of the social life.

Table 6. Social engagement of RE teachers

	never		some-times		often		regularly	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I participate in the social life of my town or the town quarter:	42	31,5	53	40	20	15	18	13,5
	culture		politics		media		other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I am activly involved in areas of the social life of my town or the town quarter:[49]	53	39	21	16	13	10	17	13

requirements of the Christian life".[50] This indicates to the importance of "local" RE teachers whose contribution to the society and culture should be encouraged and promoted.

Conclusion

What is expected from all the lay faithful is even more required and expected from RE teachers because of their theological and catechetical competences and active involvement in the Church's mission through Catholic religious education. RE teachers simply cannot close in their narrow professional field, but actively engage in the Church's pastoral and in all areas of social and cultural life. In this way, they can become important promoters of the new conciliar image of the Church and its presence in the world. In this context, RE teachers should be encouraged for greater social engagement in today's world. Therefore, this research aims not only to present the facts referring to the social engagement of RE teachers in the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska, but also to encourage them for more fervent engagement in school, the parish and the wider community. Depending on their creativity and personal preferences, RE teachers can freely choose among various possibilities.

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[50]   E. Alberich, *Kateheza danas*, KSC, Zagreb, 2012, p. 323.

III. Religious education challenged by a plurality of religions and migrations

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THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE MIGRATION PERIOD OF THE 5TH AND THE 6TH CENTURY

Abstract

The author of this paper provides a brief overview of the Roman Empire at the time of great turmoil in the 5th and 6th centuries that led to the collapse of its western part. The fall of the Empire triggered the decline of the culture and consequently collapse of the educational system. In such difficult times, the Church sought to protect the values of the Roman society (*romanitas*) including the education in Latin which was considered one of its most important values. The author clarified the historical circumstances and presented two great Christian intellectuals who were aware of the values and benefits of the culture they wanted to protect from oblivion and preserve for future generations. They were Boethius and Cassiodorus who encouraged the project of the whole education and culture, and as believers, they could also count on the Church's support, in areas of its influence, though the process was long-lasting and slow. In that context, Cassiodorus even founded the monastery Vivarium, in Calabria where the main task of the monks was rewriting of works of the holy Fathers and Greek and Roman classics. The author concluded that Christianity i.e. the Church did not neglect the culture of the Old World and time, but participated in the process of its preservation, and used it in order to reach the people who lived in the territories of the Western Empire, offering them the proclamation of the Gospel and literacy.

Key words: *Christianity, education, Boethius, Cassiodorus, education.*

Introduction

Education was important in the Greco-Roman culture and the school was one of the most influential institutions of the society at the time. Ancient Greek education had already developed a whole person education aimed to the well-being of the individual, society and to homeland defence. The Hellenistic education programme therefore included gymnastics, physical training, harsh discipline as well as the development of intellectual abilities. The lessons were taken within family, elementary

school, high school, but also in private gardens where philosophers used to gather with their students.[1] From the beginning of the 3rd century BC, Roman culture was greatly influenced by Greek culture; however, the Romans were more interested in effective school instruction for practical purposes, i.e. military and political ones.

Education and upbringing of the time is a complex issue, but this paper focuses on the trends and processes that occurred in the period from the 5th century onward, and cultural legacy that has been preserved especially in the western part of the Empire. The process of separation of the East and West began in the 5th century and affected many areas of human life including culture and education. This process was caused by migration of people, i.e. new peoples invaded the borders of the Empire. It accelerated the collapse of the Western Empire and the formation of the Gothic kingdom. The new social circumstances compelled the Church to seek new forms of evangelization but also to preserve all other heritage of civilization. Despite many difficulties and the disintegration of the Empire, which negatively affected social development, cultural values were preserved due to the many remarkable individuals who had a vision inspired by faith.

1. Education at the time of the decadence of the Roman Empire

In order to support the above claims, it is necessary to explain the role of education system in the Late Antiquity. The emergence of Christianity brought not radical changes concerning education but also in the life of Hellenistic society. Despite of the tensions that frequently undermine the sustainability of society, Christianity accepted the Greco-Roman educational models and strategies evaluating the inherited education system as well as research and scientific work. However, the Church rejected those elements which in any way promoted polytheism or mythology, so changes mostly referred to upbringing and the basic human values. At the beginning of Christianity, there were efforts to accept it as an entirely new religion opposed to all forms of culture of that world, but as anticipated, a sensible and moderate fraction prevailed and entered into dialogue with bearers of the culture of the time, which resulted in a fruitful encounter between Christianity and philosophy.[2] Although the holy fathers primarily focused on theology and theological issues of their time, which not directly affected the sphere of education, they significantly contributed to the axiological and teleological aspects of upbringing.

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[1]   Today's system of education is shaped according to the Greek model in which encompass family upbringing, elementary and high school education and finally higher education.

[2]   Cf. I. Bodrožić, *Klement Aleksandrijski i prihvaćanje grčke filozofije u Aleksandrijskoj Crkvi koncem 2. stoljeća*, Vrhbosnensia, 16 (2012) 2, p. 291-306.

The Roman Empire started to face a great crisis at the beginning of the 5th century, which intensified through years. The Empire was no longer threatened by or exposed to constant barbarian invasions on its borders or bordering provinces, but the very centre of the Empire was under attack. Thus, Alaric's invasion led to the destruction of Rome, the centre of the Roman Empire, in 410, and less than fifty years later, in 455, Genzeric invaded it again. The peak of the crisis was also the formal decline of the Western Roman Empire in 476, when Odoacer defeated Romulus Augustus and thus gained control over the western part of the Empire forming the Gothic kingdom.

The socio-political situation negatively affected the process of education and upbringing. The social and political instability caused the breakdown of education system as there were no institutions that could guarantee its overall functionality. However, some authors who deal with this subject matter and period have not always well understood the facts, and deduced from them the correct conclusions that would reflect cause-effect relationships.

It is the case with A. Kaiser who, in Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, described and interpreted those changes as follows: "The monasteries, that were built as early as in the 4th century in the West, were the only centres of knowledge which was to be preserved and transmitted through the interpretation of Christ's word in the 6th century. The Ascetic model of upbringing was based on God's fear and morality that was the most relevant aspect of education. Christian behaviour was based on the study of faith, but the individual's fee will was recognized. Therefore, young people had to be raised by the deeds and values taught by Jesus Christ, rejecting the Greco-Roman tradition as an expression of pagan idolatry. The only teacher was Christ, whose image on the icon depicts teaching the crowd, and which constituted a privileged educational tool for every individual, especially those illiterate. The schools, that had to be public, were abolished, thus only monasteries could organize catechetical lessons; the Mythologies and other works of classic writers were forgotten; there were no plays in amphitheatres, stadiums and circuses and gymnastics and music lost their values. Music education maintained and the mute perception of sight in preaching (*mute praedicatio*) was widespread, while the alphabetic letters were the privilege of few teachers of grammar and philology who taught about Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic authors, but in a Christian sense. The Barbarian people who penetrated into the ancient Roman Empire brought with them warlike games, horse games and hunting. Only the Carolingian Empire, though for a short time, was open to the cultural renewal and public education which had already been forgotten, albeit under the clergy's leadership. Instead of the classic texts, the texts of the Evangelists and the Church Fathers were rewritten and enriched with precious miniatures; all forms of literature,

art and education that were created through so many centuries fell into inexorable oblivion."[3]

The quoted text gives the impression that Christianity deliberately rejected all values of Hellenistic culture and introduced new criteria of its evaluation. It also suggests that Christianity is responsible for the decline of culture and the disintegration of education system, since the monasteries and monks were to dedicate themselves primarily to the texts of Scripture and writings of the Fathers of the Church. It follows that the Roman culture was universal since it anticipated public education contrary to Christianity that was seemingly to reduce it for the few not the many. Quite the contrary, the Church has always made the effort to reach the littlest, even at times when education was reserved for a social elite and wealthy people. Moreover, the quoted text implies understanding that the crisis of education in the Late Antiquity arose from the desire of the Church to replace schools with monasteries. However, reality was different as well as conditions that caused changes in the education and upbringing processes. Western Christianity tried to safeguard the threatened values and culture in monasteries. As far as education models were concerned, the Church did not interfere significantly, but it was deeply involved in the process of upbringing.

The Church was mostly concerned with the moral dimension of educational programme and not that much with the model of education. Briefly, from the very beginning, the Church promoted moral values, respecting the scientific and cultural forms that did not undermine morality and promote pagan values. Furthermore, Kaiser makes the rather provocative claim that the texts of the Evangelists and the Church Fathers were copied and enriched with precious miniatures, instead of the classic texts. The fact that the classic texts were less rewritten than that of the Church fathers was not at all a matter of ideology, or a choice of one thing and rejection of another, or bias, but the choice was such because of bad material conditions and the inability to overwrite all texts. But even then, as we know, the classic works were also rewritten in many monasteries, which assert that there was no conscious rejection of classic culture, but rather adjustment to the social and historical circumstances.

It is also the fact that the monasteries were the only places of culture in the 6th century and that the Church has always been eager to teach people morality and values, which have been proclaimed and left to the human race by Jesus Christ. Even if the classical tradition was neglected, to a certain extent, it was not a conscious neglect but rather conforming to the social and cultural constraints. Moreover, eventual Christian attitude of neglect towards the Hellenistic culture could have been manifested much earlier, from the 1st to the 3rd century, when the Church was

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[3]   A. Kaiser, Educazione (storia di), in: *Enciclopedia Filosofica 4*, Milano, 2006, p. 3231.

under severe persecution. But even under persecution and by rejecting the polytheism and idolatry of the pagan society, the Church had a positive attitude towards the scientific and cultural accomplishments of the time, and all Christian writers and the Church fathers were educated in the same cultural setting. Furtherly, if Christianity had ever tried to reject the social values, then it would have done it at the time when it enjoyed the social reputation and support of the Empire and not at the time of its fall. Therefore, we can rightly say that the Church has never rejected formal sciences and philosophy as the defining characteristics of Hellenistic tradition, but it certainly made efforts to *enhance* the development and *practice* of *moral values.*[4]

Obviously, the cause-and-effect relationship was different and more precise explanation is required to clarify why the decline of Roman culture happened at all. Also, it is important to emphasize the efforts of Christians to protect the inherited Hellenistic values that were under the influence of the barbaric peoples who ignored them and consequently caused their decline and oblivion. The fact that the Church cared for those values and accepted them can be supported by the data that some radical groups and individuals like Titian left the Church, since they did not approve the Church's attitude towards the Hellenistic values. Also, there were negative attitudes towards philosophy and a great theologian Tertullian was one of those who supported the idea that it caused all heresies. However, from its very beginning, Christian theology has continued to fly on the wings of Hellenistic thought by the prudent use of the spiritual heritage of the Old world.[5]

Furtherly, at the time of freedom of Christianity, Pope Damasus in Rome proved himself as a true successor of the city's sacredness, which he intended to shape according to the Christian principles, not rejecting the inherited tradition but rather using it for his own needs, i.e. to reach architectural style and aesthetic standards of Augustine. It is the reason why he adopted the form of Greek temple and civilian architecture for the early Christian basilica.[6]

2. Boethius' role in preserving Hellenistic culture

The claim that Christianity, i.e. the Church did not reject the Hellenistic values, i.e. works of classical Greek culture and philosophy, can be supported through an example of Boethius[7] who deliberately wanted to

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[4]   Cf. M. Pellegrino – S. Heid, Cristianesimo e cultura classica, in: *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, Bologna-Milano, 2006, p. 1268-1276.

[5]   Cf. C. Andersen – G. Denzler, Ellenizzazione, in: *Dizionario storico del Cristianesimo*, Milano, 1992, p. 271-272.

[6]   Cf. F. Cardini, *Cassiodoro il Grande*, Milano, 2009, p. 33.

[7]   Boethius was born between 475 and 480 in Rome and raised in reputable family, so he could receive a very caring religious education. He was greatly appreciated by The-

preserve ancient classic knowledge, especially philosophy, and to transmit it to generations in the Middle Ages. He translated into Latin Aristotle's most famous logical works, the Organon. He also made a great effort to express Christian teaching in terms drawn not simply from the Neoplatonist and other philosophers such as Aristotle and Porphyry, but also from his original philosophical thought that was to become a predominant influence in the greatest philosophical synthesis of the Middle Ages.[8] Thus, not only that he emphasized a complementary relationship between philosophy and theology, consistent with the inherited tradition, but he also referred to philosophical knowledge in order to ground his theology on a solid foundation and to promote it lately. All his accomplishments were based on his Christian and theological convictions, thought he was also supported by the highest ecclesiastical circles in Rome.

In that context, Boethius was aware that the great treasures of the Old World were to fade away if there would be no one to accept and practice it, i.e. to pass that legacy on to future generations. He also showed interest in *artes liberales* contrary to the Romans who were reluctant to that tradition.[9] But his idea and endeavour concerning education of the Christian intellectual was immense, but it would not have been feasible unless he had had support in the ecclesiastical circles who shared his opinion and his concerns about the social circumstances of the time. Thus, Boethius can be rightly regarded as the father of medieval Christian thought, who especially contributed to the development of scholasticism, since he translated into Latin many important works of Greek philosophers and scientists but also some textbooks on matters of *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*. He was known for introducing Aristotelian logic into discussions, and for defining basic concepts such as a person, happiness, eternity, etc.[10] He earnestly promoted the project of preserving Greek culture in order to introduce it into the medieval world that was underdeveloped and deprived of many dimensions of its own culture, particularly philosophical and scientific ones.[11]

The openness of Gothic King Theodoric and his official visit to Rome in 500 were favourable for Boethius. The King was welcomed by the pope, clergy, the Senate as well as whole population. He promised on that occasion that he would preserve the current social order, and hence provided

odoric, the king of the Ostrogoths who entrusted him the most important offices until Boethius was accused of betrayal, then he was sentenced and murdered in Pale around 525. (cf. U. Pizzani, Boezio, in: *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane I*, Genova-Milano, 2006, p. 796-802).

[8]   F. Koplston, *Istorija filozofije, Srednjovjekovna filozofija*, Beograd, 1989, p. 103-106.

[9]   H. Chadwick, *The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy*, Oxford, 1981, p. 69-71.

[10]   Cf. B. Mondin, Severino Boezio, in: *Storia della Teologia I*, Bologna, 1996, p. 481.

[11]   Cf. C. Moreschini, *Storia della filosofia patristica*, Brescia, 2004, p. 464-467.

enough room for Boethius' project of preserving ancient values, primarily the Greek scientific and philosophical heritage, until his fall from power because of the alleged conspiracy.

3. Cassiodorus and his project

Another writer worthy of mention was Cassiodorus who continued Boethius's project of preservation of classical literature. His goal was the same: to translate into Latin the entire Greek literature, both pagan and Christian in order to transmit it to the Latin west and future generations. Thus, he had become a significant link in the chain of the Late Antiquity culture and that of the Middle Ages, which developed several centuries later. Later he withdrew from political and public life, and founded the Vivarium monastery in Calabria where the major activity of his monks was the rewriting of manuscripts. In his *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum*, he provided a comprehensive educational programme, initially including the general humanistic education divided into two parts (trivium and quadrivium), followed by theological formation. By adopting the fundamental principles of Christian philosophy, i.e. the principle of harmony of faith and reason; the principle of harmony of the Gospel and culture, Cassiodorus considered, as Origen and Augustine, that the acquisition of profane forms of knowledge should become an integral part of monastic theology and of monastic culture, bearing in mind that pagan knowledge had to be purified of sinful misapprehensions and delusions. Thus, human wisdom (*litterae humanae*) and divine wisdom (*litterae divinae*) were complementary to each other, since the understanding of the Scriptures required the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills.[12]

Indeed, the rewriting activity in Vivarium varied. Cassiodorus produced several editions of the Bible and collected various Bible commentaries, especially that of Origen, Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome. He did not neglect the secular writings according to his possibilities. And above all, it is to point out that Cassiodorus brought Greek codes from Constantinople and arranged their translation.[13]

Boethius's and Cassiodorus's roles were irreplaceable because not only that they transmitted the knowledge of the world to the Middle Ages, but they also connected Roman society with the Gothic kingdom, that would gradually open up to the same culture that those outstanding intellectuals nourished and promoted. Thus, their significance is twofold, since they reflected the tendencies of the contemporary Christian intellectuals concerning their attitudes toward a nation of newcomers whom they could offer their cultural heritage and thus preserving it from oblivion and destruction.

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[12]   Cf. B. Mondin, *Storia della Teologia*, Bologna, 1996, p. 481-483.
[13]   F. Cardini, *Cassiodoro il Grande*, Milano, 2009, p. 139-149.

4. Instead of a conclusion

The above mentioned overview reflects an obvious crisis experienced by the society in the western part of the Empire. The decline of Western society triggered the downfall of many aspects of the Greco-Roman culture that was the pride of the Empire, and which could no longer be protected or promoted as it had been at the time of the Empire's stability. Nevertheless, there was some progress in culture and literature in the period of Theodoric's reign, unlike the period of Lombard domination specific of cultural collapse. The efforts of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) were fruitful and led to the opening to Christianity, i.e. to the Catholic Church, and at the same time to civilization and Latinization. Gregory was also known of his missionary efforts, the most significant one was the mission of forty monks that were sent to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons, and his great friend, Leander of Seville, had a great role in the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism.[14]

In addition to the above, it is important to keep in mind outstanding individuals, the people of God, as defined by P. Siniscalco, who have significantly contributed to the Church growth determining its mission and values in the new circumstances since the 5th century. Therefore, the vision and activity of the Church should be observed through their efforts. Their efforts in providing the spiritual and pastoral care, in a period of great turbulence and coping with the Barbarians, were immense and greatly appreciated. Although the Western Roman Empire was conquered by heretics, the Church remained faithful to its mission and managed to convert the winners. At this time, the Church as the most influential social institution guaranteed the social adherence even to those in power. Thus, during the fall of the Empire, in the 5th and 6th centuries, Latin culture was renewed and strengthened in its originality.[15]

Since the Church had been given full freedom in the Empire, Christians expressed their adherence to the Roman tradition that they had become familiar with. However, the fate of the society did not affect individuality and autonomy of the Church which remained free and carried out its mission accepting even barbaric people who threatened the boundaries of the Empire.[16] Thus, after the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Church recognized the need for the transmission of traditional educa-

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[14]   A. di Berardino (ur.), *Patrologia IV*, Genova, 1996, p. 121-122; p. 151-155.

[15]   P. Siniscalco, *Il cammino di Cristo nell'Impero Romano*, Bari, 2009, p. 274-280. The author mentions many names from this period, some ofwhom are the following: Peter Krizolog, Maxim Torinski, Caesar of Arles, abbot Columban, St. Benedict, Saint Patrick, Lupo di Troyes, Faust of Riez and many others such as Pope Gregory the Great and Saint Isidore of Seville.

[16]   Cf. P. Siniscalco, *Il cammino di Cristo nell'Impero Romano*, p. 264-265.

tion and its values and was guardian and bearer of Latin culture and the awareness of belonging to Roman civilization (*romanitas*).

In times of great turbulence, the Church made constant effort to preserve the Hellenistic culture and to transmit it to future generations. The Church was aware that the Hellenistic culture could also enrich those people who settled in the area of the former Western Empire. From the earliest times, due to its consistency and prudence, the Church could recognize the values and dimensions of Hellenistic culture unlike that of the Barbarians if it could be called culture at all. That is why, the Church, at an opportune time, promoted evangelical values among people who lacked a genuine understanding of culture and true faith.

In this context it is possible to explain the Carolingian Renaissance in the 8th and 9th centuries, and the cultural revival under Charlemagne who intended to reach the splendour of the ancient Roman Empire in the newly created empire, through the promotion of cultural and religious values. Since he was quite concerned with Christian upbringing of his subjects and with the education of the clergy, he mostly expected their support and he ordered the construction of school buildings near cathedrals and abbeys not only for clerics and monks, but for the lay people too. Charlemagne's tireless promotion of ecclesiastical and educational reform bore fruit in the most influential religious figures that transmitted Christian culture based on the principle of harmony between faith and reason, and the primacy of faith over reason. In order to interpret the Holy Scriptures and holy canons, a command of correct and a fluent knowledge of Latin was required. The Gospel teaching offered basic moral and religious values and rest of the teaching concentrated on the works of the Classic authors, while the values of the Barbarians were integrated into the existing traditions.[17]

Therefore, it can be concluded that Christianity was involved in the process of preserving the Greco-Roman culture from oblivion, since culture was considered more important than the values of the people who were to settle the Western Roman Empire. The faith was proclaimed to them and culture transmitted to the extent that the existing social circumstances allowed it. Pupils could receive suitable moral and religious education through an ambitious humanistic program that did not lack anything that was considered valuable and useful for the education of those who found themselves in the Empire as new masters. Precisely, the Church adequately cared about their well-being, their worldly and spiritual needs and invested much effort not only into the evangelization of those peoples but also into their integration and the acceptance of culture of the former Empire as its own.

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[17] Cf. B. Mondin, *Storia della teologia 2*, Bologna, 1996, p. 14-16.

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PASTORAL CARE AND MIGRATIONS

Abstract

The migration phenomenon is not a novelty, because it has always been inherent to man. However, in this globalized world, its causes and forms make it more complex and a serious challenge for society at all levels. In addition to its social, cultural and economic characteristics, migration is specific of its theological and pastoral aspects, being the "sign of the times" for the Church which should judge responsibly and perform its pastoral activities. The author of the article firstly deals with the phenomenon of migration in Antiquity and the biblical world, then he refers to its contemporary, social and cultural implications. Taking into consideration the globalized and secularized culture and society, the author focuses on migration as a challenge for pastoral theology and pastoral work. Finally, the last part of the article deals with the meaning of the pastoral care of migrants through its evangelizing mission and emphasize the importance of Christian formation challenged by the phenomenon of migration.

Key words: *migration, refugees, pastoral, society, culture, evangelization, formation.*

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration and refugees presents one of the complex phenomena of the modern time, which significantly interferes with the essence of human dignity, social and cultural structures as well as pastoral ministry. Although a right to migration is the fundamental human right,[1] it consequently deprives the local community of its intellectual, spiritual and material potentials, thus creating the void. Migration as a macro-phenomenon, as old as mankind, should be approached interdisciplinary, since it has provoked much more concern and interest than ever in the past.

The worldwide situation enhances migration due to the economic inequalities or the human rights violations. People look for security and a

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[1]   Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965), 65 (hereinafter: GS).

higher standard of living and are often forced to leave their home area because of insecurity and oppression. The political and ideological motives have also contributed to the complexity of migration, regardless of whether they relate to the country of origin or the host country. Recently, forced migration is affected by ravages of war, poverty and political persecutions, which aim to meet utilitarian goals, ideological intolerance and religious fundamentalism (e.g. radical Islamization).

Referring to the history of migration, it can be said that situation has worsened "in an increasingly globalized society"[2], and that globalization along with technology significantly contribute to the mobility and massive migration waves.[3] Migration and globalization encourage the Church to re-evaluate its mission, which cannot be reduced to monolithic nor Euro-centric, because the Church is universal and Jesus Christ wants to "draw all men to Himself" (Jn 12:32; cf. Col 3:11; 1Cor 12:13).

From the theological and pastoral views, migration is a great theological and ecclesial challenge[4], as Pope Benedict XVI claimed: Migrations present *a sign of the times*,[5] which pope Francis[6] constantly confirms in his teaching: "Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all."[7] The Church has always shown its concern for migrants as it is called to promote its pastoral work continuously, and to enhance its educational and formative dimensions referring to the acceptance of immigrants and refugees. However, it is not only important to create a model of pastoral care or mission which would meet the needs of migrants, but also to choose a face the Church wants to highlight and a way to promote the acceptance through pastoral praxis. Although, it has always been a tough challenge, migration still presents a *kairos* for

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[2] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate* (29 June 2009.), 7 (hereinafter: CiV).

[3] Cf. S. Zamagni, Migrazioni e globalizzazione, in: Pontificio consiglio della pastorale per i migranti e gli itineranti, *Il macrofenomeno migratorio e la globalizzazione*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2010, p. 7-20.

[4] Cf. R. Dausner, *Asylstädte. Flucht und Migration als theologische Herausforderung*, Stimmen der Zeit, 141 (2016) 9, p. 579-588.

[5] Cf. Benedict XVI, Message for the 92nd day of migrants and refugees (2006). *Migrations: a sign of the times* (18 October 2005).

[6] Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 46 (hereinafter: EG). Pope Francis At the beginning of his ministry, in order to show his solidarity Pope Francis visited refugees on the island of Lampedusa in southern Italy (July 8, 2013), and during the refugee crisis at the end of 2015, he visited the refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos (16 April 2016), where he met with Patriarch Bartholomew I.

[7] EG, 210. On August 17, 2016, Pope Francis established the *Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development,* which refers to the refugees and migrants, the sick, the marginalized, victims of conflict and natural disasters, prisoners, the unemployed, and he himself will manage temporarily, cf. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20160817_humanam-progressionem.html (25 January 2017).

evangelization because" the present time, in fact, calls upon the Church to embark on a new evangelization also in the vast and complex phenomenon of human mobility. This calls for an intensification of her missionary activity both in the regions where the Gospel is proclaimed for the first time and in countries with a Christian tradition."[8]

1. The emergence of the first migration in Antiquity and biblical life

The phenomena of migration and mobility are as old as the human race. People have always moved from one place to another throughout history. Besides, a human being is created to move. Migration has its advantages and disadvantages. People are forced to leave their natural environment and assimilate into an alien culture which is very hard. Relationship between the locals and foreigners has varied throughout history and in different cultures, where the newcomer was considered either a stranger/an enemy (*hostis*), or a newcomer/a guest (*xenos*). In many archaic cultures, the foreigner was regarded as the enemy due to the differences in language, skin color, dress and culture. Many traders, artisans and officials used to immigrate to ancient Egypt. Although, a great majority of people experienced Egyptians' oppression, still many foreigners could feel their hospitality and acceptance. In Greece, the *hostis* turned into the *xenos* and was guaranteed hospitality. It is worthwhile to mention that the Greeks realized their unity due to their language and awareness of belonging to a city (*polis*). The Greek cities were inhabited by foreigners (*barbarians*), i.e. the *xenoi* who assimilated into a community of the *politoi* (citizens).

Forced by the wars and other troubles, refugees from neighboring countries found their shelter in the Greek cities. Greece was an exemplary host in many ways, whereas ancient Rome was not that hospitable to foreigners, at the beginning, presumably due to constant wars. In the course of time, Rome became more open to receiving foreign people. Accepting of others was particularly evident in the Judeo-Christian tradition, in which hospitality was considered as a therapy to overcome xenophobia. Not only the doors of their homes, but also that of their hearts were opened to a foreigner who gradually became a friend.[9]

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[8] Benedict XVI, Message for the World day of migrants and refugees (2012). *Migration and the New Evangelization* (21 September 2011).

[9] Cf. K. Koch, Receiving foreigners as a sign of culture: from hostility to hospitality, in: Papinsko vijeće za pastoralnu skrb selilaca i putnika, *Selilaštvo na pragu trećega tisućljeća - IV. svjetski kongres o pastoralnoj skrbi selilaca i izbjeglica*, KS, Zagreb, 1999, 123-131. (Original title of a Book of Proceedings): Pontifical Council for the Pastoral care of Migrant and Itinerant People, *Migration at the Threshold of the Third Millennium IV World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees* (Vatican 1998).

In the Old Testament, individuals and the people of God were always on the move, so the Sacred Scripture is the history of the people on the move. The Book of Exodus describes the Israelites as itinerant people. The history and spirituality of the people of Israel were marked by the practice of acceptance and hospitality (cf. Ex 23:9). It is rooted in the very origin of a nomadic lifestyle in the Patriarchal Age, i.e. and prevails throughout the Sacred Scripture. Expressions of respect, support and feeling for the foreigner (cf. Deut 10:18) are based on religious beliefs, because all the rules come from God. Hospitality reflects the will of God, and in that sense, slave and free man, an orphan, the widow and the stranger should be protected (cf. Lev 19:9-10; Deut 14:28-29. 24:19-22). The Israelites experienced the love of God in Egypt and are called to share it with others: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt" (Ex 22:20; cf. Deut 5:14-21). In the book of Genesis we can read about hospitality to strangers. Abram was asked by the Lord to leave his country because the Lord wanted to make a great nation of His people (cf. Gen 12:1-5). Abram himself was "a resident alien" (Gen 23:4), "a wandering" who sought refuge in Egypt (cf. Deut 26:5), and therefore accepted those passing by his tent (cf. Gen 18:1-8). Hospitality was expressed by Moses, Joshua, Ruth, widow of Safat who accepted Elijah (cf. 1Kgs 17:8-16). The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi and others pointed to the importance of acceptance. However, some scenes violated the law of hospitality (cf. Ex 19:4-9). Jewish migration provided a favourable opportunity to spread the faith. The news of the Christian faith followed the routes of Jewish migration in the Greco-Roman world.

The New Testament emphasizes the issue of migration even more than the Old Testament. The practice of acceptance spread all over the world of Antiquity, however, Jesus' mission deepened the sense of acceptance and hospitality in the spirit of love towards others. He established the Church as the new nation, the universal Church entrusted to proclaim the Kingdom of God, but "The Church, while on earth it journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord, is like in exile."[10] Jesus was a refugee from the beginning (cf. Mt 2:13-15), since he often left Palestine and went to Samaria, the Decapolis (cf. Mk 5:1; Lk 9:51s; Jn 4:4), Tyre and Sidon, too (cf. Mt 11:20-22), and the crowd came to him from all sides (cf. Mt 4:24-25).[11]

In the parable of the Samaritan, the stranger becomes a paradigm of Christian acceptance (cf. Lk 10:29-37). The parable of the Wedding Feast indicates that all are called, throughout the world (cf. Lk 13:29). Jesus founded the ministry of His disciples on the principle of hospitality and identified himself with strangers: I was "a stranger and you welcomed

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[10] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), 6 (hereinafter: LG).

[11] Cf. G. Bentoglio, *"Il signore protegge lo straniero" (Sal 146,9). Riflessione di teologia biblica*, Credere oggi, Messaggero, Padova, 26 (2006) 4, p. 19-29.

me" (Mt 25:35). The theme of hospitality is expressed in the Book of Acts and the Epistles: "love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor"… "exercise hospitality" (Rom 12:10.13);"Be hospitable to one another without complaining" (1Pt 4:9). From its beginning, the Church promoted the openness towards foreigners, itinerant people, refugees and all the weak, realizing that the encounter with other cultures and civilizations, migration and displacement of the faithful in the world is the God's plan to proclaim" salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47). There should be no foreigner in the Church, due to its hospitality and missionary life which are in its nature. However, the Church is aware that we exist in this world i.e. in time and space as "aliens and sojourners" (1Pt 2:11), "for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come" (Heb 13:14), "But our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20). That goal is clearly described by the apostle Paul: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). In doing his missionary duty, St. Paul turned to the Jewish communities in the Diaspora which were well structured. He primarily addressed to them in their synagogues, e.g. In Thessalonica (cf. Acts 17:1ss), and in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:8ss). In this way, he could reach the others, e.g. in Athens (cf. Acts 17:16ss), and in Corinth where he met Jewish couple Aquila and Priscilla (cf. Acts 18:1ss; 18:18ss). Although they failed to convert, they connected him with others such as a God-fearing Lydia from Philippi who converted (cf. Acts 16).[12]

In addition to the Jews and the external migrations, the internal migrations to Africa, Gaul, and Dalmatia (cf. 2Tim 4:9-12), contributed to the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Apart from bishops and priests, the lay faithful had a particular role in the spread of Christianity e.g. slaves converted their masters, soldiers were converted by their fellow-soldiers and traders evangelized many of their customers. Also, the "barbaric migrations" ended up with baptism and the establishment of the Christian communities in the West. Immigration of the "pagans" to Europe was marked by their conversion to Christianity, too.

2. Migration as the contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon

Although the reasons, types, causes and challenges of migration in the past have been researched from different points of view, due to the

[12] Cf. F. Gioia, Acceptance of foreigners yesterday and today, in: Papinsko vijeće za pastoralnu skrb selilaca i putnika, *Selilaštvo na pragu trećega tisućljeća - IV. svjetski kongres o pastoralnoj skrbi selilaca i izbjeglica*, KS, Zagreb, 1999, p. 133-147. (Original title of a Book of Proceedings): Pontifical Council for the Pastoral care of Migrant and Itinerant People, *Migration at the Threshold of the Third Millennium IV World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees* (Vatican 1998).

limited scope of this paper, the systematic study of this issue is left out. This paper focuses on the contemporary phenomenon of migration and its implications for the social, cultural and pastoral settings. The interest and concern for the phenomenon of migration has been evident in recent years.[13] Better understanding of it requires interdisciplinary approach, because migration involves various and interrelated factors such as historical, geographical, economic, sociological, psychological, political, medical, secure, religious, etc. Taking into consideration the interdisciplinary character of the increasing migration, pastoral theology deals with it from theological and pastoral points of view. The internal and external types of migration are often discussed. Internal migration refers to people moving within a country, whereas external migration refers to people moving across borders, also known as international migration.

Earlier migrations, either on a temporary or permanent basis, were mostly driven by agrarian motives. The rapid rise of industrialization and urbanization resulted in migration from rural to urban areas. People used to migrate because of economic, educational or religious reasons. Religiously motivated migrations were often focused on pilgrimages, missionary or evangelizing efforts.

The Church managed to control the flows of migration in the Middle Ages, due to the expansion and strengthening of the Christianity. However, in today's globalized society migration is distracting factor which moves the Church away and leads to the process of de-Christianization, thus a new evangelization is required. The two World Wars significantly contributed to the intensifying migration processes in the 19th and 20th century. At the end of the 20th century, the world experienced enormous mobility motivated either by leisure, work, study or tourism. The Church and pastoral work have faced completely new and difficult challenges of migration associated with militant secularism and social liberalization, in the context of post-modern and pluralist society. Aware of the dramatic social changes at the end of the 20th century, Pope John Paul II claimed: "Today we face a religious situation which is extremely varied and changing. Peoples are on the move; social and religious realities which were once clear and well defined are today increasingly complex. … Religious and social upheaval makes it difficult to apply in practice certain ecclesial distinctions and categories to which we have become accustomed."[14] Migration is neither a current phenomenon nor some exceptional and unexpected situation, but rather structural, social and pastoral necessity, because "the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence there has

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[13] Cf. http://www.imiscoe.org (1 February 2017).

[14] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris mission* (7 December 1990), 32 (hereinafter: RM).

arisen a new series of problems, a series as numerous as can be, calling for efforts of analysis and synthesis."[15]

Globalization and technological advancements significantly contribute to mass mobility and migration, but the increase in number of refugees is a special "sign of the times". In addition to economic reasons, a great majority of people migrate because they are aware of the opportunities available to them in the field of science, technology or culture. Many of them just want to discover another way of life, improve standard of living or develop their talents. Pope Francis claims that human mobility and migration "can prove to be a genuine enrichment for both families that migrate and countries that welcome them"[16].

Therefore, if properly managed, migration could be a driving force for development, otherwise it can cause instability that we experience today. It has beneficial effects since it allows knowledge exchange and sharing of socio-cultural experiences and achievements. It can be the basis for understanding and cooperation among countries, which are no longer mono-cultural but multicultural.[17] It also promotes solidarity with the poor, refugees and persons whose human rights have been violated. Croatian bishops and other religious communities in Croatia[18] claim that migration also encourages social and religious groups, movements and associations to accept immigrants and refugees, allowing them social and cultural assimilation. Solidarity and charitable spirit have been recognized, especially in recent years when the influx of refugees to Europe has dramatically increased. From the religious point of view, a space for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue has been created. From the sociological point of view and in the context of multiculturalism, the migration phenomenon is considered as an occasion for tolerance. However, from the theological-pastoral point of view, tolerance is not enough since the Gospel offers much deeper message.

Migration has now become a global phenomenon which brings some tensions, so society has to deal with the problems which migrants, countries and people experience.[19] Reflecting on this fact, in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI concluded: "This is a striking phenomenon because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dra-

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[15] GS, 5.

[16] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (19 March 2016), 46 (hereinafter: AL).

[17] Cf. M. Simeoni, *I processi migratori: multietnismo e multiculturalismo*, Credere oggi, 26 (2006) 4, p. 7-18.

[18] Cf. Izjava Komisije HBK Justitia et pax, *O važnosti međunarodne zaštite izbjeglica i kršćanskoj solidarnosti u njihovu zbrinjavanju* (28 July 2015). *Apel vjerskih predstavnika u Republici Hrvatskoj za pomoć izbjeglicama* (1 September 2015.).

[19] Cf. O. Forti – E. Varinetti, *Annus horribilis*, Orientamenti pastorali, 63 (2015) 10, p. 13-24.

matic challenges it poses to nations and the international community. We can say that we are facing a social phenomenon of epoch-making proportions that requires bold, forward-looking policies of international cooperation if it is to be handled effectively. Such policies should set out from close collaboration between the migrants' countries of origin and their countries of destination; it should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries. No country can be expected to address today's problems of migration by itself. We are all witnesses of the burden of suffering, the dislocation and the aspirations that accompany the flow of migrants."[20]

Negative effects, troubles and tragedies of migration which have undermined European and global reality at the beginning of the 21st century, have been in the focus of Pope Benedict XVI and even more of Pope Francis. On the one hand, it reflects concern for the refugees and all those who were forced to leave their homes, and on the other hand, the causes and consequences of migration have been revealed. Historical problems, economic inequality and political calculations have come to light. The vast majority of migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, due to re-opening of the so-called Mediterranean and Southeast European routes. Ongoing conflicts in the African continent (Nigeria, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, etc.), in the Middle East, so-called "Islamic situation" (Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan), and current developments in Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria) as well as natural disasters prompted mass migration. The entire groups were forced to use the aforementioned routes in order to reach Europe. The whirlwind of migration let to disintegration of many families and thousands of children and women were drowned and killed. It is to conclude that economic insecurity, wars, social unrest and natural disasters are the most frequent causes of migration. Furtherly, "the roots of the phenomenon can also be traced back to exaggerated nationalism and, in many countries, even to hatred and systematic or violent exclusion of ethnic or religious minorities from society. This can be seen in civil, political, ethnic and even religious conflicts raging in all continents. Such tensions swell the growing flood of refugees, who often mingle with other migrants. The impact can be felt in host societies, in which ethnic groups and people with different languages and cultures are brought together with the risk of reciprocal opposition and conflict."[21]

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[20]   CiV, 62.

[21]   Pontifical council for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people, Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* – The love of Christi towards migrants (3 May 2004), Vatican City, 2004, 1 (hereinafter: EMCC).

According to the rules and principles of international law[22], states are required to assist and protect persons holding refugee status. There are *legal* and *illegal* immigrations, the later are often triggered by various criminal or terrorist organizations and intentions due to human hardship and tragedy. The refugees, especially women and children, often become victims of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced labor and begging.[23] Such phenomena generate intolerance and threaten the security of receiving countries. Some forms of social and religious fundamentalism, especially the phenomenon of Islamic extremism (ISIL), are sometimes supported by external, political or military forces who take advantage of social crisis and migration to infiltrate terrorist groups among refugees. The threat of terrorism and all forms of radicalism create the fear of losing national, cultural and religious identity. Consequently, on the one hand, resistance at the state level is manifested through the borders closure, fortifying borders with wire fences (Hungary, Austria, Slovenia) and raising walls (e.g. construction of border wall between the US and Mexico), and on the other hand, it encourages solidarity in preventing evil.[24]

Social institutions are required to seek a just order and the way toward coexistence so that each person is respected, and to create laws that allow a faster integration of displaced persons and refugees. Although people have the right to emigrate, it is necessary today to encourage people's right to reside, as Pope John Paul II claims: "It is a basic human right to live in one's own country. However, this right becomes effective only if the factors that urge people to emigrate are constantly kept under control."[25] Although emigration can have a positive impact on a country of immigration, it can also seriously disrupt social system of a country of emigration. Being aware of this problem Pope Francis argues that: "this process should include, from the outset, the need to assist the countries which migrants and refugees leave. This will demonstrate that solidarity… In any case, it is necessary to avert, if possible at the earliest stag-

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[22] Cf. UNHCR, *The refugee convention, 1951.* UNHCR, *The protocol of refugees 1967.*

[23] Cf. Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Guidelines for the pastoral care of the road* (24 May 2007), p. 85-86. 122. Francis, Message for the World day of migrants and refugees 2017. *Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless* (8 September 2016).

[24] Cf. L. Larivera, *La "governance" globale delle migrazioni,* La Civiltà cattolica, 165 (2014) 4, p. 484-495. G. Sale, *L'immigrazione in Europa e i diversi modelli di integratione*, La Civiltà cattolica, 167 (2016) 4, p. 253-268. *La tragedia dei bambini migranti* (Editoriale), La Civiltà cattolica, 167 (2016) 2, p. 313-320. M. Garcían Durán – G. P. Sánchez González, *La frontiera come un ponte. La sfida delle migrazioni in America Latina e nei Caraibi*, La Civiltà cattolica, 167 (2016) 4, p. 463-471.

[25] John Paul II, *Address to the Fourth World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees* (9 October 1998).

es, the flight of refugees and departures as a result of poverty, violence and persecution."[26]

The Republic of Croatia has an extensive experience in internal migration, emigration and experience to accept refugees.[27] The aftermath of World War II caused the gradual increase in rural-to-urban migration, which devastated rural areas and consequently led to the urban population growth. However, overurbanization led to emigration from large to small urban centres or from urban to rural areas. Emigration mostly caused by economic reasons has increased in Croatia after the economic crisis in 2008, and its accession to the European Union in 2013. The end of World War II was marked by a great labour emigration process and family disintegration. Young workers were motivated by earning enough money to send it to their families back home. Unfortunately, the entire young families and highly educated people are leaving Croatia today. Thus, migration is "particularly dramatic and devastating to families and individuals"[28], but also for the county itself, since it suffers a loss of valuable labour power and highly skilled and educated employees who were supported by the state funding. Emigration negatively affects demographics and the future of Croatia, which as Croatian demographers[29] have warned, is in danger of aging and gradual withering away, thus requiring immigration. Consequently, the Church and the state argue that:" every effort should be encouraged, even in a practical way, to assist families and Christian communities to remain in their native lands."[30] In this context, it is evident that the issues of emigration and refugees in the European Union have completely different effects. Due to its aging population and the need for economic recovery and development, the EU actively encourages immigration of millions of young people and foreign labour.

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[26] Francis, Message for the World day of migrants and refugees 2016. *Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy* (12 September 2015).

[27] Cf. C. Hornstein Tomić, I. Hrstić, F. Majetić, I. Sabotič, M. Sopta, Zbornik *Hrvatsko iseljeništvo i domovina. Razvojne perspektive*, Biblioteka Zbornici - Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, 2014. - http://www.pilar.hr/novosti/sve-novosti/20-izdvojeno/578-zbornik-hrvatsko-iseljenistvo-i-domovina (20 January 2017).

[28] AL, 46.

[29] Cf. *Hrvatska sve praznija, a država ne zna broj iseljenih. Stručnjaci upozoravaju: Bit će još gore*, in: http://mojahrvatska.vecernji.hr/hrvatska-sve-praznija-a-drzava-ne-zna-broj-iseljenih-strucnjaci-upozoravaju-bit-ce-jos-gore-1144731 (25 January 2017). I. Nejašmić/A. Toskić, *Ostarjelost stanovništva seoskih naselja Republike Hrvatske*, Migracijske i etničke teme, 32 (2016) 2, p. 191-219. Due to an increasing immigration of Croats into Western Europe and the difficulties experienced by the Croatian Catholic Missions, a public appeal was sent by Ivica Komadina, a delegate for the Croatian faithful, at the meeting of Croatian priests and pastoral workers from Croatian Catholic missions and communities in Western Europe, which was held in Kastel Stafilic, 9 October 2015.

[30] AL, 46.

3. Migration as a challenge for pastoral theology, the church and the parish community

The implications of mass migration and refugees flows not only affect, but also concern theologians and the Church. The following questions arise: What does faith in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour, require when challenged by religious diversity? How can one express his/her Christian belief in encounter with adherents of other religions, especially if they are exclusivists? What does God expect of the local Church and the parish communities challenged by migration and can they remain isolate from the reality? Are the existing models of parish pastoral appropriate for the acceptance and evangelization of the new types of emigrants?

Faced with these and other issues, the Catholic Church is closely monitoring developments related to migrants and refugees, seeking pastoral models to realize its mandate for missionary evangelization.[31] Although a pastoral paradigm shift is not easy, the Church's careless pastoral care and hardened attitudes toward migration are not allowed. Focusing on the migration crisis carefully and prudently, the Church becomes more aware of the anthropological-cultural catholicity through its regular day-to-day pastoral activity (cf. Gal 3:28) and ground its approach to migration on the Christian personalism and Christian anthropology. This means that, contemplating the incarnation and redemption of Jesus Christ, it recognizes Christ's image in every person and takes care of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. In this context, migration presents challenge for theology and pastoral care. The Church leaders provide guidance and launch initiatives, whereas the local Church develops and implements the migrant-specific programs and plans, taking seriously into account the reality of intercultural and inter-religious relationships, *hic et nunc.*

Some theologians contemplate on migration as the *locus teologicus*, i.e. the place of encounter with God, the place as a source for intensive theological reflection.[32] From a pastoral-theological point of view, the rapid changes affected by the modern and post-modern processes have been observed. Also, it is important to take into account the process of globalization that redefines boundaries and transforms the social, cultural and religious identity, thus leading to tensions and conflicts. The contextual conditionality of migration becomes a source of knowledge, a new place for theology, a stimulus for pastoral strategy and responsibility in the concrete situation. Therefore, both theologians and pastoral care work-

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[31] Cf. R. Polak, *Migration: Herausforderung für Theologie und Kirche,* Diakonia, 42 (2011) 3, p. 150-157.

[32] Cf. G. Parolin, *Chiesa postconciliare e migrazioni. Quale teologia per la missione con i migranti*, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, 2010, p. 271-497. R. Polak, *Migration als Ort der Theologie,* u: http://dioezesefiles.x4content.com/page-downloads/migration_als_ort_der_theologie.pdf (11 February 2017).

ers focus on the phenomenon of migration which, in the context of rapid social change, as "*a sign of the times*", requires a clear theological-hermeneutical approach. A profound understanding of the "signs of the times" also requires the social and humanistic approaches, because theology or the Church in its faith seeks to discern the signs of God's plan through the common human phenomena of our time and to discover and judge the mysterious presence of God in the complexities of modern migration. The light of faith clarifies all things and reflects God's intentions.[33] The Church is aware of its primary mission to proclaim Jesus Christ to every man including immigrants and refugees. This approach is required for "furthering human freedom … The Church is thus obliged to do everything possible to carry out her mission in the world and to reach all peoples. And she has the right to do this, a right given to her by God for the accomplishment of his plan."[34]

Having in mind the *diakonia*, the phenomenon of migration is often and almost exclusively viewed through the caritative service of the Church. In this context, there is a risk of reducing theological and pastoral dimensions of the Christian mission to only one aspect. Although, on the one hand, it justifies the Church's involvement in a dramatic movement of people, and on the other hand ignores the overall pastoral mission. The Church is called to develop integrated theological and pastoral approaches to *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Concerning migrants and refugees "the Church and her various agencies ought to avoid offering charitable services alone; they are also called to promote real integration in a society where all are active members and responsible for one another's welfare, generously offering a creative contribution and rightfully sharing in the same rights and duties."[35] According to the theological-pastoral strategy," in accompanying migrants, the Church needs a specific pastoral programme addressed not only to families that migrate but also to those family members who remain behind."[36] It is necessary to raise awareness that the Church, with its entire pastoral care for migrants and refugees in the world, acts as the "yeast" (Mt13:33) manifesting "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14).

3.1. Migration between the traditional and the Synodal pastoral care

In order to put the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people into practice, the existing forms of pastoral work should be reviewed, i.e. the relationship between ecclesiology and *poimenologia*, the traditional and

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[33] Cf. GS, 4; 11.

[34] RM, 39.

[35] Benedict XVI, Message for the World day of migrants and refugees (2013). *Migrations: pilgrimage of faith and hope* (12 October 2012).

[36] AL, 46.

the Synodal pastoral care should be distinguished. The questions arise: which face of the Church and the pastoral care model the Church's leadership tend to create; whether the existing pastoral structures effectively assist migrants and refugees; or is there a true balance between pastoral care and integration into society?

In this context, it is important to take into account the spiritual and religious dimensions of immigrants, their vulnerability, insecurity, lack of the wholeness of life, family disintegration, scattered nationality and the degree of acceptance or marginalization as a response of the receiving communities. Also, it is worth to examine whether migrants and refugees are mere recipients of pastoral care and charitable aid or they are active members and bearers of life in the Church. The pastoral care for migrants in the past and the present differs in approaches. At the end of the 19th and during the 20th century the Church was concerned about the protection and preservation of faith of migrant Catholics, who were influenced by various ideologies (e.g. Marxism). Certainly, the Church has to preserve and defend the *deposit of faith* (cf. 1Tim 6:20), but is expected to constantly encourage a sense of duty for evangelization, missionary activity and apostolic mission, in order to grant people their eternal salvation.

Being aware of the importance of integration, the Church has focused on creating structures and special pastoral care, i.e. the acceptance and the gradual integration of migrants in the life of the local Church and the parish community. The parish pastoral care model was crucial for a successful work with immigrants. Respecting the culture, tradition, customs and language of immigrants, the Church encouraged and authorized the establishment of personal parishes and pastoral counselling which, being equal to the parishes, have ever been entrusted to the priests serving the faithful in their mother tongue. Following the guidelines of the Church, the bishops have sent priests, who in cooperation with the local bishop and pastors, assisted in the missions through developing appropriate types of pastoral care.[37] Although this approach proved to be effective for many people, the mono-cultural pastoral care disregards people of other cultures and lacks interest in reciprocity, hence slowing down integration into society and the life of the local Church. Although helpful for the protection of national and cultural identities, the mono-ethnic pastoral care still risks closure of the community in itself, encouraging self-sufficiency and narrowing its catholicity. The integration and assimilation of immigrants caused difficulties, since many immigrants could not integrate in

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[37]   Cf. Pius XII, Constitutio apostolica *Exsul Familia* (1 August 1952). This constitution is still considered a charter for the pastoral care of migrants. Then, Paul VI, encouraged by the Second Vatican Council, i.e. Decree Christus Dominus (no. 18), published the Motu Proprio *Instructio de pastoralis migratorum cura* which requires from the Congregation for Bishops to publish the new norms in a special instruction,*Congregatio pro Episcopis*, *De Pastorali Migratorum Cura Nemo est* (22 August 1969.).

the host society, whereas many of them embraced the existing secular culture throwing away their communities and religious life.

The Second Vatican Council encouraged the Church to move from the mono-cultural to the multicultural model, because the Church is the community of the faithful[38]. This change of model was important for strengthening the pastoral care of migrants, offering the cultural pluralism and unity in diversity, i.e. the differences which affect common life conditions and sharing of all valuable goods in life.[39] More precisely, referring to the one human family, the catholicity of the Church is witnessed through its dealing with migration and encouraging Christians to pastoral sensitivity and concern for other cultures, because a foreigner is "a visible sign and an effective reminder of that universality which is a constituent element of the Catholic Church."[40]

Openness to different cultures and religions is not always easy, but pastoral care and ecclesiology, anchored in the Trinity, raise awareness of accepting a stranger not as a problem but as God's message of hope and trust in the eschatological victory. This eschatological reality should be revealed in the social and pastoral circumstances, which seek to implement an effective and *special pastoral care* or receiving pastoral care, because the church is clearly identified by its principles of giving and receiving which build it up and empower. In regard to migrants and refugees, "this pastoral activity must be implemented with due respect for their cultures, for the human and religious formation from which they come and for the spiritual richness of their rites and traditions, even by means of a specific pastoral care."[41] Such model of the pastoral care for migrants overcomes the traditional pastoral practice and gains its importance through the prism of *catholicity*. However, we should bear in mind that neither immigrants, catechists, pastoral workers nor pastors are familiar enough with the language and culture of the host society and the local Church, which slows down the development of the integrated pastoral care model. Therefore, it is important that the local church provides distinctive types of missionary work and Synodal pastoral care grounded on their prophetic identity. All proposals seek to shape a mindset based on the receiving and participating principles. It includes catechet-

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[38] Cf. LG, 23: "By divine Providence it has come about that various churches, established in various places by the apostles and their successors, have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. ... This variety of local churches with one common aspiration is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church."

[39] Cf. GS, 53.

[40] EMCC, 17.

[41] AL, 46.

ical activities and meetings as well as the inclusion of immigrants and parish communities' efforts. Also, it is important to make a step forward from the current Church's engagement in serving and offering many initiatives in order to meet the preferences and needs of people which are often inconsistent and consequently left unrecognized. The Church should promote the practice of involvement and participation which clearly depicts it to be the one true Church. Participation promotes receiving, and thus parishes become communities and not only gathering places for the fulfilment of spiritual or sacramental needs. It offers an opportunity for the development of the co-responsibility of the laity, which won't be instrumentalized, but will grow and strive to hold its specificity.[42]

3.2. The pastoral care of migrants and a change of circumstances

Ongoing debates on migrants and refugees mostly focus on conflicting views regarding the admission or rejection of immigrants.[43] The annual rate of national and international migration, at the global level is greater than a billion, thus, according to Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, the question often arises whether we should "defend" ourselves against it as an "invasion"?[44] Migration is a quite complex phenomenon because it brings changes that a society can hardly cope with and therefore it struggles with tensions and violence. It is important to bear in mind that these people are often risking their lives in search of protection and a better quality of life elsewhere. Pope Francis warns strongly and points frequently to the disturbing reality of today's society. In his speech to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, in January 2016, he made a strong appeal: "His is the arrogance of the powerful who exploit the weak, reducing them to means for their own ends or for strategic and political schemes. Where regular migration is impossible, migrants are often forced to turn to human traffickers or smugglers, even though they are aware that in the course of their journey they may well lose their possessions, their dignity and even their lives."[45]

The Church deals with the issue of migrants from theological, pastoral, ethical and moral points of view, and therefore it is committed to defend the right to life and dignity of every person. According to the anthropo-

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[42] Cf. S. Lanza, Responsabilità, trasformazioni e compiti della comunità cristiana, in: Centro di Orientamento Pastorale, *Gli immigrati interpellano la comunità cristiana,* EDB, Bologna, 2001, p. 89-137.

[43] Cf. *International organization for migration*: http://www.iom.int (2 February 2017). *Pontificio Consiglio della Pastorale per i Migranti e Itineranti*: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/ index_it.htm (2 February 2017).

[44] Cf. Card. A. M. Vegliò, *Accogliere i migranti: minaccia, dovere o diritto?*, Aggiornamenti sociali, 60 (2009) 7/8, p. 521-528.

[45] Francis, *Address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See* (11 January 2016).

logical catholicity: "Migrations cannot be reduced merely to their political and legislative aspects, their economic implications and the concrete coexistence of various cultures in one territory. All these complement the defence and promotion of the human person, the culture of encounter, and the unity of peoples, where the Gospel of mercy inspires and encourages ways of renewing and transforming the whole of humanity."[46]

Since the socio-cultural and epochal changes affect emigrants, they also require the conversion of pastoral mentality. A transition from the traditional self-referential pastoral paradigm to a more dynamic and creative missionary evangelization is required[47]. The pastoral care of migrants should correspond to a change of circumstances as defined by Pope Paul VI: "the pastoral mobility of the Church should correspond to mobility of the modern world"[48]. In the past, the pastoral care of migrants referred mostly to Catholics focusing on their needs, and the Diaspora has greatly empowered the Church. Today, Catholic missions seek to meet the needs of new migrants offering them spiritual and emotional shelter. However, many of today's migrants are well-educated and multilingual, so they can cope with the social and economic problems in the host environments. Under the influence of secularization and globalization of culture, there are many nominal Catholics, especially in urban areas, who ignore the Catholic tradition and practical faith. They stay away from the pastoral institutions and break their connection with the church community, hence losing their religious and national identity.[49] Since the external migration is mostly directed towards the West (the European Union, North America, Canada), and the Western Church is increasingly affected by secularization and spiritual anemia, the question arises: how would it carry out the work of evangelization or the new evangelization of immigrants? It seems that this is a burning issue which requires an urgent missionary work.

It is important to determine that the pastoral care of migrants has changed over time and that it differs significantly from that of the past, so the Catholic faith and the contemporary pastoral care in Western society and culture cope with the new challenge of migration. It is estimated

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[46]   Francis, Message for the World day of migrants and refugees 2016. *Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy* (12 September 2015).

[47]   Cf. EG, 27.

[48]   Paolo VI, *Discorso al Convegno europeo sulla pastorale dei migranti*, AAS 65 (1973), 591.

[49]   EG, 70: "Nor can we overlook the fact that in recent decades there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young …. The causes of this breakdown include: … the failure of our institutions to be welcoming …", as well as, "new cultures are constantly being born in these vast new expanses where Christians are no longer the customary interpreters or generators of meaning. Instead, they themselves take from these cultures new languages, symbols, messages and paradigms which propose new approaches to life, approaches often in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus. A completely new culture has come to life and continues to grow in the cities" (73).

that a high proportion of migrants and refugees are non-Catholic Christians. They are members of radical religious groups, some of whom are mostly fundamentalist Muslims whose identity is specific from religious and cultural point of view[50] as well as groups not inclined to integrate into society.[51]

Besides, the influx of immigrants cause fears that the cultural and national identities of the host countries would be endangered. Being aware of the complexities of migration Pope John Paul II asserted that: "Public authorities have the responsibility of controlling waves of migration with a view to the requirements of the common good. The acceptance of immigrants must always respect the norms of law and must therefore be combined, when necessary, with a firm *suppression of abuses. ...* This demands not yielding to indifference regarding universal human values and a concern for safeguarding the cultural patrimony proper to each nation."[52] Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue still remain a pastoral challenge for the Church which is called to carry out pastoral work. Rejecting proselytizing, non-Christians pose a particular challenge with regard to the form of evangelization which includes dialogue and reciprocity, the explicit proclamation and the social pastoral.

4. The missionary and educational aspects of the pastoral care for migrants

International organizations, governments and educational institutions are all responsible and called to promote the educational processes aimed at creating the just social and economic order and development of all nations and states. The Church's mission in these processes refers to "a more effective commitment to educational and pastoral systems that form people in a "global dimension", that is, a new vision of the world community, considered as a family of peoples"[53].

The foundations of society and the promotion of social integration and coexistence have been in the focus of discussions about migrants as never before. Thus, in order to avoid any exclusion, discrimination and marginalization, education for the value of respect for every person, which is based on the spirit of *anthropological catholicity*, is required. In addition to professional qualification and charitable sensitivity, the work with immigrants requires the "education of the heart". Since education

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[50] Cf. EMCC, 7. 49-69. EG, 63.

[51] Cf. Conferenza episcopale dell'Emilia Romagna, *Islam e Cristianesimo*, EDB, Bologna, 2000.

[52] John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (28 Juni 2003), 101, 102 (hereinafter: EIE).

[53] EMCC, 8., cf. 27.

and training are the most important factors which can combat poverty, the Church should constantly strengthen its efforts and activities in society.[54] Besides the recognition of fundamental rights of all migrants, it is necessary to develop creative educational processes and the culture of acceptance; to practice the biblical notion of hospitality and encourage solidarity with refugees and the weak.[55] In order to cultivate the *culture of acceptance* one should: "Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom 15:7). Integration of immigrants into the socio-cultural fabric of the nation and the host country, but also their respect for its civil laws and manners, should be in the focus of overall society. A key challenge is social integration which encourages the networking in solidarity and combating against poverty and social exclusion, hence it requires the culture of encounter and dialogue that encourages relationships, exchange and enriched reciprocity.

From the theological and pastoral points of view, migration "follows the need for a more effective commitment to educational and pastoral systems that form people in a "global dimension", that is, a new vision of the world community, considered as a family of peoples, for whom the goods of the earth are ultimately destined when things are seen from the perspective of the universal common good."[56] Solidarity requires reciprocity and cooperation, i.e., it does not merely affect the receiving country but immigrants themselves and their countries of origin. Reciprocity promotes not only welfare benefits, but language acquisition, openness to work, strengthening of public safety, respect for the rules and the fight against prejudice. However, the new circumstances reveal that pastors and pastoral workers are not adequately prepared for the pastoral care of migrants at the diocesan and parish levels, as stated in the Instruction "The love of Christ towards migrants", *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (34–68). Concerning an evangelizing aspect of the pastoral work for migrants, which is also educational, and within the theological and pastoral co-responsibility, it is necessary to think and act in the spirit of Trinitarian pedagogy and deepen theology aimed at the pastoral guidelines for fostering *catholicity*.[57]

In order to reach pastoral acceptability and integration, concern and hospitality towards migrants and refugees, i.e., overall effective models of pastoral care, which would be ecclesiastically as authentic and appropriate as possible, it is necessary to analyze and verify the tools of pastoral workers i.e. the change of mentality (metanoia) and the pastoral renewal

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[54] Cf. P. Neuner/P. M. Zulehner, *Dođi kraljevstvo tvoje. Praktična ekleziologija*, Ex Libris, Rijeka. 2015, p. 184-186.

[55] Cf. EIE, 100-102.

[56] EMCC, 9.

[57] Cf. G. G. Tassello, *Teologia e migrazioni.* Convegno annuale della Pastorale dei migranti in Germania, Kevelaer, 26-28 January 2010, p. 8-9.

in the spirit of catholicity are required. Catholic immigrant is an integral part of the local Church, because there are no foreigners in the Church. One can refer to dialectical-asymmetrical reciprocity because, despite the fact that multiculturalism can cause fear and conflict, pastoral care requires respect for diversity which can be understood as a sign of God's presence in history, and the fulfillment of God's plan for unity. The pastoral care of migrants and refugees presents an opportunity for evangelical love[58] and education, mutual acquaintance and dialogue, because dialogue rejects the weaknesses of tolerance and indifference. Moreover, dialogue is evangelism, because it comes from God Himself. Therefore, Catholic dialogue is required since it seeks to promote education based on *spirituality of communion*[59], which focuses on the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The purpose of the pastoral care for migrants is to maintain vigilance of the whole Church through the call for hospitality and catholicity[60], since in its very nature, the Church is the *one, holy, catholic and apostolic*. Catholicity is the Church' call for openness to the diversity of cultures and testimony to a generic divine plan. As stated in the Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (41–42), the particular Church must rethink and re-design pastoral care programme in order to help the faithful to live in today's new multi-cultural and multi-religious context; to raise awareness of the local population on the problems of migration and to throw out suspicions.

In regard to the pastoral care for foreigners *non-Christians*, it should be based on *the human relationship and testimony of love* which comprise dialogue and commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel. Christians are downhearted if the members of other religions, affected by emigration problems, become obsessed with materialism, thus losing their religious feelings. They should be encouraged to live the supernatural dimension of life, and to practice their faith and genuine respect for the values and laws of the host country.[61] However, other pastoral challenges arise. As stated in the Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (61–67) it is not considerd opportune for Christian churches, chapels, places of worship to be made available for members of non-Christian religions and Catholic schools must not renounce their own characteristics and Christian-oriented educational programmes when attended by immigrants' children of another religion. Particular difficulties arise with regard to marriage between Catholics and non-Christian migrants, which should be discour-

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[58] Cf. A. Küppers/P. Schallenberg, *Flucht und Migration als Herausforderung christlicher Nächstenliebe*, Theologie der Gegenwart, 59 (2016) 3, p. 189-201.

[59] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), 43-46.

[60] Cf. P. H. Vöcking, *Migration und Pastoral. Eine Chance für die Katholizität der Kirche*, in: https://www.owep.de/artikel/353/migration-und-pastoral (10 February 2017).

[61] Cf. F. Olivero, *Immigrazione e servizio pastorale della Chiesa*, Roma, 25-28 giugno 2012, pdf, (23 January 2017).

aged. If a Catholic woman and a Muslim wish to marry, the Catholic party must beware of signing documents containing Islam's profession of faith, and take a firm stand on what the Church requires, focusing mainly on the Christian upbringing of their children.

Under the influence of economic globalization and technological enhancement, the old world seems to disappear and there is the new fragmented one, without a firm basis. The new culture has undermined the current models of pastoral care and the life of the parish community, and since they are wellsprings of safety and unity to foreigners, a true welcome by the host community is hindered. Strengthen by the Christian vision of education i.e. the proclamation, sanctification and service, and being often the last strongholds for foreigners, the parish communities are called to grow in a relationship of dissimilarity with others and in a relationship with God. Due to cultural pluralism and based on the theology of its foundation, the parish community should foster its educational mission through *acceptance and evangelization.* At the parish church, "It is there that the Church is seen locally"[62], so it should not be the self-referential church, as claimed by Pope Francis "In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers" as well as "environments of living communion and participation", "completely mission-oriented" since they are called to be "a centre of constant missionary outreach"[63]. The parish community whose shape changes today takes the responsibility for the acceptance of foreigners, because it should be open to everyone and gather people in their diversity. The Eucharist is the central event of the common life of the parish community and the source of unity. The parish community should be a genuine hospitable environment for Christian immigrants.

However, the classic formula of pastoral care, i.e. the *missio cum cura animarum*[64], which focuses greatly on the *ad intra*, can hardly cope with the challenge of migration, because it is designed to correspond to the ordinary circumstances which are beyond the pastoral care of migrants today. In order to avoid a parallel pastoral care or a parallel Church, and to make the pastoral unity more effective, it is necessary to change the paradigm of pastoral care or restore the traditional models of care for migrants and refugees, through opening to the *ad extra* the particular circumstances, because the circumstances are different, and the social mobility requires new models when it comes to a rapid cross-cultural and cross-national interaction. Today, the communities experience various stages of integration which is proved by several generations of a family living in some area, thus a new, effective, appropriate and more flexible

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[62]   Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), 26.

[63]   EG, 28.

[64]   Cf. EMCC, 91.

models of pastoral care for new migrants are required. Also, migrants should be the protagonists of pastoral care, though it often depends on their initial formation. Moreover, future pastors and laity should be prepared and educated in this spirit and specific pastoral sectors dedicated to their animation and formation are: the centres for pastoral work among young persons and for vocational orientation and the centres for study and pastoral reflection, with the task of observing the evolution of the migration phenomenon[65].

Conclusion

In order to understand the perspective of pastoral work related to the current mass movements of migrants and refugees, it is important to understand the long history of this form of pastoral care. From the beginning, the church has observed that the movement of people and the spread of the faithful in the world are providential parts of God's plan to spread the Christian message throughout the world. It is not only a matter of geographical distribution but the quality of the encounter with the new cultures and civilizations. The church has ever shown concern for migrants who were forced to move away from their homeland, as an outcast Jesus Christ in Egypt with His family (cf. Mt 2:13-15).

The migration phenomenon is unstoppable, and to a certain extent it is a necessary process, because history itself is a constant movement and the only question is how to supervise and manage this phenomenon pastorally. The theological and pastoral aspects of the migration issues should be continuously reviewed and rethink evangelistically. However, migrants and refugees are often subjected to: social manipulation, political instrumentalization, the ideological battles for supremacy in the world, criminal objectives, various forms of extortion, profiting from human misery, signing fatal contracts and illicit trade. Persons in distress can be abused or become the victims of ideological games and utilitarianism. Also, they can be used for dishonest motives. Nevertheless, the mission of the Church is to warn political, social and cultural leaders and institutions about the need for peace and solidarity, the protection of human rights and human dignity, fostering of dialogue and balanced growth; to regard migrants and refugees as the *sign of the times*; to overcome the earthly interests; to show the face of God and to manifest the meaning of its pastoral mission in the world.

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[65]   Cf. EMCC, 94.

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THE ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS AND NEW COMMUNITIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF FORMATION AND EVANGELIZATION

Abstract

Being aware of the crisis of the Church's pastoral activity in the field of education, both in the European and the Croatian context, the author of the article indicates to new and unused opportunities that are yet to be identified, prudently evaluated and integrated into regular pastoral program of the local Church. For several decades, the Church has been affected by a phenomenon i.e. the emergence and rapid spread of numerous ecclesial movements and new communities that increasingly determine its mission in the modern world. The Holy Spirit gifts the people of God with the impressive richness and diversity of charisms through these movements and communities as well as through their extraordinary missionary zeal. Undoubtedly, the author emphasizes that despite their deficiencies, they represent a significant potential for the mission of the universal Church, and especially for its mission in the European de-Christianized context. The second part of the article deals with arguments that support the author's assumptions about the movements and new communities as powerful centers for Christian formation where the bearers of a new evangelization were born and raised.

Key words: *ecclesial movements, new communities, integrated pastoral care, new evangelization.*

Introduction

John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have repeatedly called the whole Church for the urgency of the new evangelization. Although this call refers to the Church worldwide, it primarily refers to the Western Church that requires the new evangelization the most. In order to respond to this call adequately, the theological and pastoral analysis of the existing pastoral trends is required. Moreover, if we want to transmit our faith to future generations adequately and effectively, in addition to our received knowledge of faith, a good knowledge of the cultural matrix/patterns of our time is needed. Such knowledge as well as communication codes/models of a particular environment enable us to transmit the truths of the

Catholic faith in an adequate way. In other words, the above prior knowledge will be a "key vehicle" i.e. the prerequisite competence not only for Christian proclamation of the Good News, but also culturally appropriate way to communicate with other people. The first part of the article deals with the identification of the major challenges the Church faces today in carrying out its mission, at both the European and national levels. The analysis referring to the national level is supported by the latest research results about religious practice in Croatia. Finally, the third part of the article highlights some specific features of the movements and new communities which truly determine them as the effective instruments/ bearers of the new evangelization.

1. The Social and Cultural Context (in Europe)

Western civilization we live in has increasingly become more and more ambivalent, complex, and even confusing. It is marked by phenomena such as: the dictatorship of relativism, an expression often used by Pope Benedict XVI, referring to repudiation of absolute truths and immutable values which God instilled into human nature[1], and the prevailing culture in a liquid modern world as called by Zygmunt Bauman[2], one of the leading sociologists of our time. Having no solid foundations, such culture rejects universal truths replacing them with a multitude of different opinions and being unable to reach consensus on the values that form both an individual and society as a whole.[3] It is a secularized[4] culture

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[1]   Cf. Benedetto XVI, *Luce del mondo. Il papa, la Chiesa e i segni dei tempi.* Una conversazione con Peter Seewald, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2010, 60.

[2]   Cf. Z. Bauman, *Modernità liquida*, Lateranza, Roma-Bari, 2008; Z. Bauman, *Vita liquida*, Lateranza, Roma-Bari, 2009; Z. Bauman, *Dentro la globalizzazione. Le conseguenze sulle persone*, Lateranza, Roma-Bari, 2012.

[3]   Pontificio consiglio Pro Laicis, *Christifideles laici. Bilancio e prospettive*, S. Rylko (ed.), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010, 11; B. Mondin, Nuova evangelizzazione dei paesi d'antica cristianità, in: Cristo, Chiesa, Missione, Urbaniana University Press, 1992, p. 199-200.

[4]   In order to distinguish the secularization from secularism we refer to the interpretations of two eminent Catholic theologians: Walter Kasper and Rina Fisichelle. According to Kasper secularization originally meant the transfer of an object from the sacred to the profane domain or from Church property to secular property. From there, today's understanding of secularization gradually developed. In a broad sense, it denotes the process by which a good (object, institution, region or society) explicitly loses spiritual characteristics and takes the mundane (secular) ones. In this sense secularization shows not hostility to religion, but puts (restricts) it to the private sphere. Cf. W. Kasper, *Il Vangelo di Gesù Cristo,* TBC, Queriniana, Brescia, 2012, (orig.: W. Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi, Herder Verlag, Freiburg, 2008),* p. 253-254. Unlike secularization, according to Fisichella, secularism denotes the shift away from the Christian faith that is supposed to be voiceless (deprived of right) when it refers both to private or public life. According to its principle, one's own existence is built up, overpassing religious horizon, which is reduced to the private sphere and have no influence on human relations. Secularism

permeated by the mentality of individualism[5], hedonism, consumerism, nihilism[6] and the culture of interpersonal rejection (exclusion).[7] Such culture is affected by a deep anthropological crisis that undermines the natural foundations of human beings, men and women (gender ideology) as well as the basic institutions of society: marriage and family.[8] Final-

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has a well-defined position even in the private sphere: it is taken into account only partially when it is a matter of ethical judgment or behaviour. Cf. R. Fisichella, *La Nuova Evangelizzazione, Una sfida per uscire dall'indifferenza*, Mondatori, Milano, 2011, p. 29.

[5] In the context of individualism, we can only mention some of its consequences for society that Pope Francis brings in his programmatic document *Evangelii gaudium*: "We should recognize how in a culture where each person wants to be bearer of his or her own subjective truth, it becomes difficult for citizens to devise a common plan which transcends individual gain and personal ambitions. In the prevailing culture, priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional. What is real gives way to appearances. In many countries globalization has meant a hastened deterioration of their own cultural roots and the invasion of ways of thinking and acting proper to other cultures which are economically advanced but ethically debilitated." Papa Franjo, Apostolska pobudnica *Evangelii gaudium – Radost evanđelja*, KS, Zagreb, 2014, 61-62 (hereinafter: EG).

[6] Giovanni Reale, an Italian philosopher, believes that the metaphysical nihilism is the main feature of the Western world. Nietzsche anticipated nihilism that has spread in today's culture. It manifests in shadows, hiding under masks. Reale counted seven such masks that conceal the metaphysical nihilism. The first mask is materialism. Above the world of sensory there is more important, more harmonious and more durable world. The world discovered by Plato. Hence, it is necessary to rise above the material in order to discover the world we live in. The second mask is exclusively trust in science; scientism. The third is ideologization; modern man's belief that truth and moral are subordinated to power. According to Reale, the fourth mask of the Western nihilism refers to forgotten happiness. While the Greeks sought for the happiness knowing that it can be found in a true measure and harmony with everything, the Western man seeks it in prosperity. Instead of happiness and harmony with everything he is looking for things. The fifth mask is infinite progress, i.e. the continual growth of new wants and needs, and all for the cause of having new things and thus increasing production, consumption and profit. Violence is the sixth mask. Unidimensionality of man is the last, the seventh mask. The man broke the relationship with the absolute, declared himself the center of all and soon started to realize more clearly that after the annihilation of faith in God and the destruction of the values, he himself became a victim of his devastating nihilism. Cf. A. Vučković, *Imena i Riječ,* Svjetlo riječi, Sarajevo-Zagreb, 2009, p. 215-217.

[7] Unfortunately, modern, fluid, consumerist and individualistic society, has become more a place for production of human beings who gradually become superfluous. Moreover, the consequence of our way of life and organization of society resulted in the existence of zombies: people in the periphery of society belonging to no one (socially excluded) and striving for their survival. Pope Francis has repeatedly spoken about their needs condemning the culture of selfishness, rejection and social exclusion. Cf. EG 53, 191; Francesco, *Discorso del santo padre Francesco ai partecipanti all'incontro mondiale dei movimenti popolari del martedì 28 ottobre 2014,*https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2014/october/documents/papafrancesco_20141028_incontro-mondiale-movimenti-popolari.html (20 December 2016). Cf. Z. Bauman, *Vite di scarto*, Lateranza, Roma-Bari, 2014.

[8] R. Gerardi, Introduzione. Insegnare la prassi?, in: *Insegnare la prassi cristiana. Percorsi di teologia morale, spirituale, pastorale*, R. Girardi (ed.), Lateran University Press, Roma, 2011, p. 14-15.

ly, we live in a culture where" ... the man has delegated the technique to produce any-thing being unaware of a grave danger threatening him. The technique, in fact, has gradually taken control not only over nature, but over the man reducing him to an object of his own experiments and ignoring his interests."[9]

Besides, viewed through the prism of pastoral theology, one of the basic characteristics of the modern Western man is his religious indifference and closure in the so-called weak thought.[10]

At the beginning of the new millennium, Europe finds itself in a rather paradoxical situation. On the one hand, its cultural identity was certainly formed under significant impact of Christianity, but on the other hand, initial healthy emancipation from controlling religion, gradually turned into a progressive exclusion of religion from social life and its reducing to the private sphere.[11] Unfortunately, an increasingly waning influence of religion in shaping the social fabric and the irrelevance of Christian act in private life are evident in our context. Thus, the real challenge for the Church's mission in Europe is to bring the Gospel back into everyday social life and particularly into new forms of the socio-cultural Areopagus. It implies re-launching the process of inculturation that brings the Gospel into the depth of people's lives as well as of society. This means that the Church, in carrying out its mission, should be more open and more sensitive to people and their needs. Fulfilling this condition, it would recognize their deep existential thirst for meaning, harmony, peace ... and would offer the Gospel, the Word of God in response to their search.[12]

2. Faith Formation in Croatia

Concerning religious practice, the situation in Europe is very complex and difficult to analyze precisely. It is apparently marked by epochal changes, technological and any other progresses that are, as already

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[9]   The original text in the Italian language "... l'uomo ha delegato la tecnica a produrgli ogni cosa da non riuscire più ad accorgersi del grave pericolo in cui è caduto. La tecnica, infatti, è giunta ad assumere il ruolo di dominazione non solo della natura, ma dell'uomo stesso, riducendolo a un oggetto della sua sperimentazione, senza più curarsi delle sue ragioni." R. Fisichella, *Identità dissolta. Il cristianesimo lingua madre dell'Europa*, Mondatori, Milano, 2009, p. 29.

[10] Sergio Lanza, a famous Italian pastoral theologian, writing about this phenomenon, i. e. the weak (non-argumentative) thought, points out that it is a matter of a soft but latently harmful version of those nihilistic trends that, unprotected by shouting of crazy persons and the false prophets of the death of God, represent an important feature of contemporary culture. Cf. S. Lanza, *Convertire Giona. Pastorale come progetto*, Edizioni OCD, Roma Morena, 2008, p. 164.

[11] A book of reference: R. Koch and C. Smith: *Samoubojstvo Zapada* (*Suicide of the West*), Naklada Ljevak, Zagreb, 2007.

[12] Cf. M. Menin, *La missione oggi nell'orizzonte del mondo, delle religioni e delle culture*, Credere oggi, 5 (2010), p. 9.

stated, contradictory (dichotomous) in their nature. The number of the faithful who attend Holy Mass and receive particularly the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Matrimony is decreasing constantly. Secularization affects almost all aspects of social life that deliberately faces a growing religion and cultural diversity. Taking into account various circumstances that influenced our way of life, these trends are likely to be observed in our Croatian context. Some aspects of pluralism and relativism gradually affect even the Catholic families that have been the guardians of the Church tradition and the authentic transmitters of the faith in Croatia for centuries. They permeate the entire family primarily through modern media not inclined to Christian faith. The transmission of faith in the form of cultural socialization is no longer presupposed; since we live in the age of pluralism stressing the role of liberty and pragmatism. Parents are increasingly reluctant to raise their children responsibly, especially to raise them in faith. Moreover, it seems that they are no longer enthusiastic about sharing their witness of faith to their children in their daily lives. Unfortunately, their strong religious beliefs remain hidden, and their witness of faith is often weak. They often feel the burden of strong suspicions that lead them to active disbelief. In this way they neglect their parental and missionary responsibilities unaware of the consequences for their children who, as grownups, are free to decide on their involvement in the life of faith and in the Christian community.

In addition to this, the phenomenon of religious indifference associated with overwhelming apathy, seems to pose a particular threat to Christian faith. The problem of the youth indifference in the parish community is likely to cause spiritual apathy, frustration and fatigue. Thus, this is a particular challenge for the Church that considers a school as an institution of a great importance. Since the communist regime severely restricted religious education and practice, following the democratic changes, the Church invested considerable effort into material, spiritual and intellectual renewals. In carrying out its mission (bringing up children in the faith), the Church has truly relied on this fundamental educational institution for the last twenty years, in mediating information and faith formation. It especially refers to some passive parish communities than to the parish catechesis, which is often reduced to immediate preparation for the sacraments of Christian initiation. It seems, however, that the school becomes place where the promotion of cultural and religious pluralisms leads to the relativization of religion and weakening of the religious socialization in the family.[13] There is a significant number of people who think that religious education should not be taught in schools and they seek more openly to exclude it from the school curriculum, even though it is the elective course.

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[13] Cf. M. Šimunović, Pastoralna teologija u misionarskoj situaciji, in: P. Aračić, *Novi izazovi pastoralnoj teologiji*, Biblioteka Diacovensia, Đakovo, 2005, p. 44.

Unfortunately, many parents are unaware of co-responsibility for the transmission of faith, not only regarding the proclamation of the Gospel to other people (unbaptized), but also to their own children. It seems that parents are more reluctant to familiarize their children with the basic knowledge of faith due to their irresponsibility and doubt concerning the true values for the upbringing of their children, so they let them decide on their own. These are negative effects of postmodernism, a period marked by religious pluralism which has undermined the traditional Christianity (the time known as *societas cristiana*) and led to the primacy of individual choice, even that of the children. Briefly, to be a Christian today and to raise up children in the faith are no longer logical and self-evident requirements, as they have been until recently.[14]

2.1. Recent Researches on Christian Education and Religious Practice?

Despite the aforementioned negative tendencies, the theological and pastoral researches on the practice of religion that have been carried out in Croatia in recent years, show that a great majority of parents seek the sacraments of initiation for their children. Thus, according to the research results, infant Baptism was sought by more than 90% of Croatian citizens; First Confession and First Communion were administered for 90% of children and the sacrament of Confirmation was received by 75% of children.[15] Certainly, this high percentage of parents seeking the sacraments of Christian initiation for their children indicates to an open question of motivation that leads them to do the same.

In any case, my own pastoral experience as well as the above research results indicate to a lack of commitment and readiness of parents to witness Christian life and educate their children in faith. One of the reasons is probably parental indifference and ignorance concerning the Christian education of their children or even a fear of taking responsibility that implies spiritual and intellectual efforts. The other reason is that most

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[14] It is to point out that the Church considers the freedom of public involvement in social life as its legitimate right, which contributes to strengthening of Christian values in our society. According to recent research, Catholics make up 87.8% of total population. If we add to it 7.2% of citizens who belong to other Christian denominations, we reach 95% of Croatian citizens who adhere to a dominant Christian community. The research data are cited in *Modernizacija i identitet hrvatskog društva;* the research was conducted at the end of November until the beginning of December in 2010. Cf. K. Nikodem, *Religija i Crkva. Pitanja institucionalne religioznosti u suvremenom hrvatskom društvu*, Socijalna ekologija, 20 (2011) 1, p. 25.

[15] Cf. P. Aračić - G. Črpić - K. Nikodem, *Postkomunistički horizonti*, Biblioteka Diacovensia, Đakovo, 2003, p. 178-179; Concerning the Sacrament of Matrimony, the results of the same research conducted at the end of the nineties in Croatia, show that 90% of citizens were married in the Church, and 95% of citizens asked for the Sacrament to the dying family member, i. e. a Catholic funeral.

parents of that generation were not fully initiated into the Christian faith, during their primary and secondary education. The research data shows that only half (49%) of participants attended catechetical sessions at the parish through their childhood and adolescence (at that time religious education was not included in the school program), whereas 21% of participants attended catechetical sessions only a few years.[16] Furtherly, 5.9% of participants were involved in religious instruction (courses) for a few months, 1.3% of them attended for a few weeks and 4.9% of participant reported irregular attendance. A relatively high percentage of participants (17.6%) stated that they have never received any religious instruction.[17]

Another research shows that despite a high proportion of Catholics 87.83%[18] in the total population of Croatia, only 36.8% of them believe in a personal God,[19] whereas 48.9% of them believe in a higher power. However, it is surprising that 38.4% of those who go to church often or every week – believe more in god spirit-like or higher power then in the personal God.[20] If the faith lacks a personal relationship with God it finally leads to a sterile ideology. The belief in a personal God is a key determinant of the Christian faith. It is prerequisite for the Church's existence as the People of God. It is also important for the successful mission of the Church as the sacrament of Salvation, as a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and the unity of the entire human race.[21] As already stated, the research results are the fruits of defective education in the faith during the communist regime (1945–1990) and they clearly indicate to the urgent need for the new evangelization that is meant to permeate all segments of society.

2.2. The Need for the New Evangelization

The fundamental task of the Church at all times, especially in our time, is to direct man's gaze to the mystery of Christ. In other words, His life, words and deeds hide the response to our longing and search. Certainly, this very brief analysis highlights the need for the new evangelization as the primary service which the Church can and should render to each individual and to all people in the modern world. Indeed, the Church still has something to offer despite the greatest achievements of mankind that

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[16] Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 179.

[17] Cf. *Ibidem, p.* 157.

[18] Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 157.

[19] Cf. Državni zavod za statistiku, *Stanovništvo prema vjeri, po gradovima/općinama, popis 2001*, in: http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/Census2001/Popis/H01_02_04/ H01_02_04.html (14 February 2017.)

[20] Cf. S. Zrinščak - G. Črpić, *Vjerovanje i religioznost*, Bogoslovska smotra, 70 (2000) 2, p. 242.

[21] Cf. LG, 1, 48.

seemingly lost a sense of reality, and the meaning of human existence.[22] Since we are facing a completely new situation, some minor adjustments (merely cosmetic changes) are not enough to cope with the pastoral challenges efficiently, but a radical review and renewal of all models (forms) and carriers of pastoral activities are required. More precisely, it includes the inherited mentality (clericalism, unfruitful pastoral work *ad extra* etc.), the awareness of co-responsibility of all the baptized for the mission of the Church, to the importance of developing synodality, to different structures and forms of fostering pastoral activity, redefining the field of pastoral action etc.

The increasing individualization of society as well as other social phenomena that characterize the postmodern age imposed the pastoral *metanoia* and the restructuring of the traditional pastoral approaches. On the one hand, we are called to be attentive and to critically observe social events, and on the other hand, to be open to new approaches/capacities to carry out the Church's mission.[23] In this regard, it is important to understand and if it is possible to gain control over the social processes,[24] that, from a pastoral-theological view, are not only a threat, but also a *kairos* for the proclamation and witness to the Gospel in modern society. In this context, we are called to identify a renewed interest in Christianity experienced by majority of people and the emergence and spread of ecclesial movements and new communities that can be providential pastoral response to the challenges of modern society. Accordingly, the Croatian Conference of Bishops issued a document offering/recommending the pastoral *metanoia-* transformation of the inherited mentality in the parish communities and raising awareness on the joint participation of all the baptized in the Church's mission – right through the living believers circles,[25] or through dynamic groups of lay persons (e.g. community youth, community of elder people, family community, liturgical community, biblical community, charity, choir, altar servants, scouts, etc.).

It is important to point out that religion did not disappear with postmodernism, but simply changed. It has become a kind of product and a matter of individual choice.[26] Affected by major social and cultural changes, this transformation of religion offers a room for the new pastoral efforts that can be carried out by the movements and new communi-

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[22] Cf. Ivan Pavao II., Enciklika o trajnoj vrijednosti misijske naredbe *Redemptoris missio* (25. 3. 1987), KS, Zagreb, 1991, 2.

[23] Cf. Benedetto XVI, *Luce del mondo. Il Papa, la Chiesa e i segni dei tempi.* Una conversazione con Peter Seewald, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2010, 71; W. Kasper, *Il Vangelo di Gesù*, p. 225.

[24] Cf. EG, 222-225.

[25] Cf. Hrvatska Biskupska Konferencija - Nacionalni katehetski ured, Župna kateheza u obnovi župne zajednice, Plan i program, HILP, Zagreb-Zadar, 2000.

[26] A. Borras, *La parrocchia, casa di tutti*, Rivista di clero italiano, 94 (2013) 3, p. 178.

ties in the Church. Certainly, their place and role in the Church pastoral have always been regarded as an integral rather than a parallel part of the regular pastoral work in parishes. According to some researches, they form and effectively safeguard the Christian identity against the growing secularization (which gradually transforms into secularism), individualism and fragmentation of society.[27]

A detailed analysis of all characteristics of many new ecclesial movements and new communities in the Church is beyond the scope of this paper, since it focuses on those which constitute adequate instruments/vehicles of the new evangelization. In this context, it is to highlight that it is a matter of the gift and task: the gift from above for the building of the Church and society, and the task of the church pastors that with a lot of patience and pastoral prudence manage the "gift" by integrating it into a regular mission of the local Church.[28] In other words, the ecclesial movements and new communities are invited to involve in the parish and diocese voluntarily and humbly being at the service of common mission. Also, the pastors of the Church (bishops and priests) are called to accept them wholeheartedly and through complementary relationship and in synergy to respect the gift (charisms) of each individual, in order to carry out the mission entrusted to them by Christ the Savior, harmoniously.[29]

Emphasizing the role of movements and new communities in the service of the new evangelization, we contemplate about authentic evangelization in the particular socio-cultural environment. Although the Gospel always remains the same, but the new approaches to understanding and testifying to it are required in a given socio-cultural context. It should always renew the social fabric and permeate it focusing on the future. These movements and new communities can make the existing pastoral care less clericalized and more real, meeting the needs of concrete people, and becoming more open to the competences of all the baptized. These instruments of the new evangelization are in the focus of this paper which aims to clarify their role as the main instruments of the new evangelization in the Croatian context.

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[27] Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 180.

[28] Cf. EG, 29.

[29] For a more comprehensive insight into the complementarity of the charismatic and hierarchical gifts in the Church as well as the criteria for judgment (discernment) of charismatic gifts see the most recent document of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith, Pismo biskupima Katoličke crkve o odnosu između hijerarhijskih i karizmatskih darova za život i poslanje Crkve *Iuvenescit ecclesia* (15. 5. 2016.), KS, Zagreb, 2017.

3. The Movements and New Communities as Instruments of Formation and Evangelization

The movements and new communities are mainly considered to be an expression of a deep desire for authentic Christian life. They are the paths that lead the faithful to the origins of Christianity and hence to a re-discovery of the joy and power of the Church. Sprang out of the bosom of the Church, on the one hand, they present the fruit of its mission, and on the other hand, a source that specifically enriches and strengthens its mission. Moreover, due to their diverse activities, they not only enrich the Church with a new original testimony, strength and zeal, but society as a whole. A good observer will perceive that the movements and communities keep talking about the Church nowadays, revealing its face, presenting it as the place of communion, cooperation, instruction, celebration and living the faith. Nevertheless, many movements and new communities are places of Christian formation. Being aware that evangelizing the family, unfortunately, affects fewer children, especially in strongly secularized area, their role in faith formation is growing. Through their membership and various activities in the ecclesial movements and communities, the faithful gain a new experience of the Church, i.e. the new experience of communion which deepens their ecclesial dimension of faith and reveals new possibilities for its proclamation.

Certainly, children are product of their own time and society: living from the impulses of society, they promptly provide answers for today's problems and ambivalence. This is reflected through their insisting on a personal decision, conversion, a baptism in the Spirit, and a personal relationship with Christ as a personal God.[30] It is a matter of personal conviction/experience that one can live in the community that gathers voluntarily and where all members know each other well. In addition to one's own vocation and the quality of performing/transmitting it through new technologies/communication channels, this existential (personal) adherence to Christ is one of the most important features of the movements and new communities in the Church.

God always has the first initiative. Although the Christian formation requires an arduous effort on our part, it should not be exclusively considered as our personal task or merit. Regardless of their form, both formation and evangelization basically come from God. It is above all His work. Jesus is the first and greatest evangelizer.[31] He is always the same: ever young, genuine and a constant source of newness. As such, He is always able to renew our lives and our communities. In his programmatic

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[30] Cf. D. Gruden, *Pokreti su djeca svoga vremena i odgovor na vrijeme*, Interview with dr. Fr. Ante Vučković, Glas Koncila, 27 January 2008.

[31] Cf. Pavao VI., Apostolska pobudnica *Evangelii Nuntiandi – Naviještanje evanđelja* (8. 8. 1975.), KS, Zagreb, 2000, 7.

document *Evangelli Gaudium*, Pope Francis argues that Jesus Christ can break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. He precedes us, gives us strength and inspiration in proclaiming of the Good News.[32]

Besides, the Pope claims that: "Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world."[33] Indeed, everything comes from Him, from the very essence of our faith – Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man.

In this crisis of the Church's authenticity, the movements and new communities especially show their great availability and generosity when they are called to respond to their missionary mandate. Moreover, due to their flexibility, they promote the Church and its mission (values) carrying out their regular pastoral work at inaccessible places (areas), that have been neglected so far due to objective or subjective reasons. Indeed, they present a great potential of the local Church in fulfilling its evangelizing mission. Unfortunately, this potential has not been fully recognized / evaluated, thus remaining on the periphery of the Church life and its activities.[34] There are many reasons that affirm the movements and new communities as instruments of the new evangelization, but taking into account Croatian context, we focus on their specific feature that seems to allow faithful a personal relationship with God.

3.1. A Personal Relationship with Christ is the Foundation of Faith

Christianity is not merely science, wisdom, a set of moral rules or tradition. Its core, its very essence is in Jesus of Nazareth and His reality, His historical existence, work and fate. We believe that Christ is present in the Church and that faith is actually a true relationship with Him. Referring to this in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes: "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a Person who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. [...] Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 John 4:10), love is now no longer a mere "command"; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.[35] Being a Christian means primarily being in a friendship with God. In the Apostolic Exhor-

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[32] Cf. EG, 11.

[33] *Ibidem*, 11.

[34] Cf. N. A. Ančić, *Razvitak i teološko mjesto duhovnih pokreta u Crkvi*, Bogoslovska smotra, 78 (2008) 2, p. 265; T. Ivančić, *Duhovni pokreti u Crkvi u Hrvata*, Crkva u svijetu, 16 (1981) 3, p. 247-252.

[35] Benedikt XVI., Enciklika *Deus caritas est – Bog je ljubav* (25. 12. 2005), KS, Zagreb, 2006, 1.

tation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis also emphasizes the importance of a personal relationship with God for the life of every believer.[36]

It is to conclude that transmitting the faith to others, especially to young people, means to create such favorable conditions/circumstances to achieve a personal encounter with Christ in every time and space (environment). The goal of evangelization is in fact the fulfillment of this relationship which changes man, his world and his fate.[37] Jesus Christ is the heart and the essence of Christianity: in His historical uniqueness and His eternal glory. Christ Himself is a criterion that defines what it means to be and act as a Christian.

In other words, instead of universal norm, the essence of Christianity is a Person – Jesus Christ. We are Christians only if we truly know Christ. In addition to an external approach to the New Evangelization that would refer to the strategy shift in preaching the Gospel and its interpretation through proposed new approaches, the recent Church documents highlight the indispensability of relationship with God. So, evangelizer is the only one who is open to evangelization i.e. the one who is spiritually reborn through a relationship with Jesus Christ.[38] The New Evangelization is not only a reaction to the widespread secularization, but primarily a true conversion and the obvious necessity of wholehearted Christian commitment. Namely, the new evangelization primarily refers to a spiritual renewal and is not merely a matter of a change in methodology, technology and communication. Undoubtedly, a possibility to experience a personal relationship with Christ, within the ecclesial movements and new communities, is their greatest contribution to the Church's mission. They offer exactly what the new evangelization wishes to achieve: an active faith in all areas of life based on a personal relationship with God. According to the most recent theological-pastoral research, the possibility for a personal relationship with God motivated young people to involve in a church movement and not merely their formal membership.[39]

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[36]   Cf. EG, 3, 266.

[37]   Cf. Sinodo dei vescovi, *XII Assemblea generale ordinaria, La Nuova Evangelizzazione per la trasmissione della Fede Cristiana, Instrumentum laboris*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2012, 18, 31.

[38]   Cf. Sinodo dei vescovi, Xiv assemblea generale ordinaria, *La vocazione e la missione della famiglia nella Chiesa e nel mondo contemporaneo*, Lineamenta, Città del Vaticano, 2014, 5; *Instrumentum laboris*, 158.

[39]   Cf. K. Peračković – V. Mihaljević, *Analiza strukture* članstva i temeljna *obilježja pokreta "Franjevačka mladež" – Jedan primjer postmodernoga crkvenog pokreta*, Društvena istraživanja, 14 (2005) 1-2 (75-76), p. 56.

3.2. The Movements and New Communities as Places of Communion in Action

According to Bauman's liquid modernity, everything in society is dynamic and changeable i.e. everything is in constant motion. Life has become a constant struggle for identity and self-affirmation. The age of globalization negatively affects man lowering his inherent worthiness. Freedom is rather understood as the lack of rules and all pre-conditions. Briefly, a lack of humanity is becoming increasingly evident, i.e. the lack of true human relationships, even within the families. The prevailing behavior of younger generations is particularly characterized by excessive consumerism, openness to novelty without critical thinking, superficial relationships and the quest to fulfill every desire regardless of the cost.[40] At the same time, despite the overall social networking trends, modern man desperately longs for unity, for belonging; for the concrete community in which he will feel free, creative and valuable. History and social changes have negatively affected a significant number of people who feel disoriented; neglected by all social institutions, including the Church. In such circumstances, many people live on the "existential peripheries" of misery, of our time, hence the movements and new communities can be a way out of insecurity. Challenged by increasing individualism which has destroyed personal identity, they can be a place of Christian formation and living ecclesial communion.

3.3. Accessibility Based on the Benefits of Smallness and Flexibility

We can rightly claim that the impact of almost all large institutions, including the Church, has been weakening over time, due to external and inner reasons. Unlike other institutions that are large in number, bureaucratic and unfavorable environments for common people (and often to their problems), the movements and new communities are more accessible to people. So, people show more trust and can easily approach them in seeking true values.[41] They perceive them as a group of people who live and openly defend their own convictions.

Another advantage to highlight is the flexibility of ecclesial movements and new communities due to their flexible structure. Moreover, unlike a closed circle of people who gather only in a certain place and time, some movements and new communities are structured as social networks. Due to these characteristics, they are more dynamic, more movable and more accessible to young people, in particular. It is sometimes hard to determine the actual start and end date of some of their activities. Also,

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[40] Cf. Z. Bauman, *La libertà*, Città Aperta, Troina (Enna), 2002, p. 72-85.

[41] Cf. M. Hochshild, *Neue Geistliche Gemainschaften und Bewegungen – Prototypen einer Kirche als sozialem Netzwerk*, Sociologia Internationalis, 38 (2000) 1, p. 115-139.

they use different forms of communication which is especially important if we bear in mind a fast paced-life in cities, and regular parish activities. Two examples of such a flexible, diverse and fruitful pastoral activity for the Church and for society as a whole are: the Catholic Student Center (SKAC) and the Franciscan Youth (Frama).[42]

Conclusion

One needs not to be too wise to note that the present Christian education in the family and the very family are in deep crisis. It is evident that fewer young people are getting married, and if they opt for a sacramental or civil marriage, they do it later and later in life. Demographic consequences are obvious to everyone. The lack of vocations is also a logical consequence of this way of life. Unable to find some "good" paying jobs and in order to meet their materialistic and social demands, a great majority of parents take side jobs leaving their children to grow up alone. Due to the accelerating pace of life and the growing expectations of the environment (sometimes unrealistic), both parents and children are less concerned about Christian formation. These facts and phenomena pose a real challenge for the Church's mission referring to education in faith. They are signs of the times that should be recognized and that require adequate response.

What is the path Pope Francis proposed to the Church to follow in order to cope with difficulties of the present time efficiently, and to carry out its mission in the family and in all areas of social life? This is the way of mercy, the way out to the "existential periphery" where there are so many lost, ignored, and socially excluded people. In order to follow this path the Church itself should be less self-referential and closed in on itself and its needs and should go out of its own safety and passivity.[43] Individualistic culture has created selfish mentality closed in its microcosm and indifference towards others. The way out of this life-style is in the fullness of life, in our turning to God and in the right values only He can supply.

How and where to adopt true life values? A significant number of practical lay faithful in Europe and in Croatia do not find their "spiritual nourishment" in what we provide in the parish community and the parish pastoral.

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[42]   More about the Catholic Student Center (Skac Palma and Skac_St) and Frama and their activities see on: www.skac.hr, www. skac.st, www.frama-portal.com

[43]   Cf. B. Forte, *Francesco parla alle periferie dell'uomo,* in: http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2015-03-22/francesco-parla-periferie-uomo-141136.shtml?uuid=ABZLCRDD (2 March 2017).

Evidently, some of them can find what they seek for in the various ecclesial movements,[44] associations and new communities, which are not and should not be any parallel or "rival" church, but well integrated pastoral subjects that enrich and build parish community. As such, they represent, for many believers, the way of Christian formation that leads them to the sources of Christianity and reveals new joy and strength of the Church. The faithful seek to live their faith in a more personal way, with a missionary zeal and communion, having influence on the wider social context. It seems they experience it through the aforementioned realities. Due to their emergence and spread and despite a constant decline of religious practice, the Church is growing along with the new pastoral subjects full of vitality, unity and joy of their being Christians. From this fact flows a specific quality that opens up a new perspective for the re-evangelization of the Church.

Undoubtedly, speaking about these relatively new realities in the Church, especially if we take into account their number and variety, we can say that they are signs of the times. They are the gift and in spite of some of their deficiencies which were not discussed in the article, they can significantly contribute to the Church through faith formation and evangelization either of the faithful in the periphery of society or unbaptized persons. In Croatia, they can basically contribute to the new evangelization of the faithful who have been sacramentalized but not evangelized yet, and thus, they often live their everyday life far from the Church and its activities.

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[44] Here we need to provide a fact supporting the relevance of the above realities in the Church concerning its mission. The latest data on the movements and new communities in the Church indicate to 123 different organizations that count almost 200 million believers (Catholics) in total and they are most numerous in: the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Legion of Mary, the work of Mary (also known as the Focolare), the Cursillo, the Militia of the Immaculate, the Neocatechumenal Way, etc. Cf. P. Coda, *Con Benedetto e con Francesco, La lettera* Iuvenescit Ecclesia *e la "co-essenzialità" di carisma e istituzione*, Il Regno attualità e documenti, 61 (2016) 14, p. 395.

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CATECHESIS FOR CONFIRMATION AS A PASTORAL CHALLENGE IN SLOVENIA

Abstract

The article aims to present the state of confirmation pastoral care in the Slovenian territory. When thinking about confirmation pastoral care we cannot overlook the society we live in, the values this society sets as exemplary. This is where we encounter excessive materialism and secularism. Modern media and various social media are also an important influence. There is also the additional fact that Slovenia is one of the few countries where religious education is not part of the school system. This means that the entire weight of religious education falls on parishes or parish catechesis, the parish pastoral care which has to find ways to be simultaneously a religious education and catechesis, a life of religion. Nor can we overlook the families our candidates for Confirmation grow up in. In Slovenia, the sacrament of Holy Confirmation is granted in the last two years of primary school, therefore, at the milestone between primary and secondary school. Some people call this sacrament the "farewell to Church". Such a state of Confirmation pastoral care encourages the search for new approaches, both in the preparation for Confirmation as well as regarding the approaches and methods of work after the sacrament of Holy Confirmation has been granted. This process includes several factors: the people being granted Confirmation and their basic family, the parish community, godparents, animators, various pastoral groups (altar boys and girls, singers, scouts), and also various prayer groups who pray for the candidates for Confirmation, godparents and their families. In the concluding part of the article guidelines are presented which will have to be considered in future work with candidates for Confirmation, Confirmation groups, godparents, and parents. Family catechesis is suggested as an alternative which, methodologically speaking, encompasses the entire family and thus ensures greater stability regarding the preparation for Confirmation and the life after it. Some parishes already practice this form of catechesis and the results there have proven to be positive. This means that catechesis is in need of thorough reform. It is a complex

process demanding time and a lot of energy. Nevertheless, this approach should be tried with at least some of Confirmation groups.

Key words: *Confirmation, Confirmation pastoral care, family catechesis, New Evangelisation, carriers of Confirmation pastoral care.*

Introduction

In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church it is written that through baptism, the baptismal character of the faithful makes them worship the Christian religion; therefore reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church. They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit so that they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and deed (C 11).[1] These words of the Council, written fifty years ago, are the ones we wish to "verify" and evaluate in the present Slovenian catechistic and pastoral context. The Council emphasises the duty of professing faith and imposes a stricter duty of being witnesses by word and deed. The scientific aspect of this was presented by Polona Vesel Mušič in her doctoral thesis entitled *Birmanska pastorala na prepihu: vzgojno-pastoralni model kot oblika celostne vzgoje v Cerkvi na Slovenskem.*[2] Her vast scientific research is additionally presented in five books published in recent years.

1. Young People in Contemporary Society

This chapter aims to examine who our candidates for Confirmation are and where they come from.

1.1. A Young person – a Candidate for Confirmation

In Slovenia, Confirmation is usually conferred on teenagers, in their eighth or ninth grade of primary school. This is a person at the crossroads between childhood and the teenage period.[3] John Paul II wrote that this is the time of discovering oneself and one's own inner world, the time of generous plans, the time when the feeling of love awakens, with the biological impulses of sexuality, the time of the desire to be together, the time of a particularly intense joy connected with the exhilarating discovery of

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[1] Cf. *Koncilski odloki (2. vatikanski vesoljni cerkveni zbor),* Nadškofijski ordinariat, Ljubljana, 1980.

[2] Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birmanska pastorala na prepihu: vzgojno-pastoralni model kot oblika celostne vzgoje v Cerkvi na Slovenskem, doktorska disertacija,* Teološka fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2012.

[3] Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma – pečat svetega Duha (priročnik za starše birmancev in birmanske botre), Zbirka: Birmanska pastorala I.,* Ljubljana, 2013, p. 17-26.

life. But often it is also the age of deeper questioning, of anguished or even frustrating searching, of a certain mistrust of others and dangerous introspection, and the age sometimes of the first experiences of setbacks and of disappointments.[4]

Thus a young person matures in the physical, spiritual, and mental areas. It is also a period when young people leave the safe haven of their families and seek new friends, new company. This is youthful socialisation where he or she becomes one of the group, becomes the co-creator of the group he/she belongs to. It is a period when they are saying goodbye to childhood and forming new habits and a new style of living. If we look at a young person comprehensively and consider all the changes that are happening, we see that it is not always the case of a complete synchronisation, and discrepancies, dissonances, and tensions that reflect outwards also occur.

1.2. A Young Person – a Candidate for Confirmation and his Relationship with his Family

Every person creates the foundations of his life in his family. In the field of religious education we have come to notice that the family used to be the first "religious school". The family spent time together praying: in the morning, before meals, in the evening, upon holidays etc. They went to mass together, while eating Sunday lunch they discussed the sermon of that day etc. This was the way for a child and later also teenager to slowly enter into the world of faith. Looking at this from an educational perspective, this involved all three dimensions: cognitive, experiential, and engagement. Changes in society and changes in the manner of living brought changes to the way faith is perceived, too. With many, faith increasingly became a matter of "habit", a matter of "tradition". Prayer grew increasingly rarer. Many people left religious education to the institution, meaning catechesis, Sunday school. Catechesis used to be just an upgrade of home-based catechesis. Today, for many people, catechesis presents the only religious activity. And at some point, such Sunday school pupils become candidates for Confirmation. They need the support of their families but often they do not receive it. At home children frequently hear such words of solace: "Hold on, just Confirmation and then you're done with the sacraments". When this attitude towards the sacrament of Confirmation and the young person to be confirmed occurs, we need a redefinition of the preparation for Confirmation, which not only involves the preparation of the candidate but of the entire family.

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[4]   Cf. Janez Pavel II, Apostolska spodbuda o katehezi v našem času *Catechesi tradendae*, Cerkveni dokumenti 5, Ljubljana, 1980, 28.

1.3. A Young Person – a Candidate for Confirmation and the Internet

The invention of the Internet can be compared to some of the greatest revolutions in the history of communication (speech, writing, Internet). The invention of writing changed human communication in a great many ways, the same happened with the Internet. Still, it is clear that these changes do not bring along only positive things.[5] Young people are part of this world and the statistics which reveal and represent the levels of use of social media more or less reflect the behaviour of our candidates for Confirmation, too. The internet brings information, eases many tasks and makes access to various content much easier. Therefore, our pastoral work includes the question of how much we know about how to include these media as a pastoral aid, as the aid to our catechesis. Using is one thing, abusing another. Another thing is a contribution to the Internet so that it could increasingly be used as an aid. To what extent are the websites of our parishes the tool of the New Evangelisation and are they "attractive" to our young people preparing for Confirmation?

1.4. A Young Person – a Candidate for Confirmation, Materialism and Secularism

A teenager, the candidate for Confirmation today is a part of this world. The society we live in is filled with material goods. We could also say: "What you have is what you're worth." Intentionally or unintentionally hidden competitions take place constantly, of who will have more, who will have better, who will have it first. This materialism is first revealed in the family (the standard of living, the car, property) and then in the "property" of the young person (all kinds of gadgets). Confirmation is frequently tightly connected with gifts. It happens that we hear young people say how they can't wait to go to the Confirmation so that they can get something. In such a context it is very difficult to move to the spiritual sphere and establish the sacrament of Confirmation as a "purely" spiritual event. In this context we should consider the influence of the secular conception where there is ever less room for the spiritual. This is overtaken by materialism, social position, importance etc., and there is much less room for the spiritual and sacramental. When we think about the sacrament of Confirmation, the essence of the problem lies in the climate of society which is becoming increasingly "materialistic".

2. Pastoral practice on Confirmation in the past and today

The essence of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation has never changed through history. As it is written in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

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[5] Cf. B. Rustja, *Kako je internet spremenil naše mišljenje in ravnanje*, Cerkev danes, 49 (2016) 2, p. 8-11.

"Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds." (1316) Considering all of the social changes and the changes in the school and catechism-pastoral care fields, the pastoral care of Confirmation calls for its own development. This is not a blind adaptation to the situation of the present time, but the search for a path towards our young people preparing for Confirmation. Here we face the questions of methodology, didactics, and animation.

The preparation for Confirmation includes certain fixed points, such as:

1.1. Preparation for Confirmation in the last triad of primary school
1.2. Preparation of the candidates[6]
1.3. Confirmation groups
1.4. Preparation of parents[7]
1.5. Preparation of godparents[8]
1.6. The role of the animators in the preparation for Confirmation[9]
1.7. Direct preparation for Confirmation
1.8. Confirmation[10]
1.9. What about after Confirmation?

The state of mind in Europe and in Slovenia is changing. This is revealed also by the statistical data in the field of Confirmation pastoral care. In the last ten years the number of candidates for Confirmation in Slovenia has decreased from 14,788 (in 2004) to 10,557 Confirmations, which is a drop of 28.61%. The greatest decrease happened in 2004 – 2005 for 2,257 Confirmations and in 2012 – 2013 for 1,426 Confirmations.[11]

The Slovenian Bishops' Conference explains the table with the following words: "Changes in the manner of expressing faithfulness and participating in religious life are the expression of socio-political changes in the past decades and even during the entire last century which brought secularism, laicism, and distancing from religious values. We are faced

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6   Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 54-65.

7   Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 66-72.

8   Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 73-81; P. Vesel Mušič, *Tobija, Sara in Angel Rafael – o poročni ljubezni in botrstvu, Zbirka: Birmanska pastorala II.,* Ljubljana, 2014.

9   Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 82-80; P. Vesel Mušič, *Birmanski animatorji (dragocena priložnost), Salve,* Ljubljana, 2015.
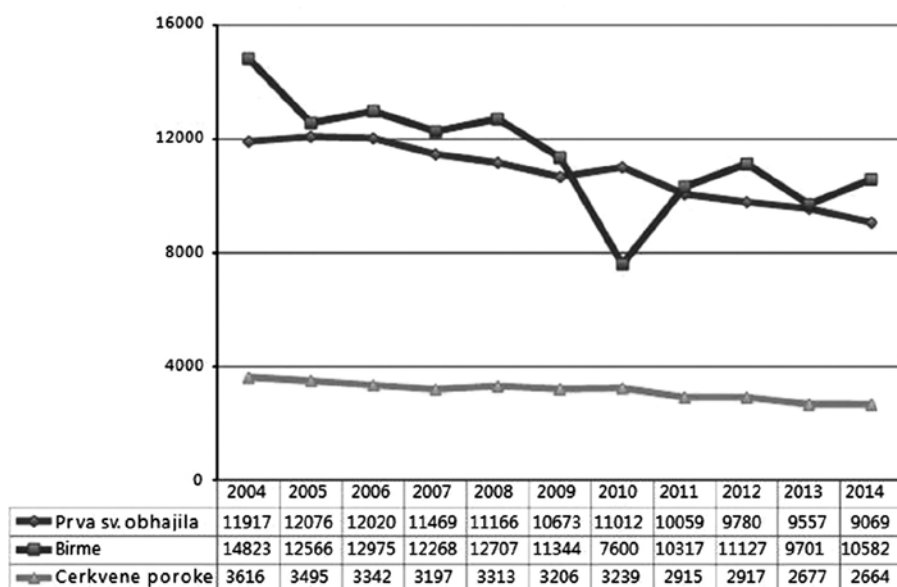
10   Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 163-225.

11   All statistical data is taken from: https://www.domovina.je/v-sloveniji-krscenih-samo-se-dobra-polovica-novorojencev-strmo-dol-tudi-stevilo-prvoobhajancev-in-birmancev/ (accessed on 10. 1. 2017).

	Škofija	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Birme	Celje	0	0	2176	1872	2097	1816	2184	1828	1869	1580	1813
	Koper	1509	1412	1109	1155	1232	1068	1092	1077	1055	937	1093
	Ljubljana	6076	5543	4845	3767	4778	3418	n.p.	3175	4167	3151	3926
	Maribor	7203	5590	2722	3086	2786	2766	2633	2349	2360	2177	2142
	Murska Sobota	0	0	945	891	788	847	812	825	689	776	551
	Novo mesto	0	0	1140	1463	1014	1403	848	1038	953	1054	1032
	Vojaški vikariat	35	21	38	34	12	26	31	25	34	26	25
Skupaj:		14823	12566	12975	12268	12707	11344	7600	10317	11127	9701	10582

with the first generation of young adults who are partly or completely estranged from their religion."

The following chart shows the trend in the number of Baptisms, Confirmations, and Christian weddings:

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Prva sv. obhajila	11917	12076	12020	11469	11166	10673	11012	10059	9780	9557	9069
Birme	14823	12566	12975	12268	12707	11344	7600	10317	11127	9701	10582
Cerkvene poroke	3616	3495	3342	3197	3313	3206	3239	2915	2917	2677	2664

The fact is that numbers are decreasing but they are not nearly as low as in some other European countries. What remains of traditional religion is still well visible in Slovenia; nevertheless, these numbers may cause worry about the future.

Authors A. Slavko Snoj and Dieter Emeis write in their book *Kateheza o zakramentih* (*Catechesis on the Sacraments*): "Goals and contents for the catechesis for Confirmation cannot be determined without considering the expectations of the candidates for Confirmation, and also not without a certain pastoral scheme in the preparation for Confirmation. Thus it is impossible to prepare a draft for Confirmation catechesis for all candidates and for all circumstances. Parishes prepare for Confirmation for various periods of time. These goals cannot be determined from a purely theological aspect. There is a need for pastoral decisions which should be substantiated considering the circumstances and comprehensive scheme of pastoral behaviour."[12]

We would like to include among the activities in the field of Confirmation pastoral care the website designed in the Maribor Archdiocese: http://www.birmanec.si/. The answer to the question why such a website (and a Facebook page) is needed is given by the Archbishop and Metropolitan Alojzij Cvikel: "Why? For us to get to know each other, connect, tell each other what we want to say…". The Archbishop continues: "I would like the webpage birmanec.si to become a 'giant playground', where we meet each other, inform one another, exchange experiences, discoveries… To be awarded the sacrament of Confirmation means the confirmation in faith, as well as a more conscious entry into the community of Jesus' friends. Every friendship grows slowly, but the more time we spend together, talk, confide in each other, the more likely it is that this friendship will become real."[13]

Hence, a new attempt to enliven Confirmation pastoral care happened at an archdiocesan meeting of candidates in Maribor on November 5th, 2016. The programme was well-prepared (guests, testimonies, musical groups) and the experience has proven to be very positive.

The Church is searching for a path towards people, families and candidates. Despite all this, we see that the statistics are still "negative". Therefore, the Church strives to find a "formula", which would turn a negative trend into a positive one.

The Church in Slovenia is aware of the state in the field; there are children and young people entering into parish catechesis who come from families who try for a life from faith and also those young people for whom this catechism lesson is the only time they engage in faith. In such cases, how do we lead a person to a personal relationship with God? What do we do so that Confirmation is not the sacrament of departure but the sacrament of confirmation and support in growth? These are the questions which the emerging Slovenian catechism plan is trying to address,

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[12] A. S. Snoj – D. Emeis, *Kateheza o zakramentih,* Katehetski center Knjižice, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 91.

[13] http://www.birmanec.si/ (accessed on 12. 1. 2017).

the plan which is being prepared with the cooperation of the Slovenian Catechetical Office, Faculty of Theology, and Interdiocesan Committee for Young People. As the basic starting point of the catechetical work it emphasises the individual in all age periods and a personal approach. Thus we wish to establish, in the field of Confirmation pastoral care, a system of preparation which would take into account the candidate's level of growing in faith and not only Confirmation as the logical consequence of the specified lesson of catechesis. Here a special preparation for the sacrament cannot be omitted (but the candidate would enrol in it himself). It will be founded on the construction of a small community, contact with contemporary witnesses, and a life of faith within the community of young people; similarly to what is happening in numerous programmes organised by the Interdiocesan Committee for Young People and SKAM (Community of Catholic Youth). All this is done with the purpose to enable the young to experience how the Holy Spirit is present in our lives and how he works, in the hope that they would, through experiential dynamics, discover that God loves us, as we can read in the invitation to the spiritual weekend for candidates organised by SKAM. The hope that after Confirmation the young people remain part of the community is also ever-present. We get hope and joy from the fruits of the project already in motion and that is the annual *Stična mladih* event, the meeting where thousands of young people from all over Slovenia join together to celebrate faith, as well as the initiatives of the above-mentioned organisations.

2. Confirmation Pastoral Vision for the Future

The Church in Slovenia is greatly aware of the importance of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. The search for the answers to the problems arising in the fields of pastoral care and Confirmation thus never ends. Polona Vesel Mušič in her book entitled *Utrip birmanske pastorale v Cerkvi na Slovenskem*[14] presents several suggestions for Confirmation pastoral care which are sought within the existing practice:

2.1.   The need for the re-evaluation of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Here we need to return to the study of the theology of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. This means the re-evaluation of the formation of all those who work with young people preparing for Confirmation.

2.2.   According to the research it is necessary to redefine the pastoral care of Confirmation according to priorities, expectations, approaches, pastoral areas.

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[14]   Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Utrip birmanske pastorale v Cerkvi na Slovenskem,* Salve, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 248-253.

2.3.   Clear evaluation of the functions of the main carriers of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation (the candidate, parents, godparents, animators, community, priests, bishops).

2.4.   The importance of the team and comprehensive approach including the cognitive, experiential, and engagement aspects. Aspects need to be brought to light which include personal assistance, methods and the doctrine of Gestalt pedagogy, and the theology of the body.

2.5.   Regarding the age of the candidates for Confirmation it remains in the period of the third triad (8th and 9th grade). A year earlier could be better so that candidates for Confirmation could actively participate in the life of the parish after Confirmation (various groups).

2.6.   Systematic continuation with Confirmation groups and spiritual exercises for both, the candidates for Confirmation and their parents.

2.7.   Thorough preparation of Confirmation animators, for example within the framework of the Slovenian School for Animators.

2.8.   Much thought should be devoted to thorough training of priests and laics, especially future theologians, for work in the field of Confirmation pastoral care.

2.9.   The Bible should be given a crucial place in the preparation for Confirmation, as well as the community and personal prayer. This would profoundly promote the New Evangelisation among all its carriers. We should work as if everything depends on us, pray and have faith as if everything depends on God.

2.10. Much has been done regarding Confirmation literature. What is needed is the systemisation and unification of aids (incorporation of various methods and manners).

2.11. In parishes, such pastoral care should be created which will be open for new members, for young people in particular (candidates for Confirmation).

2.12. The question of gifts upon the granting of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. In the polls candidates for Confirmation clearly state that gifts upon this occasion do not mean very much to them and that they do not want to be "left alone by the Church", but want to be incorporated in a quality manner, meaning we have to evaluate interpersonal relationships.

2.13. Since Confirmation is a spiritual event, prayer is of key importance.

All these suggestions reveal that we remain, more or less, within the framework of existing pastoral care. This means that we want to deepen the existing things, re-evaluate them or redefine them in certain fields.

The problem we notice is simple. Candidates for Confirmation who display a lesser degree of preparation or those candidates who are more difficult to motivate are part of a wider issue. The problem does not lie only

in the candidates but often in the environment they come from (family, relatives). If there is no support in the family, the animator, priest and Confirmation group will find it difficult to "move" such a candidate. On the basis of this fact we will try in the continuation to develop a vision of a somewhat different approach and that could bring the answer to this problem.

3. To Think about: a Slightly Different Confirmation Pastoral Approach

Confirmation pastoral care is a very demanding field of work with young people. On one hand, this is pastoral care where we invest a lot of energy and time into the preparation of the young for the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. On the other hand, we are realising that our approach is not yielding the desired results. We would like Holy Confirmation to be a "mature" answer of the young to the Christian calling.[15] But the truth is that the occasion presents some sort of a "farewell to Church", a "farewell to sacramental life".

3.1. Family Catechesis

One of the forms that could answer the challenges of time and circumstances is the so-called "family catechesis".[16] The presentation of family catechesis strives to open a new possibility for preparation for the sacrament of Holy Confirmation.

Family catechesis began in the Sunday school in Domžale in 2013-14. This is a catechesis for the entire family at the same time. The method is very dynamic. At the beginning the families sing a song together, say a prayer, and refresh the main points of the Gospel from the previous Sunday. This encourages children to increasingly follow the Sunday word of God. After this initial part they divide into four groups: parents, children of the first triad, children of the second triad, and preschool children. The official part lasts for 60 minutes. What follows is socialising, children play and parents chat.

Family catechesis is a pilot project in certain parishes all over Slovenia. It is an opportunity for all those parents who want to deepen their religious knowledge together with their children. The fact is that parents should be the first catechists (as used to be the case) for their children. Once a month, parents and children work together the entire meeting. Four times a year a quiz takes place consisting of questions from the previously appointed part of the Bible, and all the families are invited

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[15] Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Sveti Duh (naš prijatelj)*, Salve, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 67.

[16] The complete presentation of family catechesis is adapted from the website: http://natalijapodjavorsek.splet.arnes.si/ (accessed on: 12. 1. 2017).

to focus on that part. Four common meetings are intended for learning about the patron saints. Another part of the curriculum is the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

With the agreement of the local priests, children who are part of family catechesis do not need to attend Sunday school with their peers. Namely, family catechesis is designed to cover all the content a young Christian needs to know and will pass the year along with the other children at the end of the year. The curriculum differs from "classical" religious education lessons; therefore the children do not need books and workbooks, only a notebook. Currently, family catechesis includes children up to the sixth grade, while older children continue with the traditional form. Family catechesis can include them as animators.

Parents spend part of the meeting reading the Bible, another part discussing a pre-chosen book of spiritual content, a part talking about things related to individual days in the Church year, and the last part debating the contents of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Families having only one parent involved in Christian upbringing can also participate in family catechesis. The same goes for those families where, due to their job obligations, one of the parents is not always able to participate at weekly meetings.

In addition to regular meetings, family catechesis once or twice a month helps prepare family masses with introductions and singing, they head the Lent action for children, in which children who generally do not attend choir practice learn to sing songs that they later sing at the Easter celebrations, they prepare for a Passion performance, there is a charity on Epiphany, and they lead the May masses for children. They also actively participate in the preparation of the celebration for children attending First Communion. All families participating in family catechesis are invited to join these activities, but are not obliged to. Families participate as far as they are able to and according to their interests and also other families, who are not part of the family catechesis, are invited to join in the activities. The planners of family catechesis do not want family catechesis to become an isolated group within the parish pastoral care.

The first evaluations of the results in the parishes where family catechesis is carried out show that they are above expectation (satisfactory). What is needed is a greater connection between regular pastoral care and family catechesis, greater "presence" of the priest, chaplain (both of whom completely support the project of family catechesis). A positive result of family pastoral care is also the fact that families in the parish are much more connected, they get to know each other very well during this period, and their communication deepens.

Parents presented some much-appreciated feedback at the end of the year. They were satisfied with the explanation of the Bible. They liked being invited to read literature with spiritual content and that they were

able to plan preparation for Church holidays within the family group. They liked the Bible quizzes because they brought about a lot of laughter. Children also perceived these meetings as a more relaxed form of learning where they talk a lot about different themes connected to the life of a Christian.

Family catechesis set in motion several processes. One of the most important ones is the connection of the families. Pastoral theology frequently emphasises the fact that our efforts should be directed towards the formation of new communities. Family catechesis is the proof that this is possible.

Positive experience of family catechesis could present an encouragement for a thorough examination of Confirmation catechesis. An alternative Confirmation pastoral proposal could follow the direction of family catechesis.

3.2. A slightly Different Confirmation Approach

This proposal does not aim to "negate" the existing practice. The existing form of preparation includes many positive elements. The ceremony of Confirmation itself also cannot be changed and "modernised". What stops us and makes us consider whether this is the post-Confirmation practice. We are faced with the question: why such a decrease? Why do so many people distance themselves from the Church and why do so many abandon the practice of the practical Christian? Despite much effort there are only a few pastoral workers who have managed to direct the preparation and happenings revolving around Confirmation in such a way that the young people remained in the community.

Existing Confirmation pastoral care includes parents. But in comparison with the practice of family catechesis the extent is very small and there is the question of efficiency. Thus we give as an example of best practice the greater promotion of family catechesis. The Slovenian Bishops' Conference gave their consent to this practice which means that family catechesis is now an alternative to the regular Sunday school lessons and that they are free to prepare children for Holy Confession and First Communion themselves, the same goes for Holy Confirmation. In the beginning, although, the practice was for children to attend family catechesis, but for the preparation for the sacraments they joined other children and adolescents, their peers at the regular religious classes.

Good practice of family catechesis presents us with two options. The first is to encourage family catechesis in parishes and that means right from the start, therefore in the first triad and continuing through the second and third. Considering all the positive experience, this would lead the child to the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. Judging from the experience of family catechesis, participants feel good in this community and this

can be taken as an assurance that they will remain part of this community even after Confirmation. The question of godparents remains open. They could also be included in this catechesis (at least those who want to). If not, there remains the option of spiritual weekends or the systematic preparation of godparents for their duties. An example of best practice today can be found in the Diocese of Koper.

The other option is to introduce family catechesis in the third triad and form the third triad in such a way that it would be directed towards the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. We can assume that the group of candidates for Confirmation with their parents and godparents would be divided. On one side there would be those who would embrace the proposal and start the path of preparation according to the method of family catechesis, on the other those who would want it done "the old way".

This is a risky alternative which would, for those who choose it, bring some sort of an assurance that their Christian practice does not end with the day of Confirmation but will continue in the community ensured by the liveliness of the individual as well as the wider community (parents, brothers, sisters, godparents etc.). The future of the Church in Slovenia is not oriented towards massiveness but rather small communities. The suggested alternative methodologically supports the idea of small communities.

All these efforts are headed in the direction of New Evangelisation. Walter Kasper wrote in his book *Evangelij družine in nova evangelizacije Evrope*: "Naturally, we cannot simply copy local Churches from the first Christian times. We need extended families of a new type. For the nuclear family to survive, they should be included in a family network encompassing several generations… In the same way, nuclear families should be part of interfamily circles of neighbours and friends…"[17]

A few days before the election of the new Pope, Benedict XVI gave a lecture at Subiaco about the position of Europe.[18] In his clear analysis of the present state he emphasised the composition of the programme for New Evangelisation: "What we need in this historical times are the people with faith, which is zealous and alive, who will show that God is real in this world… We need people who are gazing at God and learn from Him what the true humanity is…"[19]

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[17] W. Kasper, *Evangelij družine in nova evangelizacija Evrope,* Celjska Mohorjeva družba, Celje, 2014, p. 46.

[18] Cf. R. Fisichella, *Nova evangelizacija,* Ognjišče in Slomškova založba, Maribor, 2014, p. 162-163.

[19] J. Ratzinger, *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture,* Siena, 2005, p. 63-64.

Conclusion

The document entitled *Sklepni dokument plenarnega zbora Cerkve na Slovenskem* reads: "The reform of Confirmation pastoral care has to be set in the framework of New Evangelisation. In addition to contemporary theological and ecclesial consideration this pastoral sphere has to stem from spiritual, cultural, moral, and other signs of the present time and our space."[20] This article presents Confirmation catechesis in the past and today. We have brought attention to its positive and negative aspects. We primarily stopped at the question of comprehensive Confirmation pastoral care, meaning the inclusion of all in the process of preparation and formation of the community. As a solution, we presented the positive experience of family catechesis which could serve as a preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation and simultaneously assure the community spirit after Confirmation, too. All of these correspond with the guidelines of New Evangelisation.

Abbreviations:

C – Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG = Lumen gentium) from November 21st 1964.

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[20] *Sklepni dokument plenarnega zbora Cerkve na Slovenskem*, Družina, Ljubljana, 2002.

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RELIGIOUS DIDACTICS UNDER THE TERMS OF PLURALITY

Abstract

Plurality, individualisation and globalisation are the striking features of the present time. They affect the importance of the Church and religion in our society. Under these terms, religious education has to be subject-orientated and it should enable young people to overcome heterogeneity and plurality.

1. Children of Freedom - the Social Starting Point

Every day we are spoilt for choice: At the supermarket you have to choose between innumerable yoghurt varieties. The car market offers a confusingly large number of different models. And which of the numerous mobile phones is the best?

All of these questions should be considered as the signs of the times. The key words individualisation, pluralisation and globalisation accurately describe that.

The first part of the article explains the signs of the times. After a general analysis, the consequences for religion and the Church will be taken into account.

Finally, the article offers a pedagogical point of view referring to the impact of social and religious plurality on religious educational processes. The social situation of the Federal Republic of Germany, the altered role of religion in Germany, as well as, the distinctiveness of the German education system and the specific structures of religious education make up the basis of this article. Although, there are considerable differences between the social and ecclesiastical situation in Germany and Croatia, it can be very interesting for Croatian readers to discover similarities and differences.[1]

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[1] The question about religious education in a pluralistic society, facing the privatisation of religion is widespread even beyond the borders of Germany: L. G. Beaman / L. Van Arragon (Ed.), *Issues in Religion and Education. Whose Religion?*, Koninklijke Brill NV Leiden, 2015.

1.1. Pluralisation, globalisation and individualisation as a challenge

People living in the so-called postmodern time are not anymore determined by traditional relationships (family, religion, national origin). They are free to choose between different options concerning life and values. Over-lapping and general interpretations of world and life in general, do not exist anymore; people face different ways of living.[2]

The process of globalisation enhances this. Therefore people's room of living, experience and work, expands to the global world. The social-cultural dynamic of globalisation affects the following areas: Institutions suffer a loss of controlling the behaviour and the attitudes of people (deinstitutionalisation), common traditions are put back by blurring of the borders of spaces (detraditionalisation), people get more insight in foreign cultures and traditions (pluralisation), uniform design processes can be traced in fashion, music, food and economy. At least everybody has to create his/her own biography (individualisation).[3]

But this kind of biographical construction is very demanding. The necessary process of subjectification is not solely a chance for a more determined curriculum vitae. It presents a compulsion: The "Kinder der Freiheit"[4] are forced to choose from a wide and varied range of possibilities and to create their own *Sinn-Cocktail*[5]: they are forced to choose. People are condemned to search for meaning. It sounds like the resurrection of the existential paradigm: "You are what you make of yourself". At the same time the fragile subject searches permanently for personal affirmation and social agreement: "I know who I am, when I am trendy." The ambitious aim is a fundamental and flexible literacy of your own life.

However, life as an individual creation has ever been limited due to the individual's dependency on institutions (labour market, social welfare state, education system). New dependencies arise and limit people's possible actions and life opportunities. In this context, it is understandable that people do not want to be tied to a political party, the Church or partner their whole life. Each selected option excludes all the others. It is therefore no surprising, that trade unions, sports clubs, political parties and churches suffer a significant loss of their members.

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[2] Cf. K. Gabriel, Christentum im Umbruch zur "Post"-Moderne, in: H. Kochanek (Hg.), *Religion und Glaube in der Postmoderne*, Nettetal, 1996, p. 39-59; H. Mendl, *Religionsdidaktik kompakt. Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf*, 5. A. München, 2017, p. 14-22.

[3] Cf. H.-G. Ziebertz, Gesellschaftliche und jugendsoziologische Herausforderungen, in: G. Hilger / S. Leimgruber / H.-G. Ziebertz, *Religionsdidaktik. Ein Leitfaden für Studium, Ausbildung und Beruf. Neuausgabe*, München, 2010, p. 76-105, hier p. 81f.

[4] U. Beck, *Kinder der Freiheit*, Frankfurt a.M., 1997. / Children of Freedom.

[5] People combine different things to create their own concepts of happiness, meanings and a good life.

1.2. The challenge: Development of an individual identity - handling plurality

The development of an identity in a postmodern, plural and global society is a nonlinear process, being finished someday in the period of adolescence.[6] The individual is more vulnerable than expected in the modern age. Moreover, due to the rapid change of society, a static identity concept seems to be insufficient. Social scientists observe tendencies to a patchwork identity, based on different, every day fragmentation-experiences.

Postmodern people are forced to choose from a variety of life plans and to create a fragile and changeable identity. This means people need to create separate identities for different living contexts. Whereas occupational change was seen as an indication of professional failure, today it seems to be a requirement for multiple identities. Nowadays it is regarded as an expression of liveliness and vital reorientation.

Since life has always been in progress, individuals have to make sure that their identity constructions are the best ones. This affirmation of identity is carried out in the social context through the dynamic confrontation between your own ideas and the expectations of the others. The concept of narrative identity claims that people feel identical due to telling others the events that happen in their lives and therefore reliving the narrated things. Through the narratives, life is structured, correlations are established, contradictions are adjusted and missed opportunities are evaluated.[7] Especially social media plays a key role in identity configuration.[8]

Supporting identity development and reassurance is a macrosocial task. Educational institutions are in charge of the fragile individuals and have to assist them in creating a new shape of life. The venture will only succeed if people learn how to overcome plurality. But it is not enough to create your own identity. To take the metaphor further you have to get all things for this life achievement on your own. As already mentioned, people have to face an unmanageable amount of possibilities. You will meet up with people and groups of people with unequal values and life decisions. So the aim is to be prepared to handle plurality. Therefore, special rules

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[6]   Cf. H. Mendl, *Religionsdidaktik kompakt. Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf*, 5. A. München, 2017, p. 71-72; H. Mendl, *"Identitäts-Arbeit" als Aufgabe des RU?*, in: Zeitschrift für Integrative Gestaltpädagogik und Seelsorge, 21 (2016) 80, p. 14-17.

[7]   Cf. H.-G. Ziebertz, Wozu religiöses Lernen? – Religionsunterricht als Hilfe zur Identitätsbildung, in: G. Hilger / S. Leimgruber / H.-G. Ziebertz, *Religionsdidaktik. Ein Leitfaden für Studium, Ausbildung und Beruf. Neuausgabe*, München, 2010, p. 142-154, hier p. 152.

[8]   Cf. E. Fuchs-Auer, *Wer bin ich? Facebook als "Identitätskonfigurator"*, KatBl, 138 (2013), p. 180-183.

and methods are necessary. According to Hans-Georg Ziebertz, plurality in school settings can be overcome like this:[9]

– Ambiguous situations need to be withstood (ambiguity tolerance).
– To become familiar with fundamental styles and methods of reasoning.
– To be capable to see things from another perspective, to touch upon them and to learn from them.
– To be able to use traditions that are culturally present to solve problems.
– Acquire competences to master agreement as well as disagreement.

Even globalisation is a special challenge that affects plurality. In both media and face to face encounter with people from other cultures, people are confronted with ways of life and values which are unequal to their own attitudes. The numerous refugees which came to Germany in 2015 are an outstanding example of the consequences of globalisation, which intensifies the social pluralisation process.

2. Religious pluralisation and individualisation

Religion is a part of the society. Therefore, it is self-evident that religion is involved in the sketch process of pluralisation, individualisation and globalisation.

2.1. The starting point: Somewhere between secularisation and change of religion

In the process of modernisation, religion will disappear. This was, for quite some time, the predominant opinion in sociology but today it is seen from a different point of view. The problem of the secularisation hypothesis is that it only refers to the institutional form of religion.

Therefore, the existing social situation seems obvious: German churches become less important. Currently about 60% of the population belongs to the Christian religion. But conceivably, in 2025 people of different faiths and non-believers will form the largest majority.[10] There is a considerable degree of confessional secularisation especially in the eastern federal states. Eberhard Tiefensee gets to the heart of it: "If the Western Germany is a kind of a disaster area (…), the Eastern Germany is its epicentre!"[11]. Regional numbers verify the decline in reference to the church too: the number of the Church service visitors in Passau halved

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[9]   H.-G. Ziebertz, Gesellschaftliche und jugendsoziologische Herausforderungen, in: G. Hilger / S. Leimgruber / H.-G. Ziebertz, *Religionsdidaktik*, p. 86; Cf. auch H. Mendl, *Religionsdidaktik kompakt. Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf*, 5. A. München, 2017, p. 20.

[10] Cf. http://www.zukunftsentwicklungen.de/gesellschaft.html (letzter Abruf 24. 11. 2016); Cf. auch zu den jeweils aktuellen Zahlen: www.remid.de.

[11] E. Tiefensee, *Religiös unmusikalisch? Folgerungen aus einer weithin krisenfesten Religiosität*, KatBl, 126 (2000) p. 88-95, hier p. 88f.

between 2000 and 2015. In 2015 only 11.7% of Catholics visited Sunday services. Compared to 2000, this is a decline of 46.1%.[12] The number of members leaving the Church, despite a slight decline, is consistently high: In Bavaria the Protestant and the Catholic Church lost more than 85,000 members.[13] The different sinus-milieu studies drew attention in the ecclesial environment: According to the study, only a few social milieus are involved in church institutions.[14] Particularly alarming in this context are the results of the Sinus-Youth study. Especially social trendsetters among young adults seem to be far removed from the Church![15]

Overall, attachment to the Church decreases more and more and religious and cultural traditions are being overcome in an arbitrary way.[16] Surprisingly this development may not only be found among unchurched people but also in the churchly milieu.

At the same time, distancing from Church institutions does not mean that people and even young people have not got any religious believes. The Shell-Youth Study can clarify this.[17] On one hand, it becomes clear, that young people do not let themselves be influenced by the Church. On the other hand, numbers show that young people are reserved, but not non-religious! Religious convictions are predominant, collective religious practices are declining. Young people's relationship with God can be categorised like this: 26% think there is a personal God (close to church religions), 21% say there is a supernatural power (distant from church religions), 24% say that they don't know what or who they should believe in (doubtful) and 27% think that there is neither a personal God nor a supernatural power (unchurched).[18] In pedagogy, this existing plurality of religious attitudes has to be taken seriously.

Against this background it appears more appropriate to refer to a change of religion.

In our society there are different forms of hidden or freely floating religions with an individualistic tone. In postmodern times, religion appears

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[12] Cf. F. Kammermeier, L. Haus, *Die katholische Kirche in Passau hat in 15 Jahren fast die Hälfte ihrer Besucher verloren*, Passauer Neue Presse, 299 (24. 12. 2015), p. 25.

[13] *Kirchen: Exodus noch nicht gestoppt*, Passauer Neue Presse, 163 (16. 7. 2016), p. 10.

[14] Cf. Wippermann, Carsten, *Religiöse und kirchliche Orientierungen in den Sinus-Milieus 2005*, München, 2005.

[15] Cf. M. Calmbach / S. Borgstedt / I. Borchard / P. M. Thomas /B. Bodo Flaig, *Wie ticken Jugendliche 2016? Lebenswelten von Jugendlichen im Alter von 14 bis 17 Jahren in Deutschland*, Wiesbaden, 2016.

[16] Cf. U. Ruh, *Ein Fremdkörper? Christlicher Gottesdienst in säkularer Gesellschaft*, Liturgisches Jahrbuch, 66 (2016) 3, p. 137-149, hier p. 138.

[17] Deutsche Shell (Hg.), *Jugend 2000*. 2 Bde., Opladen, 2000; *Jugend 2002*, Frankfurt a. M., 2002; *Jugend 2006*, Frankfurt a. M., 2006; *Jugend 2010*, Frankfurt a. M., 2010; *Jugend 2015: Eine pragmatische Generation im Aufbruch*, Frankfurt a.M., 2015.

[18] Deutsche Shell (Hg.), *Jugend 2015: Eine pragmatische Generation im Aufbruch*, Frankfurt a.M., 2015, p. 253.

in various ways. The transformation thesis enables the viewing of plural offers in the worldview market of religion. Religion is embedded in the macrosocial process of pluralisation, individualisation and globalisation.

2.2. The force to heresy

Peter Berger explained the heretic dynamic many years ago in his book, which is called "Der Zwang zur Häresie" (1980)[19]. Even in the sphere of religion, people have to create their own patchwork identity. It is necessary that people choose between different available styles of religion and develop a self-responsible, individuating and reflective faith. There is a variety of choice and it is comprehensive.

You can verify this by visiting a library and comparing the numbers of theological books with esoteric ones! Moreover this diversity, which can be combined (syncretism), seems to be proof to support the thesis: It is not the end of religion. Religion is coming back, in a multiply changed form. Functions, task fields and rituals of the classical confessional religion are taken over by other institutions and manifestations (equivalent to religion).

In everyday life and in the world of media, many elements of traditional religion can be found. Religion is a topic in the public sphere as well as in religious productive popular culture (e.g. advertisement, world of cinema, in pop and rock music). Twenty years ago, in relation to the Church, Paul Zulehner mentioned that people chose suitable elements of the Christian religion. In the meantime, his observation has been confirmed by several studies: Even Christians do not agree with denominations within the Christian faith. They combine Christian elements with things of other religions and esoteric ideas that fit to their everyday life.

2.3. The task: to overcome religious plurality – to create your own religious style

The fundamental task of religious pedagogy is to support people when handling religious plurality and to foster the creation of your own religious style.

In religiously homogeneous environment, one's own religion seems to be self-evident; in plural environment it seems to need justification. The large number of Islamic refugees who came to Germany must be regarded as a productive challenge. Thus it becomes necessary to clarify the importance of religion in your own life. The question of religion will be answered

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[19] P. L. Berger, *Der Zwang zur Häresie. Religion in der pluralistischen Gesellschaft.* Aus dem Amerikanischen von Willi Köhler, Frankfurt a.M., 1980. – The Greek word heresy (choice) is actually a neutral word. In the ecclesial environment it has got a negative connotation: A deviation from the right faith. In his book, Peter Berger plays with this wide semantic range!

more substantially, beyond a pure functional and anthropological term for religion.[20] Church communities were especially actively involved in providing assistance to refugees in Germany last year. Supporters circles were established and many volunteers got involved in helping refugees all over the world. Therefore, church communities are the places where interreligious encounters take place. Apart from the important interpersonal encounters, an intercultural clarification of the foreign and your own religion is necessary. The famous crucial question of Goethe's Faust: "Say, as regards religion, how you feel!" becomes important in a social and individual way.

It may appear paradoxical: The wave of refugees is especially really challenging to a secular and invisible religion and overall it shows its limitations!

3. Plurality and heterogeneity in school

3.1. Plurality as a whole school task

The social tendencies are reflected in school, too. Although there are areas where you may find confessional homogeneity and ethic milieus, the federalist society becomes multicultural especially in the cities.

But even among the peers, there is a wide variation: it is necessary to assume the differentiation between living environment and learning conditions among pupils.

This also applies to all kinds of schools and school classes: Each case is unique! This postulate is supported by learning and developmental psychology as well as by fundamental social perspectives: We know that it is not possible from a universalist approach to fix cognitive, moral and religious development[21] of children and young adults. The process is far more individual and domain-specific.

From learning psychology we know that there are different types of learners in learning groups who prefer their own ways and methods of learning (auditory, visual, motor or communicative learner types etc.). If you add more pedagogical indications, the following starting point of pupils seems to be a relevant distinguishing factor: background experiences, prior knowledge, general skills, personality traits, learning posture, learning technique, motivation and attitude, learning pace and their learning performance.[22] One more thing needs to be complement-

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[20] Cf. B. Porzelt, *Grundlegung religiösen Lernens*, Bad Heilbrunn, 2009, p. 45-108.

[21] Cf. H. Mendl, *Religionsdidaktik kompakt. Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf*, 5. A. München, 2017, p. 33-43.

[22] Cf. H. Altrichter / B. Hauser, *Umgang mit Heterogenität lernen*, Journal für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung, 1 (2007), p. 4-11, hier p. 6.

ed, namely the distinction of gender.[23] These perspectives need to be reflected while planning the lessons. Given this, it can be rationally concluded that: There is no grosser injustice than treating different people in the same way.[24]

In light of pupil's advanced heterogeneity each heterogenic didactic is doomed to failure.[25] The starting point has got more complicated, since the emergence of inclusion.

In 2009 the German Bundestag decided to join the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is realised in different social areas, especially in the school sector. Everybody should enjoy social equality. Unlike integration, the aim is not only to put disabled children in regular classes. In fact, a new fundamental education conception where heterogeneity and differentiation are normal is acquired.[26]

3.2. Overcoming religious plurality - finding orientation

Of course, the sketched features of heterogeneity can only be applied to pupils who visit religious education classes. Since the Würzburger Synod in 1974, German religious pedagogics assume that even the confessional religious education classes are visited by heterogenic pupils even if they formally belong to a confession: There are pupils who believe, who seek, who are sceptic and those who don't care.

Moreover, in many federal states–the concept of a pure confessional-based religious education cannot be kept up. In many cases there are religiously mixed or interreligious learning classes. Moreover, religious plurality is an inevitable reality for all pupils.

This again can be underlined by the examples of the Shell Study:

In the western Germany's mainstream there is a moderate interest in religion ("religion light"). In the new federal states, religion is not really important. However, migration culture conversely can be characterised

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[23] Cf. KatBl, 140 (2015), 5: *Lernen Jungs Religion anders?*

[24] Cf. M. Eisenmann, Differenzierung im Englischunterricht, in: M. Eisenmann / T. Grimm (Hg.), *Heterogene Klassen – Differenzierung in Schule und Unterricht*, Baltmannsweiler, 2011, p. 79-98, hier p. 79.

[25] Cf. H. Mendl / M. L. Pirner, Differenzierung im katholischen und evangelischen Religionsunterricht, in: M. Eisenmann / T. Grimm (Hg.), *Heterogene Klassen*, p. 173-191.

[26] Cf. A. Müller-Friese, *No child left behind – Herausforderung Inklusion*, Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik, 10 (2011) 2, p. 25-37; S. Pemsel-Maier / M. Schambeck, *Inklusion!? Religionspädagogische Einwürfe*, Freiburg i. Br., 2014; H. Mendl, Religionslehrerbildung als hochschuldidaktische Herausforderung zwischen Differenzierung und Inklusion, Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik, 10 (2011) 2, p. 51-68; K. Metzger / E. Weigel u.a. (Hg.), *Inklusion – eine Schule für alle: Modelle – Positionen – Erfahrungen*, Berlin, 2010; A. Müller-Friese / S. Leimgruber, Religionspädagogische Aspekte eines integrativen Religionsunterrichts, in: A. Pithan u.a. (Hg.), *Handbuch integrative Religionspädagogik*, Gütersloh, 2002, p. 356-374; J. Schöler, *Alle sind verschieden: Auf dem Weg zur Inklusion in der Schule,* Weinheim, 2009.

by religious vitality.[27] According to religious education teachers in vocational schools, the growing number of refugees represents a challenge for German youth. Muslim youth affirm their religious community to a greater extent than Germans do. Many times, they feel quite indifferent about their own religion. You may ask: What do we believe in? Insofar it is the key role of religious education today, to provide basic knowledge about your own, but foreign faith. Moreover religious education should support pupils in search of their own faith.[28]

Besides, they need the ability to distinguish between constructive and deconstructive forms of religion. Especially dealing with different perceptions of religion, the Protestant Church says, that they should gain religious orientation.[29] Catholic bishops formulate it like this: religious education should convey fundamental knowledge about the faith of the Church. This knowledge should be structured and important for life and the pupils' dialogue capability and power of judgement should be fostered.[30] Rudolf Englert is doing this in a religious pedagogic way by making an exact determination of the relationship between configured religious knowledge (the understanding of connected knowledge base within the objective religion) and an individual religious knowledge (the individual acquisition of religious tradition).[31]

4. Religious- didactical instruments for mastering plurality

4.1. Subject- orientation: Starting and target point of learning

It is also inevitable that especially religious education has to recognise and heed the heterogeneity of pupils, too. It should enable pupils to overcome the plural world and its religious pluralism in a constructive way. Therefore Subject – orientation needs to be the starting and target point of any learning in religious education classes. Religious pedagogy in Germany seems to be prepared for all the challenges to come. In the last few years, many different principles and methods were developed. They help to cope with subject orientation and to overcome plurality in a textual and didactic way.[32]

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[27] Cf. Deutsche Shell (Hg.), *Jugend 2015: Eine pragmatische Generation im Aufbruch*, Frankfurt a.M., 2015, p. 254-261.

[28] Cf. F. Schweitzer, *Die Suche nach eigenem Glauben*, Gütersloh, 1996.

[29] Cf. Kirchenamt der EKD (Hg.), *Religiöse Orientierung gewinnen. Evangelischer Religionsunterricht als Beitrag zu einer pluralitätsfähigen Schule. Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, Gütersloh, 2014

[30] Cf. Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (Hg.), *Der Religionsunterricht vor neuen Herausforderungen*, Bonn, 2005.

[31] Cf. R. Englert, *Der Religionsunterricht vor der Frage nach seinem Ertrag*, in: ders., *Religionspädagogische Grundfragen. Anstöße zur Urteilsbildung*, Stuttgart, 2007, p. 256-269.

[32] Siehe zur Begrifflichkeit: H. Mendl, *Religionsdidaktik kompakt. Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf*, 4. A. München, 2015, p. 149f; C. Kalloch / S. Leimgruber / U. Schwab, *Lehrbuch*

4.2. Subject: Living environment and living history, a place of religious learning

Living environment and living history are docking sites for religious learning.

In the light of a brief task: fostering identity in the middle of plurality, religious education has to offer possibilities of positioning. Pupils have the opportunity of having a close look on their own life and self-reflecting on the heart of it. Biographical learning enables pupils to look back at their life and to reflect the contexts of their own life in a critical way. Learning through other biographies fosters self-reflective learning. Because "the person in you becomes me"[33].

Dealing with life experiences and decisions of others, children and young adults, try to understand perspectives, thinking possibilities and ways of life.[34]

Two further principles take their starting point in the plural living environmental challenges: From a gender specific point of view, the question is, if boys and girls learn fundamentally different.[35] A gradual decline in religious commitment arises the following question: should religious education include performative elements, since only religious experience allows us to understand religion and to make an individual positioning? [36]

4.3. Didactics: Progressive Education, Theology for children, Constructivism

The postulate of subject orientation is a part of all didactical principles that take seriously the learning subject as an actor of its own individual learning process.

In this connection, mention can be made of all didactical educational ways, orientated towards progressive education: free-choice learning, learning circles, Montessori pedagogy. Appreciation of learning can been

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der Religionsdidaktik. Für Studium und Praxis in ökumenischer Perspektive, Freiburg u.a., 2009, p. 205f; G. Hilger / S. Leimgruber / H.-G. Ziebertz, Religionsdidaktik. Ein Leitfaden für Studium, Ausbildung und Beruf. Neuausgabe, München, 2010, p. 331-333;

[33]   M. Buber, Ich und Du, in: Ders., Die Schriften über das dialogische Prinzip, Heidelberg, 1954, p. 7-121.

[34]   Cf. H. Mendl, "Identitäts-Arbeit" als Aufgabe des RU?, Zeitschrift für Integrative Gestaltpädagogik und Seelsorge, 21 (2016) 80, p. 14-17; H. Mendl, Modelle – Vorbilder – Leitfiguren. Lernen an außergewöhnlichen Biografien, Stuttgart, 2015.

[35]   Cf. KatBl, 140 (2015) 5: Lernen Jungs Religion anders?; Andreas Obenauer, Reli für Jungs Didaktische Impuls für einen jungengerechten Religionsunterricht, Göttingen, 2014.

[36]   Cf. H. Mendl, Religion erleben. Ein Arbeitsbuch für den Religionsunterricht. 20 Arbeitsfelder, 2. A., München, 2013; H. Mendl, Religion zeigen – Religion erleben – Religion verstehen. Ein Studienbuch zum performativen Religionsunterricht, Stuttgart, 2016.

seen in the numerous parts of Theology for children and youth: even children are trusted to question and to change reality in a theological way. [37]

Different models of constructivism[38] create a learning bracket theory to justify the concept of subject and individual reality construction among a social plurality.

4.4. Plurality: Discourse ethics, interreligious learning

Finally two methodological approaches which help to overcome plurality, not only in a textual way but also formal, will be mentioned: One aspect of good education is the ability to discuss moral and religious dilemmas.[39] Especially in a society, which is shaped with value pluralism, children and young adults have to choose between different competitive ethics procedures, values and standards. In the narrower field of interreligious learning[40] you will find models that enable pupils a responsible handling of religious plurality. Besides the reflective encounter and learning about other religions, the use of religious artefacts needs to be mentioned. This method derives from the Anglo-Saxon tradition. There more knowledge and experience in handling plurality is available than in Germany.[41]

5. Desideratum: Organisational design of religious education

There is one big challenge, religious pedagogy in Germany has to meet in the next few years: the organisation of religious education. Should it still be confessional? Is it not necessary to restructure RE because of the multi-religious situation and religious indifference in school classes?[42]

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[37] Exemplarisch: G. Büttner / P. Freudenberger-Lötz / C. Kalloch / M. Schreiner, *Handbuch Theologisieren mit Kindern. Einführung – Schlüsselthemen – Methoden*, Stuttgart – München, 2014; *Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie*, Stuttgart, 2002ff.

[38] Cf. G. Büttner u.a. (Hg.), *Jahrbuch für konstruktivistische Religionsdidaktik*, Hannover und Babenhausen, 2010ff-.

[39] Cf. H. Mendl, *Religionsdidaktik kompakt. Für Studium, Prüfung und Beruf*, 5. A. München, 2017, p. 116-119.

[40] Cf. C. Meyer, *Zeugnisse fremder Religionen im Unterricht. "Weltreligionen" im deutschen und englischen Religionsunterricht*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1999; C. P. Sajak, *Kippa, Kelch, Koran. Interreligiöses Lernen mit Zeugnissen der Weltreligionen. Ein Praxisbuch*, München, 2010; H. Mendl, *Religion erleben. Ein Arbeitsbuch für den Religionsunterricht*. 20 Arbeitsfelder, 2. A., München, 2013, p. 272-280.

[41] Cf. J. M. Hull, *A Gift to the Child. A New Pedagogy für Teaching Religion to Young Children*, Religious Education, 91, p. 172-188.

[42] Translation: Elisabeth Fuchs-Auer: Thanks a lot!

IV. Challenges for the family faith formation

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN FAMILY TRANSITIONS IN THE LIGHT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Abstract

The article[1] focuses on transformative learning during significant family life transitions demanding from family members to learn new roles, habits, operating modes, relating, and feeling. Transformative learning explains how one changes/learns by transforming the meaning of one's experiences. In many cases, these experiences are painful and stressful for the learner, and the existing skills, knowledge and ways of coping are no longer sufficient. In one's life cycle, either predictable or unpredictable events present the opportunities for transitional and transformative learning, where the transformation of the individual, his skills, knowledge, habits, identity, and patterns takes place. Many significant events occur within the nuclear family, in the creation of a new family, the so-called family of procreation, or in the reorganization of the family such as the loss of a family member. Given the increasing number of divorces in Europe we have examined divorce as an extremely stressful trial for all family members, which brings change in the family structure charged with very strong emotions; considering the religious dimensions of an individual's experience we have also presented opportunities for transformative, transitional learning from the perspective of religious education.

Key words: *transformative learning, transitional learning, religious education, divorce.*

Introduction

Learning[2] is the most intensive in a family which is subjected to major changes in the modern world[3]. The common scenarios of life events in the

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[2] Learning is understood as the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. P. Jarvis, *Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Human Learning*, Routledge, London, New York, 2006, p. 134.

[3] Cf. N. Ličen, *Triptih o družinskem življenju*, Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2017.

past, when, for example, marriage was followed by childbirth and its timing was quite predictable are gone. Moreover, there is a growing number of various forms of coexistence, while some practices are becoming common phenomena in our culture. Individuals, families and spouses face new challenges; they need to learn new patterns of integration, functioning, habits, values, social roles, etc. It is not enough, however, to merely adopt the existing forms: they need to learn how to live in new relationships. In the last few decades, divorce rates in Europe have increased (bringing about a higher number of reorganized families), so we shall focus on learning during this particular life event.

1. Challenges During Transition in a Family

In its lifetime, each family faces various transitions during which the family members learn intensely. Family transitions are explored in detail by the family life cycle theory, which focuses on family experiences in transition as they progress through phases of development such as a family with infant children, toddler, early childhood, latency, adolescent, emerging adult, and mid and later periods. The authors[4] describe a transition within family life cycle theory as a shorter time period, as a chronological movement from one direction to another, which is marked by a period of rapid, often dramatic change. Transitions are generally known and recognizable and may require a change in roles, rules and relationships. During each transition, which can be either predictable or unpredictable, the family system reorganizes – adapting the operating rules, roles, responsibilities, communications processes and boundaries in order to meet the changing developmental needs of individual members and the family as a whole, and to adapt to the ever-changing community and larger sociocultural systems. Transitions have been conceptualised as periods of elevated risk for individuals within a family system in that they require reorganisation of core family structures and involve changes in normative stressors further to any concurrent non-normative stressors.[5] Intensive learning occurs.

More recently, reflecting modern trends in Western European families, family researchers have added stages representing separation/divorce and partnership.[6]

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[4] Cf. M. McGoldrick, B. Carter, N. Garcia-Preto, *The Expanding Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives,* Pearsons, Cambridge, 2015.

[5] Cf. M. P. Levine, L. Smolak. Adolescent transitions and the development of eating problems, in: *The Developmental Psychopathology of Eating Disorders: Implications for Research, Prevention, and Treatment,* ed. Linda Smolak *et al.*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996, p. 207-233.

[6] Cf. R. Dallos, A. Vetere, *Systemic Therapy and Attachment Narratives: Applications in a range of clinical settings*, Routledge, London, 2009.

2. Transitional learning in families

Transitional learning appears when individuals are faced with predictable or unpredictable changes in the dynamics between their life course and the transforming context. Transitional learning also takes place when they are confronted with the necessity to (learn to) anticipate, handle and reorganise these changing conditions. This situation triggers a continuous process of constructing meaning, making choices, taking up responsibilities and dealing with the changes in the personal and societal context.

In modern times, separation and divorce are frequent transitional events; from the perspective of the life cycle they belong among unexpected disruptive events.[7] Nobody marries or enters a partnership with a vision that the marital (or extramarital) relationship will deteriorate. During transition, i.e. in a period when one faces relatively unpredictable change in one's life course, one learns consciously as well as subconsciously.

Transitional learning occurs by two dimensions. Horizontal dimension relates to action and reflection dealing with tensions between societal demands and personal demands (needs, values, aspirations). Vertical dimension is about the subject's perception of the extent to which the areas in which s/he operates can be altered in view of individual or social expectations, plans and projects.[8]

Learning takes place according to four strategies: adaptation, growth, distinction and resistance.[9] *Adaptation* means that one adapts to cultural patterns, i.e. to social expectations about one's role and identity. It is a kind of 'loyalty' to socio-cultural requirements when one develops the skills and knowledge that are expected from one's environment.

The second strategy is *growth*, which is typical of individuals who feel that they can affect their own change, being able to change their interpretation, perception and conception. Even though they experience a part of their situation as unchangeable, they see themselves as free people who

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[7]   Cf. A. P. Greeff, B. Human, *Resilience in families in which a parent has died*, American Journal of Family Therapy, 32 (2004) 1, p. 27-42. Abraham P. Greeff, S. van der Merwe, *Variables associated with resilience in divorced families*, Social Indicators Research, 68 (2004) 1, p. 59-75. F. Walsh, Family transitions: Challenges and resilience, in: *Textbook of child and adolescent psychiatry*, Washington, ed. Mina Dulcan, DC: American Psychiatric Association Press, 2012, p. 675-686. G. Gorell Barnes, *Divorce transitions: Identifying risk and promoting resilience for children and their parental relationships*, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 25 (1999) 4, p. 425-441.

[8]   Cf. D. Wildemeersch, V. Stroobants, "Transitional learning and reflexive facilitation: the case of learning for work" In *Contemporary Theories of Learning*, ed. Knud Illeris, London, New York: Routledge, 2010.

[9]   Cf. D. Wildemeersch, V. Stroobants, Transitional learning and reflexive facilitation: the case of learning for work, in: *Contemporary Theories of Learning*, ed. Knud Illeris, London, New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 219-232.

have the ability to decide and choose for themselves.[10] This strategy is related to the holistic development of individual in the sense of developing all aspects and potentialities of the whole person and in the sense of caring for the well-being and recovering of the self in order to personally cope with the society-in-transformation.[11] Apart from negative consequences, the change of the family structure due to separation or divorce brings opportunities for positive change on the identity level, i.e. personal growth.

Distinction is the third strategy, meaning the development of an alternative life style in view of finding a personalised way out of societal demands that are experienced as oppressive. One does not adapt to the social environment due to its oppressiveness, so one learns by developing new habits, patterns and rules which are significantly different from the previous ones[12]. For example, after divorce one may move abroad.

The fourth strategy, *resistance*, includes action related to changing one's environment. One chooses actions explicitly focused on influencing and possibly transforming the demands of society. Various activities are conducted to raise the awareness of the environment and to change societal expectations. There are educational programs for divorcees, articles and presentations of case studies on the work of divorcees, good examples of cooperative parenting after divorce, etc., which are changing societal expectations towards individuals from dissolved marriages and partnerships. These strategies have been also noticed in divorce studies in Slovenia.[13]

As mentioned above, learning accompanying transition does not only encompass the transmission of knowledge or information but the change of identity as well.[14] The emphasis is therefore on transformative learning.

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[10] Cf. N. Ličen, *Triptih o družinskem življenju*, Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2017.

[11] Cf. D. Wildemeersch, V. Stroobants. Transitional learning and reflexive facilitation: the case of learning for work, p. 219-232.

[12] Cf. N. Ličen, *Triptih o družinskem življenju*.

[13] Cf. D. Ganc, *Izzivi očetovstva po ločitvi*, Družinski inštitut Zaupanje, Sevnica, 2015. B. Simonič, N. Rijavec Klobučar, *Experiencing positive religious coping in the process of divorce: a qualitative study*, Journal of religion and health, 55 (2016) 3, p. 1-11. N. Rijavec Klobučar, B. Simonič, *Risk factors for divorce in Slovenia: a qualitative study of divorced persons' experience*, Journal of family studies, (2016) doi: 10.1080/13229400.2016.11 76592.

[14] Cf. K. Ecclestone, G. Biesta and M. Hughes, *Transitions and Learning through Life Course*, Routledge, London, 2010. N. Ličen, *Triptih o družinskem življenju*. N. Rijavec Klobučar, *Rojstvo otroka: priložnost za duhovno učenje*, Bogoslovni vestnik, 75 (2015) 4, p. 771-780.

3. Transformative Learning during Transition in a Family

Transformative learning theory describes learning among adults. Jack Mezirow, the most prominent proponent of transformative learning theory, explained how adults change on the basis of experience, finding new meanings, and critical reflection. Learning takes place along with changing frames of references, a culturally conditioned 'filter' through which one perceives and interprets the world, oneself, and others. Frames of reference selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings.[15] The affective dimension is especially apparent in the family relations.

The frame of reference is composed of two dimensions: the habits of mind and a point of view. "Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set" of cultural, political, religious, social, educational, and economic codes.[16] It includes the dimensions of sociolinguistic, moral-ethical, epistemic, religious, philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic perspectives, which include sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments. The habits of mind get expressed in a particular point of view to include the constellation of beliefs, value judgment, attitude, and feelings that shape a particular interpretation.[17]

What the transformative learning theory seeks to understand is "how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others – to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear thinking decision makers".[18] Transformative learning is therefore a process in which one changes one's frames of reference. This is done in four ways: by elaborating on existing frames of references, by learning new frames of references, by transforming habits of mind or transforming points of view.[19] Learning takes place within relations to others, in testing what one

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[15] Cf. J. Mezirow, E. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, 2009.

[16] Cf. J. Mezirow, Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice, in: *Transformative Learning in Action: Insights from Practice. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, ed. Patricia Cranton, Ca: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997, p. 5-12.

[17] Cf. J. Mezirow, Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress, CA: John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, Inc, 2000. J. Mezirow, Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice, p. 5-12.

[18] J. Mezirow, (2012), Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformative learning theory, in: *Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research and practice,* eds. Edward Taylor, Patricia Cranton, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012, p. 73-96.

[19] Cf. J. Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation*, p. 21.

has learned in the so-called *rational discourse.*[20] Transformative learning is fostered through trust, encouraging relations with others, empathy, and solidarity.

4. Phases of Transformative Learning

Not all types of learning are transformative. Learning can be simple, or it can be transformative. Simple learning merely elaborates the learner's existing paradigm, systems of thinking, feeling, or doing, relative to a topic. O'Sullivan's view is that transformative learning involves a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-location: our relationships with other humans and with the natural world.[21] The concept of transformative learning comprises all learning that implies change in the identity of the learner.[22]

According to Mezirow[23] transformative learning involves "critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience"[24] and often follows the following phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

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[20] Cf. N. Rijavec Klobučar, Rojstvo otroka, p. 771-780. N. Rijavec Klobučar, *Transformativno učenje v partnerskih odnosih na prehodu v starševstvo*, Andragoška spoznanja, 17 (2011) 3, p. 31-39.

[21] Cf. E. O'Sullivan, *Bringing a perspective of transformative learning to globalized consumption*, International Journal of Consumer Studies, 27 (2003) 4, p. 326-330.

[22] Cf. K. Illeris, *Contemporary Theories of Learning*, Routledge, London, New York, 2014, p. 4.

[23] Cf. J. Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation*, p. 21-22.

[24] J. Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1991, p. xvi.

These phases are adapted according to each individual's transformation and do not always follow the same sequence.

Transformative learning usually results from a *disorienting dilemma*, which is triggered by a life crisis, an incident or major life transition, although it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in 'meaning schemes' over a period of time. The disorienting dilemma begins as a stressful situation, a life event or an incident which a person experiences as a crisis that cannot be resolved by applying previous problem-solving strategies. As a result, the person engages in self-examination often accompanied by unpleasant or undesirable emotions that lead to a critical assessment of assumptions. One finds oneself in a position where one has to explore options for forming new roles, relationships, or actions followed by a plan of action. This plan consists of acquiring knowledge and skills, trying out new roles, renegotiating relationships, and building competence and self-confidence. Finally, the re-integration process is completed when the individual fully incorporates the new learning, that is, the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours into her or his life that develop into a new transformed perspective.[25]

Disorienting dilemma is accompanied by strong emotions. In the phases of transformative learning, one can recognize parallels with the phases of bereavement, which we shall discuss later on.

5. Learning during Divorce

Divorce, one of the most stressful life events, affects various areas of one's life and triggers transformative learning in adults who leave the partnership on their own initiative, as well as in those who are left behind.

Divorce is synonymous with loss: the loss of partner, social network, financial security, the image of family and the ideal of love. In learning during divorce intense emotional processing takes place; one grieves for old patterns of acting, relating, loss, but also explores and forms new behaviours, beliefs, etc. Generally, grieving is an individualized process consisting of the following phases:[26]

Shock and denial – For some people it is almost impossible to believe that the loss truly happened, or they completely deny reality, still searching for their spouse's attention

Sadness – Sadness can be accompanied by a feeling of emptiness, despair, yearning, deep loneliness, a lot of crying, and / or emotional instability.

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[25] Cf. J. Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions.* J. Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation.*

[26] Cf. E. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying. What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and their Own Families*, Scribner, New York, 1969, 2014. F. Walsh, M. McGoldrick. *Living Beyond Loss: Death in the Family*, W. W. Norton & Co, New York, 2004.

Guilt – A sense of guilt can emerge in connection with what was said (or not) and what was done (or not); one's thoughts are focused on the question if the relationship really could not have been saved.

Anger and bargaining – A person is focused on ex-spouse, on oneself or on a third person (also on God or life) as a response to the injustice he / she feels was done to him/her.

Fear – The loss triggers concerns and fears, anxiety and feelings of helplessness, uncertainty about the future increases.

Acceptance – At one point, one realizes that the loss really happened and cannot be undone. He / she stops trying to maintain the relationship. The new frames of reference are formed.

Divorce also brings loss for children: not only the loss of a secure family structure but often a loss of friends, grandparents, and in case of the change of residence also a loss of schoolmates and a wider social network.[27]

Most of the findings[28] on the effects of separation note that the negative effects of separation are especially strong, long-lasting and complex for children. Divorce affects emotional and social development, physical and mental health both in childhood and in adulthood, and consequently educational and socio-economic achievements.

Different circumstances and so-called protective factors determine how the adjustment will take place after the dissolution of marriage and how the child will accept a new lifestyle. These factors are primarily the quality of parental relationship and cooperative parenting which father and mother can either maintain or create anew after divorce. Here they often change their frames of reference. Research shows that in the case of connecting parenting children experienced fewer negative consequences than in cases where parents were not able to draw the appropriate distinction between partnership and parenting, and they 'pulled' children in their conflicting relationship. The child's efforts to unite parents, strong feelings of guilt or conflicting feelings regarding loyalty to one or the other parent can lead to long-term emotional problems.[29]

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[27] Cf. J. Wallerstein, J. Lewis, *The unexpected legacy of divorce: Report of a 25-year study*, Psychoanalytic Psychology, 21 (2004) 3, p. 353-370. P. Amato, *Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments*, Journal of Marriage and Family, 72 (2010) 3, p. 650-666.

[28] Cf. A. Clarke-Stewart, C. Brentano, *Divorce: Causes and consequences*, CT: Yale University Press, New Haven, CT: 2006. J. Wallerstein, J. Lewis, *The unexpected legacy of divorce: Report of a 25-year study*, Psychoanalytic Psychology, 21 (2004) 3, p. 353-370. P. Amato, *Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments*, Journal of Marriage and Family, 72 (2010) 3, p. 650-666.

[29] Cf. B. Hohmann-Marriott, P. R. Amato, *A comparison of high- and low-distress marriages that end in divorce*, Journal of Marriage and Family, 69 (2007) 3, p. 621-638.

It should be noted that in cases of violence between the parents, the conflict can be reduced after divorce which is actually a positive solution since in certain situations it can even save a child's life.

Learning during divorce is associated with adjustment to a new life situation, not only in adhering to their fate, but by creating a variety of activities that help children as well as parents cope with hardship, obstacles and stress accompanying the reorganization of life. Parents frequently experience a lot of distress after the dissolution of their partnership, and sometimes because of trying to regulate their own pain, they overlook the child's distress and his negative emotional states that are either internalized or (possibly) expressed through misconduct.[30] Encouraging transformative learning among parents also encompasses the formation of a supportive community, educative, counselling, therapy, and other groups, where parents are not only informed about the importance of their role in helping their children but with sufficient support change their habits of mind, points of view and (albeit slowly) reshape their frames of references. A wider supportive social network consisting of grandparents, schoolmates, teachers, and pastoral workers proved a significant protective factor in preventing negative consequences for children who need counselling, as well as education and other forms of help that enable them to process their distress.

6. The Contribution of Religious Education to Learning during Divorce

Religious dimension is one of the dimensions of man's frames of reference which starts to take shape in the first years of life in the intense child-parents relationship. Parents contribute to shaping beliefs about whether divorce is one of the options in modern relationships. From the perspective of some psychological studies, children from divorced families have higher probability of choosing a partner with similar experience (divorced parents), and their marriage has three times higher probability to dissolve in comparison to those from non-divorced families.[31] The idea that divorce is a way of solving problems is more readily accepted in divorced families.

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[30] A. Clarke-Stewart, C. Brentano, *Divorce: Causes and consequences*, CT: Yale University Press, New Haven, CT: 2006. J. Wallerstein, J. Lewis, *The unexpected legacy of divorce: Report of a 25-year study*, Psychoanalytic Psychology, 21 (2004) 3, p. 353-370. P. Amato, *Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments*, Journal of Marriage and Family, 72 (2010) 3, p. 650-666. C. Ahrons, *Family ties after divorce: Long-term implications for children*, Family Process, 46 (2007) 1, p. 53-65. G. Mette Haugen, *Children's perspectives on everyday experiences of shared residence: time, emotions and agency dilemmas*, Children & Society, 24 (2010) 2, p. 112-122.

[31] Cf. N. Wolfinger, *Understanding the divorce cycle: The children of divorce in their own marriages*, Cambridge University, New York, 2005.

The twelve-year study of the intergenerational transfer of parents' religious views and attitudes and divorce showed that more religious offspring are less tolerant of divorce.[32] People who are more religiously active are less likely to have positive attitude regarding divorce. Divorce in religious families can trigger transformative learning in a form of changing religious beliefs and experiences in several dimensions, such as God image, religious attendance, scepticism towards parents' faith, doubts about God, and attendance of religious services.[33] At the same time, religion can be a powerful source of help for an individual coping with stressful situations brought up by divorce.[34] Many distressed individuals turn to religion and use religious strategies of coping to regulate difficult affects.[35]

Unprocessed emotions and stress after divorce can lead to serious health problems. Religious involvement is discussed as having protective effect including preventing and reducing unhealthy lifestyles.[36] It is also argued that religiousness affects individual's health through facilitating social support by and for religious group members, and providing coherent frameworks of meaning that provide comfort, coping, and understanding in the time of difficult transitions in life[37]. In the process of coping with divorce, people mostly use positive forms of religious coping like praying, personal rituals or various forms of worship (important for transforming the feelings of anger, pain, and fear); searching for spiritual purification or forgiveness for eventual wrongs in the dissolved relationship (it helps reduce the feelings of guilt or reinforce the feeling of integrity); searching for possibilities to increase the feeling of connectedness with God (it reduces the feeling of being abandoned).[38] This is related to personal, identity, and spiritual growth – transformative learning takes place. Religious coping transforms frames of reference a part of which are religious dimensions.

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[32] Cf. C. A. Kapinus, L. A. Pellerin, *The Influence of Parents' Religious Practices on Young Adults' Divorce Attitudes*, Social Science Research, 37 (2008) 3, p. 801-814.

[33] Cf. C. Ellison, A. Walker, N. Glenn, E. Marquardt, *The effects of parental marital discord and divorce on the religious and spiritual lives of young adults*, Social Science Research, 40 (2011) 2, p. 538-51.

[34] Cf. B. Simonič, N. Rijavec Klobučar, *Experiencing positive religious coping in the process of divorce: a qualitative study*, Journal of religion and health, 55 (2016) 3, p. 1-11.

[35] Cf. K. Pargament, *Spiritually integrated psychotherapy*, The Guilford Press, New York, NY: 2007.

[36] Cf. E. Rippentropa, E. M. Altmaierb, J. Chena, E. Founda, V. Keffalaa, *The Relationship between religion/spirituality and physical health, mental health and pain in a chronic pain population*, Pain, 116 (2005) p. 311-321.

[37] Cf. H. Koenig, D. King, V. Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA, 2012.

[38] Cf. B. Simonič, N. Rijavec Klobučar, *Experiencing positive religious coping in the process of divorce*, p. 1-11.

Religious education during divorce is closely linked to transformative learning. As mentioned above, social networking support and safe environment – the so-called rational dialogue – is an important factor in adapting to the reorganization of family structure after separation. An important supportive social environment is provided by our religious communities and their activities, which contributes to reduce distress and, by providing incentives for transformative learning, helps individuals to improve their quality of life.

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DISCIPLINING CHILDREN IN DIVORCED FAMILIES: THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN RELATIONAL FAMILY THERAPY

Abstract

Divorce is a long-term emotional process during which distress is often expressed within the parent-child relationship, where changes in emotional bonding with child, as well as parenting style take place. The Parent-child relationship depends on parent's interpersonal and intrapsychic experiences. Marital tension is related to the inability to create emotional security in the parent-child relationship, whereas the intrapsychic feeling of vulnerability is related to the reduced ability of bonding with child. Reduced emotional security and disconnection in the parent-child relationship increase the probability of more authoritarian methods and non-involved style of parenting. Because of that, parenting can become an additional source of tension and distress. Relational family therapy with its combination of interventions on systemic, interpersonal and intrapsychic levels enables the addressing of repetitive emotional vulnerability and a new approach to affect regulation. This article presents task analysis method based on qualitative data. Results have shown that through addressing excessive affective responses in current relationships, the dissolution of defences, the awareness of repetition on systemic and interpersonal levels, and transition to intrapsychic experience, the client learns to distinguish between past relationships and present experience, and can therefore begin to change the implicit relational perception. The connection between client's relationship with child and client's interpersonal and intrapsychic experience provide the client with a new understanding of her actions, thus opening a possibility of different parenting. Finally, the limitations of the research are presented.

Key words: *divorce, parenting, interpersonal experience, intrapsychic experience, relational family therapy.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Divorce and Parenting

Primarily, divorce is formal and physical separation of spouses, as a rule decided upon after a long and thoughtful decision-making process[1]. It is followed by a significant stage in their separated lives, the so called emotional divorce[2]. This stage begins while they still live together, in the period of increased conflict when stress causes an emotional gap between spouses[3], and continues after formal divorce, especially in coping with parental responsibilities. Long-term emotionally separating process of spouses is not only related to their being emotionally overwhelmed but also to their parental role and child raising.

Children feel the consequences of divorce primarily as stress caused by living separately with one of the parents, parents' marital conflict, the loss of important relationships and less carefully maintained parental roles[4]. Children of divorced parents display more prominent behavioural problems, more frequent feelings of anxiety and depression, difficulties in establishing relationships and learning difficulties[5]. Not only is there a correlation between divorce and poor outcome for children in direct transmission from one generation to the next; research proves that there is correlation between divorced grandparents and inadequately adapted grandchildren[6]. Another study of three generations points out that depressive mood is a significant factor in the trans-generational transmission of the negative impact of divorce: the very depression accompanying divorce is supposed to be the factor which determines whether or not negative consequences will be passed to the third generation[7]. Authors explain the transmission by poorer adaptation in relationships of the second generation. The children of divorcees are thus not success-

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[1] Cf. C. R. Ahrons, Divorce: An unscheduled family transition, in: M. McGoldrick, B. Carter and N. Garcia-Preto (ed.) *The expended family life cycle: Individual, family and social perspectives*, Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2014, p. 289-305.

[2] Cf. F. W. Kaslow, Families Experiencing Divroce, in: W. C. Nichols, M. A. Pace-Nichols, D. S. Becvar and A. Y. Napier (ed.) *Hadbook of Family Development and Intervention*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 2000, p. 341-370.

[3] Cf. S. A. Anderson and R. M. Sabatelli, *Family interaction: a multigenerational developmental perspective*, Pearson Education, Boston, 2007, p. 285-301.

[4] Cf. J. B. Kelly and R. E. Emery, *Children's adjustment following divorce: Risk and resilience perspectives*, Family Relations, 52 (2003) 4, Research Library, p. 352-362.

[5] Cf. P. R. Amato and J. Cheadle, *The long reach of divorce: divorce and child well-being across three generations*, Journal of Marriage and Family, 67 (2005) 1, p. 191-206.

[6] Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 191-206.

[7] Cf. E. Vousoura, H. Verdeli, V. Warner, P. Wickramaratne, C. D. R. Baily, *Parental divorce, familial risk for depression, and psychopathology in offspring: A three-generation study*, Journal of Child and Family Studies, 21 (2012) p. 718-725.

ful in their marriages[8], since it negatively affect their efforts in forming efficient parental roles. As parents, they are unable to take care of their children's needs and efficiently stop unwanted behaviours. Deregulated family stress caused by divorce (and depression) in the generation of grandparents is transferred to their grandchildren, manifesting itself in emotional and/or behavioural disorders.

The correlation between divorce and parental distress can be explained by the loss of emotional security which is transferred from spouses' subsystem to children's subsystem. Emotional security is primarily formed in child-mother relationship. Mother's sensitivity and responsiveness to child's emotional arousal creates the feeling of a secure relationship because the child experiences that his/her feelings are controllable[9]. The feeling of emotional security is therefore formed when mother is available for an aroused child, finding a way how to, when under stress, calm herself and therefore also her child. For the child, mother is a safe haven, where under stress the child finds appeasement and emotional security[10]. Emotional security in a relationship is threatened by too much stress and by conflicts which cannot be solved within the relationship. Unsolved marital conflict impacts not only emotional distance between spouses but also prevents the formation of emotional security between parent and child[11].

Child raising is based on the tendency to develop child's potentials and to encourage moral and acceptable behaviour in child[12], and takes place in the interpersonal space between parents and child. Parents' task in child raising is to follow and respond to child's needs and at the same time to effectively control their behaviour[13]. Research shows that mothers who are emotionally overwhelmed by the process of divorce show less

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[8]   Cf. U. Mustonen, T. Huurre, O. Kiviruusu, A. Haukkala and H. Aro, *Long-term impact of parental divorce on intimate relationship quality in adulthood and the mediating role of psychosocial resources*, Journal of Family Psychology, 25 (2011) 4, p. 615-619.

[9]   Cf. R. A. Thompson, A. M. Easterbrooks & L. M. Padilla-Walker, Social and emotional development in infancy, in: R. M. Lerner, M. A. Easterbrooks, & J. Mistry (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology: developmental psychology*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New Jersey, 2003, p. 91-112.

[10]   Cf. M. E. Cummings, J. M. Braungart-Rieker & T. D. Rocher-Schudlich, Emotion and personality development in childhood, in: R. M. Lerner, M. A. Easterbrooks, & J. Mistry (Eds.), p. 211-240.

[11]   Cf. M. E. Cummings and P. T. Davies, *Marital conflict and children: an emotional security perspective*, The Guilford Press, London, 2010; K. K. Hyoun, K. C. Pears, D. M. Capaldi and L. D. Owen, *Emotion dysregulation in the intergenerational transmission of romantic relationship conflict*, Journal of Family Psychology, 23 (2009) 4, p. 585-595.

[12]   Cf. M. Peček Čuk and I. Lesar, *Moč vzgoje. Sodobna vprašanja teorije vzgoje*, Tehniška založba Slovenije, Ljubljana, 2009, p. 23.

[13]   Cf. S. A. Anderson and R. M. Sabatelli, *Family interaction: a multigenerational developmental perspective*, Pearson Education, Boston, 2007, p. 214.

warmth towards their children, use more severe punishment in parenting, and are less efficient in controlling their children[14]. Due to the fact that parenting is part of the relationship between two persons, the definition of parenting should include the statement that parenting is both intentional reaching of desired objectives[15] and a subconscious as well as unintentional transference of emotional contents[16]. During the procedure of divorce, parental role is determined by decisions about child care in the future as well as by unintentional transferences of emotional tensions originating in parent's interpersonal and intrapsychic space.

1.2. Interpersonal experience during divorce and parenting

The interpersonal level of an individual's experience manifests as the dynamics of longing and attraction, in internal working models of attachment, in psycho-organic states, in communication dynamics, and in the manner of affect regulation within a relationship[17]. During divorce, spouses can perceive their longing as unrealisable[18]; they can reinforce insecure attachment styles by ceasing to response emotionally, or, on the other hand, try to gain attention by excessive emotional responses[19]; and in a prolonged stressful period, they can create permanent patterns of emotional deregulation and unadjusted feeling and thinking patterns[20].

Stress and emotional vulnerability caused by divorce also impact parenting. During (and sometimes after) divorce, parents are emotionally overwhelmed with their own feelings of loss, failure, anger, disappointment, and as a result, they do not recognize their child's emotional needs. Irresponsiveness to these needs creates a model of child-parent attachment where the child needs to supress his/her own emotional responses

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[14] Cf. C. Osborne, L. M. Berger and K. Magnuson, *Family structure transitions and changes in maternal resources and well-being*, Demography, 49 (2012) 1, p. 23-47; J. Wallerstein, J. Lewis and S. Packer Rosenthal, *Mothers and their children after divorce: Report from a 25-year longitudinal study*, Psychoanalytic Psychology, 30 (2013) 2, p. 167-187.

[15] Cf. N. J. Salkind, *Child development*, Micmillan Library Reference, New York, 2002.

[16] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Inovativna relacijska družinska terapija*, Brat Frančišek, Teološka fakulteta in Frančiškasnki družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2011, p. 101.

[17] Cf. C. Gostečnik, Relacijska družinska terapija, in: B. Simonič (ed.) *Relacijska družinska terapija v teoriji in praksi*, Teološka fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 9-33.

[18] Cf. F. W. Kaslow, Families Experiencing Divroce, in: W. C. Nichols, M. A. Pace-Nichols, D. S. Becvar and A. Y. Napier (ed.) *Hadbook of Family Development and Intervention*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 2000, p. 341-370.

[19] Cf. W. H. Berman, L. Marcus and E. Raynes Berman, Attachment in marital relations, in: M. B. Sperling and W. H. Berman (ur.) *Attachment in adults. Clinical and developmental prespectives*, The Guilford Press, New York, 1994, p. 204-231.

[20] Cf. N. L. Galambos and C. L. Costigan, Emotional and personality development in adolescence, in: Richard M. Lerner, M. Ann Easterbrooks and Jayanthi Mistry (ed.) *Handbook of psychology: developmental psychology*, John Wiley&Sons. Inc., New Jersey, 2003, p. 351-372.

to a certain degree; the child's internal models of experiencing are characterized by the feelings of instability, distrust and inability to form secure attachment bonds with another person[21]. The child internalizes inadequate emotional responses, which further destabilizes emotional bonding with the parent. Parents feel inefficient in their child raising and parental distress, a rather frequent accompaniment, increases.

Unsolved marital conflict and/or divorce transmits emotional sensitivity from the children subsystem to the spouses system. Spouses, trying to cope with their own emotional vulnerability, become unavailable for children's emotional vulnerability. Unwillingly, children thus become the regulators of emotional atmosphere between their parents[22]. With their behaviour they try to redirect attention, over and over again seeking emotional security from their parents, who are unable to provide this security until they solve marital conflict. In addition to difficult emotional process brought up by divorce, parents are faced by children's emotional vulnerability and instability, which often leads to parental distress. The chances to manage children's distress during divorce are limited by the degree of emotional security which parents have succeeded to create for the child: research shows that divorce brings more negative consequences for the child if prior to it there was no safe emotional space between child and parent[23]. It can be assumed that internal mechanisms of emotional appeasement in a child who has experienced emotional security are formed to such degree that he/she will more easily cope with stress brought up by divorce. In this case, the child does not resort to extreme behaviours, which reduces the need for parents' limitations of child's behaviour and the chances of parental stress. Emotional security is therefore a significant factor in coping with parental distress in accompanying divorce[24].

1.3. Intrapsychic experience during divorce and parenting

An individual's intrapsychic experience can be understood through exploring object-relation mental contents, the system of intrapsychic self-images, and the internalized affective space between the individual and

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[21] Cf. C. Hazan and P. R. Shaver, Broken attachments: Relationship loss from the perspective of attachment theory, in: T. L. Orbuch (ed.) *Close relationship loss: Theoretical approaches*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 1992, p. 90-110.

[22] Cf. C. Gostečnik, Inovativna relacijska družinska terapija, Brat Frančišek, Teološka fakulteta in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2011, p. 87.

[23] Cf. K. K. Hyoun, K. C. Pears, D. M. Capaldi and L. D. Owen, *Emotion dysregulation in the intergenerational transmission of romantic relationship conflict*, Journal of Family Psychology, 23 (2009) 4, p. 585-595.

[24] Cf. S. Poljak Lukek, Predelava čustvene stiske v procesu ločevanja - proces spremembe v relacijski družinski terapiji, in: Sabina Kerec and Tadeja Horvat (ed.) *Novodobni izzivi družbe*, RIS Dvorec, Rakičan, 2016, p. 155-167.

others[25]. During separation process, parents can re-experience feelings from long ago, in that others behave and respond in ways similar to people in their past[26]; they can perceive themselves similarly as they did as children[27], and in a relationship they re-experience the basic affect and specific regulation of affective states[28]. All these intrapsychic processes cause in an individual a physical state of vulnerability, which the individual tries to avoid, negate, overcome, or supress by means of defence mechanisms and constructs. In this period, parenting, which is also an unwilling transference of emotional contents, is marked with personal vulnerability and feelings of helplessness.

Parental stress and family conflict predict severe and punishing parenting methods[29], and precisely negative intrapsychic emotional experience in marital system can be related with a possibility of unadjusted types of attachment which include the feelings of parental rejection and even hostility towards children[30]. The repetition of intrapsychic wounds from early attachment patterns determines individual's interpersonal behaviours. During divorce or in times of a conflicting marital relationship parents are unable to efficiently regulate their emotional tensions[31] and/or become emotionally irresponsive[32], which undermines the ability of parents' emotional bonding with children. In this case, parenting methods tend to limit children's behaviour instead to follow their needs, which is typical of authoritarian parenting style; or parents are unable

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[25] Cf. C. Gostečnik, Relacijska družinska terapija, in: B. Simonič (ed.) *Relacijska družinska terapija v teoriji in prak*si, Teološka fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 9-33.

[26] Cf. M. E. Cummings and P. T. Davies, *Marital conflict and children: an emotional security perspective,* The Guilford Press, London, 2010, p. 108.

[27] Cf. A. N. Schore, *Relational trauma and the developing right brain: an interface of psychoanalytic self psychology and neuroscience, Self and Systems*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, New York, 2009; D. J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*, Bantam Books, New York, 2011, p. 56.

[28] Cf. D. N. Stern, N. Bruschweiler-Stern, K. Lyons-Ruth, A. C. Morgan, J. P. Nahum and L. W. Sander, *Change in psychotherapy: a unifying paradigm*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2010, p. 87.

[29] Cf. M. Pereira, M. Negrao, I. Soares and J. Mesman, *Predicting Harsh Discipline in At-Risk Mothers: The Moderating Effect of Socioeconomic Deprivation Severity,* Journal of Child and Family Studies, 24 (2015) p. 725-733.

[30] Cf. E. M. Cummings and P. T. Davies, *Marital conflict and children: an emotional security perspective*, The Guilford Press, London, 2010; C. Smith Stover, C. Connell, L. D. Leve, J. M. Neiderhiser, D. S. Shaw, L. V. Scaramella, R. Conger and D. Reiss, *Fathering and Mothering in the Family System: Linking Marital Hostility and Aggression in Adopted Toddlers*, Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 53 (2012) 4, p. 110-133.

[31] Cf. K. K. Hyoun, K. C. Pears, D. M. Capaldi and L. D. Owen, *Emotion dysregulation in the intergenerational transmission of romantic relationship conflict*, Journal of Family Psychology, 23 (2009) 4, p. 585-595.

[32] Cf. M. E. Cummings and P. T. Davies, *Marital conflict and children: an emotional security perspective,* The Guilford Press, London, 2010, p. 167.

either to limit or fulfil children's needs which leads to uninvolved parenting style[33]. Both parenting styles stem from parents' inability to recognize child's needs and to adequately respond to these[34]; consequently, children in such relationships experience anxiety, fear and anger. Their internal distress increases the probability of unadjusted behaviours, which additionally increase parental distress and resorting to severe, punishing parenting methods[35]. Due to his/her need for security and acceptance, the child not only adapts to the parents-child relationship but also to parents' mutual relationship. Spouses and children subsystems within the family system are interrelated and impact each other, not only through direct relationships between family members but also through indirect experiencing of affect in the family system[36].

1.4. Parental challenges during divorce and relational family therapy

The article presents the innovative model of relational family therapy[37]. Therapeutic interventions in relational family therapy take place on systemic, interpersonal and intrapsychic levels of individual's experience, because the relational family therapist addresses self-images (self-psychology), the images of others (object-relation theory), and the images of relationships (interpersonal analysis). The therapist explores the basic affect, affect regulation, affective psychological constructs, the process of projective and introjective identification, and the ways of compulsive repetition of these mechanisms.

Therapeutic interventions in relational family therapy are directed to systemic level where the therapist explores the functioning of the family system, interpersonal level, where the therapist explores emotional conflict in interpersonal space (between spouses), and intrapsychic level where the therapist looks for the source of emotional vulnerability. In interventions on intrapsychic level, the therapist explores affects related to experiences in the client's primary family. Memory therefore becomes a crucial element of therapeutic interventions; specifically, we speak of

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[33]   Cf. E. E. Maccoby and J. A. Martin, Socialization in the context of the family: parent-child interaction, in: Paul Henry Mussen (ed.) *Handbook of child psychology: socialization, personality, and social developement,* John Wiley, New York, 1983, p. 1-101.

[34]   Cf. S. A. Anderson and R. M. Sabatelli, *Family interaction: a multigenerational developmental perspective*, Pearson Education, Boston, 2007, p. 203.

[35]   Cf. A. Grogan-Kaylor and M. D. Otis, *The predictors of parental use of corporal punishment,* Family Relations, 56 (2007) p. 80-91; R. R. S. Socolar, E. Savage and H. Evans, *A longitudinal study of parental discipline of young children*, Southern Medical Journal, 100 (2007) 5, p. 472-477; L. J. Woodward and D. M. Fergusson, *Parent, child, and contextual predictors of childhood physical punishment*, Infant and Child Development, 11 (2002) p. 213-235.

[36]   Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Inovativna relacijska družinska terapija*, Brat Frančišek, Teološka fakulteta in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2011, p. 130.

[37]   Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 187.

explicit recollection of events and their experiencing, as well as implicit memory recorded in the body.

The starting point in relational family therapy is the relationship, in which – through establishing of the basic affect, affect regulation, affective psychological construct with the process of projective and introjective identification – the patterns of psychological perception are compulsively repeated. In a relationship (with a therapist, too) we can observe the basic affect manifested as body arousal related to the feelings of anger, fear, sadness, shame, disgust, or joy. Every individual tries to control these physical-emotional states, and so in relationships we see mechanisms of emotional regulation, i.e. the transmission of body arousal into emotional and behavioural response[38]. Individuals protect themselves from excessive emotional vulnerability by affective psychological constructs. In the process of projective and introjective identification, familiar emotional atmosphere is compulsively repeated in all relationships. Change in parenting during divorce can thus be understood as a repetition of emotional vulnerability which has not been solved in the interpersonal space between spouses, or as a repetition of familiar emotional atmosphere and an affective psychological construct from past relationships. We shall now present the relational family therapy model and therapeutic interventions which enable managing parenting challenges during divorce.

2. Empirical part

2.1. Method

The processing of parental distress in relational family therapy will be presented by the qualitative method of task analysis. Task analysis is a model of qualitative research of therapeutic process, aiming at determining changes within the therapeutic process[39]. The qualitative research method is based on the assumption that therapeutic interventions and clients' responses leading to change happen within specific sequences of events during therapy; to understand levers of change it is important to understand smaller units of a therapy session. Task analysis explores therapeutic process as a sequence of events leading to change in therapy, where we observe the sequence of events through the participant's process and the sequence of therapeutic interventions[40]. After a predefined

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[38] Cf. J. R. Schore and A. N. Schore, *Modern attachment theory: the central role of affect regulation in development and treatment*, Clinical Social Work Journal, 36 (2008) 1.

[39] Cf. B. Bradley and S. M. Johnson, Task analysis of couple and family change events, in: D. H. Sprenkle and F. P. Piercy (ed.) *Research methods in family therapy*, The Guilford Press, New York, 2005, p. 254-271.

[40] Cf. B. Bradley and J. L. Furrow, *Toward a mini-theory of the blamer softening event: Tracking the moment-by-moment process*, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 30 (2004) 2, p. 236.

event in therapy, which represents the task, the researcher follows therapeutic interventions and client's responses in order to define a series of events leading to a successful solution of therapy task. By means of repeated analysis of all events within therapy, the researcher examines the baseline model of changes.

2.2. Participants

A case of individual therapy using the relational family therapy model is presented. The participant was a woman, 33, mother to a four-year old son; in the time of therapy, she was undergoing the divorce procedure. The therapy cycle consisted of 12 weekly sessions. The participant voluntarily consented to audio-recording of therapy sessions. After recording, the transcript was made, and then recordings were destroyed. The transcript of therapy sessions was used to define the steps of change in therapy according to the therapy tasks map based on the qualitative method of task analysis.

2.3. Procedure: rational analysis

Based on the analysis of five therapy cycles with various clients, we used rational analysis to define the beginning of the task, therapeutic interventions map and client's process, and the conclusion of the task[41]. The beginning of the task is client's excessive affective response determined by the following criteria: (1) the participant recognizes the atmosphere as crucial for her distress in current relationships, (2) the participant has no control over the atmosphere, (3) the repetition is manifested as powerlessness, frustration, distress, despair, inability, (4) emotional atmosphere is repeated in relationships which the client feels are important for her, i.e. relationships with her children and spouse[42]. The therapist's process consists of five steps based on theoretical concepts of the relational family paradigm, using affect regulation as a basic therapeutic intervention which enables change in relational family therapy. The client's process is characterized by her experiencing of and responding to therapist's interventions. In the interpersonal therapeutic space – a creative space where the change in therapy takes place[43], the therapist's process and the participant's process mutually create the course of therapy,

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[41] Cf. S. Poljak Lukek, *Kaznovanje kot vzgojno sredstvo in predelave starševskih stisk v relacijski družinski terapiji. Doktorska disertacija.*, Univerza v Ljubljani. Teološka fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2011, p. 204-223.

[42] Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 204-205.

[43] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Inovativna relacijska družinska terapija*, p. 130; D. N. Stern, N. Bruschweiler-Stern, K. Lyons-Ruth, A. C. Morgan, J. P. Nahum and L. W. Sander, *Change in psychotherapy: a unifying paradigm*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2010, p. 145.
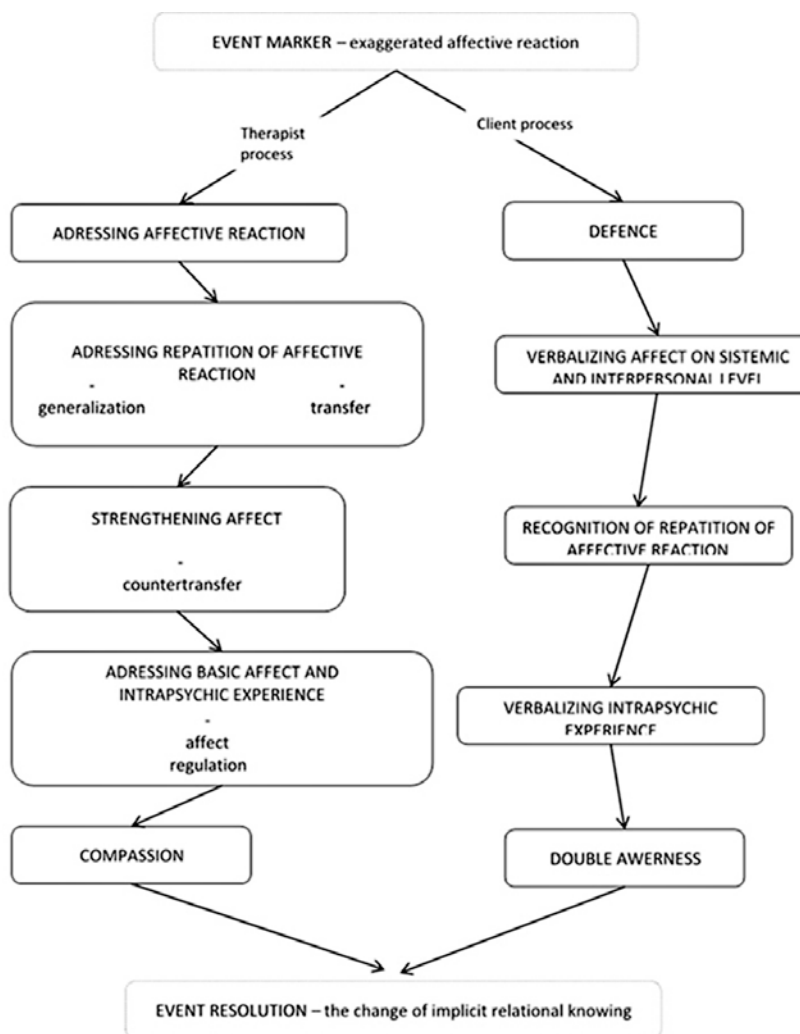
Figure 1: The map of therapeutic processing of parental distress in relational family therapy. Source: Poljak Lukek (2011)

gradually progressing towards the conclusion of the task. The conclusion of the task is a change of implicit relational perception, consisting of internal representations of relationship experiences in non-symbolic form[44]. Relational family paradigm understands change in therapy not only as change in cognitive awareness but primarily as the change of affective

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[44] Cf. D. N. Stern, N. Bruschweiler-Stern, K. Lyons-Ruth, A. C. Morgan, J. P. Nahum and L. W. Sander, *Change in psychotherapy: a unifying paradigm*, p. 145.

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perception in relationships[45], enabled by a therapeutic relationship with verbalisation, the assessment of the affective aspects of client's experience, and the transfer of this new experience of a relationship in the relationship between spouses, with children and other significant persons.

2.4. Results – empirical analysis

Below we present the processing of parental distress v relational family therapy. The fragments of therapy transcripts illustrate specific steps according to the map of therapeutic process.

Excessive affective response (the beginning of the task) and addressing emotional atmosphere (therapist's process)

Ms Novak (hereinafter: MsN): I've been beside myself for a week. I don't know what is happening. I feel overwhelmed and I can't cope any more... I guess I'm a bit desperate about it all.

Therapist (hereinafter: Th): What happened?

MsN: I think it began on Saturday... My son and I were having lunch. He started to pull faces. For a while I ignored him but then I just snapped... and went mad. I started to yell, I grabbed his arm, dragged him away from the table and whacked his butt. I have no idea what possessed me: he always behaves like that. But this one time I totally lost it...

Th: You probably felt that your child ignores you and that you couldn't bear it any more. How do you feel when this happens?

MsN: True. I often feel like I just don't count. Whatever I say, he doesn't hear me; whatever I want, he doesn't care... he just continues to wreak havoc and annoy me.

Verbalization of the affect on systemic and interpersonal levels (participant's process) and addressing the repetition of emotional atmosphere (therapist's process)

Th: Do you know these feelings from your relationship with your ex-partner? Did you have the same feeling of not being heard and taken into consideration?

MsN: Yes, it was like that. Now that I think about that... it was exactly the same. With him, too, I kept talking, demanding, even begging... but nothing happened. He kept doing what he pleased, as if I weren't even there.

Th: ...and with him, too, you just waited, patiently, and then you suddenly snapped and couldn't hold back and the only thing you could do was yelling. And when the storm was over you wondered what was wrong with you to react like that.

MnS: I always blamed myself. I thought I had to be more patient, I had to wait, and some day, things will change...

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45   Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Inovativna relacijska družinska terapija*, p. 130.

Th: And over and over again, in such situations you feel deep sadness which nobody understands. Even you want to silence it.

MsN: Yes, sadness is not for me.

Facing the repetitions of emotional atmosphere (participant's process) and affect reinforcement and addressing of the basic affect (therapist's process)

Th: Can you describe the sadness we are now talking about?

MsN: I have no words for sadness. Or tears.

Th: You had to part from so many things in life, and yet you must not even feel sad. What would happen if you felt sadness?

MsN: In that case I would feel sorry for myself, as would others. And I don't want that. What's the use of sadness? Well, I can weep, but it won't change anything. Everything will still be the same. Sadness is no good.

Th: And when you feel bad and you are left alone with all these feelings, you do everything in order not to feel sadness. And the more you avoid it, the stronger the feelings of despair and helplessness. Nothing can be done. Nothing will change. You cannot part with anything.

Verbalization of intrapsychic experience (participant's process) and addressing intrapsychic experience (therapist's process)

Th: When you were a child, what did your parents do when you were sad?

MsN: I don't know. Nothing.

Th: Can you remember an event when you were sad?

MsN: I guess I was often sad with no particular reason when I was a child. I was just sad. The same as my mother, I guess. She, too, was whining all the time. I think that she was and still is very dissatisfied, very unhappy. But she never noticed when I was withdrawn and probably sad, too. I always had this feeling that it was harder for her than for me. My father was at work, anyway. It was even worse when he came home. He only knew how to be violent.

Th: Nobody found words for your feelings. You didn't know what the reason was, and nobody told you what those feelings meant. And even today you experience how you have no reason for sadness and that to feel sadness does not bring solace. Back then you couldn't afford being sad because there was no one who would try to understand and wipe off your tears. Everything that was left was loneliness and abandonment. This child should have been noticed and according to what was going on, she should have been noticed and comforted. But everybody was so busy that you weren't even noticed. And when you were noticed, they were violent towards you...

Double awareness (participant's process) and empathy (therapist's process)

Th: Your son is sad, too, because he has lost his family. Besides anger, this is a totally natural child's response to divorce. And all the tension that

sadness causes in him is hard and tedious for you. But today, you can let your child be sad, and you can find words for this feeling. It is only sadness. Only a feeling of pain because something has gone.

MsN: For me, this is the most difficult part. The feeling that my son is sad and that it's my fault.

Th: It is only sadness and you can handle it regardless of who has caused it. Just as you had only needed to be noticed by somebody, now your son only needs you noticing him. In his need for attention, however, he sometimes goes too far, but he is unable to help himself. He wants you to respond. And today you are not helpless as you were helpless noticing your mother's sadness and not being able to console her; today as a mother you have all the power to find the words of comfort for your son and at the same time for yourself. And your raging father is not here anymore. You could not stop him; today, though, you can stop the violence.

MsN: I would really want to do things differently.

2.5. Discussion

Parental distress in relational family therapy is processed through affect regulation in a therapeutic relationship and through the connection of present distress with intrapsychic experience (or primary family experience), by means of which client's implicit perception changes[46]. To cope with emotional sensitivity during divorce, the therapy process addresses double awareness by means of which relational family therapist assesses present affective arousal as an expression of past experiences[47]. Even though current relationship with child arouses emotional pain, the cause of the pain lies in the past. The case presented in this article shows the processing of distress in relational family therapy. The relational family therapist understands severe punishment described by the client as an excessive affective response. Exploring emotional atmosphere she examines deeper causes of specific feelings. By talking about the repetitions of this emotional atmosphere, both the therapist and the client begin to understand and experience the basic affect, in this case sadness. Due to addressing early (intrapsychic) experiences by the regulation of sadness, the client gets the insight into her multi-layered present perception. She understands that her feelings belong to the past and hopes that today she is able to change these feelings. Therapeutic relationship offers a new experience of a relationship, one in which distress is manageable and assessed, and simultaneously with affect regulation provides emotional security, so that the participant can relate her feelings to past experiences. This fresh perception of a relationship changes

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[46] Cf. S. Poljak Lukek, *Kaznovanje kot vzgojno sredstvo*, p. 293-298.

[47] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Relacijska paradigma in travma*, p. 123.

client's implicit awareness, by means of which she forms new images of herself, others, and relationships[48], and is a crucial element of change in relational family therapy. This case study confirms efficiency of the therapeutic process map, since the client, following therapeutic tasks in her process, reaches a new understanding and experience.

Conclusion

This research offers an insight into complex emotional dynamics within therapeutic process in case of divorce. It emphasizes multi-layered emotional experiencing of divorce. The Parent-child relationship is the interpersonal space where emotional vulnerability manifests most prominently. The distress in parent-child relationship is thus related to interpersonal dynamics, because an unhealed emotional wound from the relationship between spouses is transferred to their relationship with the child[49], as well as in intrapsychic dynamics, because the atmosphere of early relationships is repeated in the relationship with child[50]. In relational family therapy, the transition from systemic level (relationship with child) to interpersonal level (relationship with spouse) and then to intrapsychic level (relationship with parents) enables a new understanding of present experience, by means of which the individual can better control his/her thinking, feeling and behaviour.

Finally, the limitations of the article should be mentioned. For more credible generalization of the results, more therapeutic processes conducted by various therapists should be included in research. Also, we should additionally verify the task map generated through task analysis, which would require a standardization of coding system suitable for relational family therapy and include numerous therapeutic processes with different symptomatology and approaches. Moreover, for better under-

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[48] Cf. D. N. Stern, N. Bruschweiler-Stern, K. Lyons-Ruth, A. C. Morgan, J. P. Nahum and L. W. Sander, *Change in psychotherapy: a unifying paradigm.*

[49] Cf. W. H. Berman, L. Marcus and E. Raynes Berman, Attachment in marital relations, in: M. B. Sperling and W. H. Berman (ed*.) Attachment in adults. Clinical and developmental prespectives*, The Guilford Press, New York, 1994, p. 204-231; N. L. Galambos, and C. L. Costigan, Emotional and personality development in adolescence, in: R. M. Lerner, M. A. Easterbrooks and J. Mistry (ed.) *Handbook of psychology: developmental psychology*, John Wiley&Sons. Inc., New Jersey, 2003, p. 351-372; F. W. Kaslow, Families Experiencing Divroce, in: W. C. Nichols, M. A. Pace-Nichols, D. S. Becvar and A. Y. Napier (ed.) *Hadbook of Family Development and Intervention*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 2000, p. 341-370.

[50] Cf. A. N. Schore*, Relational trauma and the developing right brain: an interface of psychoanalytic self psychology and neuroscience, Self and Systems*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, New York, 2009, p. 1159; D. J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The nwe science of personal transformation*, Bantam Books, New York, 2011; D. N. Stern, N. Bruschweiler-Stern, K. Lyons-Ruth, A. C. Morgan, J. P. Nahum and L. W. Sander, *Change in psychotherapy: a unifying paradigm*, p. 112.

standing of the efficiency of relational family therapy in coping with emotional distress, a comparison with a control group who does not receive any treatment is required.

Acknowledgment

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CHILDREN'S COMPREHENSION OF THE RELIGIOUS STORY AFFECTED BY THEIR EMOTIONAL CAPACITIES

Abstract

The use of the religious stories is an important element of the religious education of preschool and younger schoolchildren. The question arises here, in what way should the story be presented to the children in order to be understandable to them at their specific level of development? In this article children's understanding of a story is placed within the context of their emotional development. The key emotional competencies, mastered by the child until the age of 12, are presented, as well as the key aspects of the social reality which the child can understand based on the mastered emotional competencies and which are important for the understanding of the story. The aspects of the biblical story about the multiplication of the loaves are shown through each individual development stage of a child in order to show the things a child is capable of understanding at a particular stage.

Key words: *understanding the religious story, religious development, emotional competencies, preschool and younger schoolchildren, religious education.*

Introduction

Right at the beginning an examination of religious education leads us to story, respectively stories with religious content. The Bible as a foundational book of Christian religious education is full of stories, and Jesus also uses stories, or rather parables, in his speeches to people. As Tilley claims in the introduction to his book *Story Theology*, "Christian stories provide the central and distinctive structure and content of Christian faith. /.../ Stories do not merely decorate or illustrate, but provide the substance of faith. The better one understands the Christian stories, the better one understands the Christian faith"[1].

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[1]   T. Tilley, *Story Theology*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1990, p. xvii.

The basic purpose of the religious stories is the transfer of a spiritual message from an educator or a teacher to a child. When the apostles asked Jesus why he was not transmitting his spiritual message to people directly, why he was telling them the parables instead, he answered: "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them" (Mt 13:11) and: "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables" (Mr 4:11). The story is thus primarily an attempt to bring spiritual reality, which we do not yet understand or are not yet aware of, closer to people. We could say that the story is a bridge between spiritual reality and psychological awareness, through which humans attempt to approach spiritual reality, until they enter into spiritual reality itself.

When we use the story in religious education, especially in religious education of small, preschool children, we quickly stumble upon the question of how children understand the stories with religious content. Working with children we quickly realise that children of different ages understand stories in different ways, according to the child's psychological maturity, but what exactly are these differences? Which elements, respectively aspects of a story can children at a certain psychological development level understand and which are not yet understandable to them?

In our research we focused primarily on the aspect of social-emotional relationships between the characters of the story. We wanted to know how discoveries in the field of developmental psychology, especially in the field of emotional development in humans, can help us choose the appropriate difficulty level of the story, so that the children can actually understand the level of interpersonal relationships between the characters.

1. Individual's faith development theories in the context of emotional development

An overview of the literature in the field of development of faith and religion shows that Fowler's theory of faith development[2] and the theory of development of religious judgement by Oser and Gmünder[3] are the most detailed and established. Oser and Gmünder's theory does not reach into the time period of preschool development, as it recognizes the first development stage from the age of 6 onwards. Fowler's theory places two development stages into the preschool age: the first, which is not even called real faith since Fowler uses a term the pre-stage of faith, and the second, which encompasses the entire period of time between the child's

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[2] Cf. J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, New York, HarperOne, 1995.

[3] Cf. F. K. Oser and P. Gmünder, *Religious Judgement: A Developmental Perspective*, Birmingham AL, Religious Education Press, 1991.

3rd and 7th year of age. In comparison with the contemporary development theories, like for example Greenspan's theory of functional emotional development[4], which defines the preschool stage much more precisely, the current religious development theories in this earliest stage remain loose and do not take into account the nuances in the child's capacities for understanding, which change very quickly during the preschool age.

The research, upon which the above-mentioned researchers of religious development came to their conclusions, was based on children's verbal descriptions of their understanding of faith. Adult researchers asked the children questions and the children more or less only expressed their views. In the pastorals for the children, the opposite process often occurs: the teachers or educators express their views of faith, tell the children religious stories etc. The children are also the ones who listen, watch and receive. Observing the pastoral practice we thus legitimately ask the question: "How can current faith development theories be boosted when seen from a different perspective?" Not only what the children can express about their faith to others, but also how much is transmitted to them and what the children are capable of understanding and accepting at a certain age. What should a grown-up teacher or a religious educator do in order to help a child to understand? How and in what way should they bring a religious story closer to the child?

To answer this question, we used the findings from the field of emotional development, especially Greenspan's[5] findings which foreground the key emotional competencies that a child masters in an individual development stage for each key stage of emotional development[6]. Table 1 shows the development sequence, in which individual emotional competencies appear in a child's development; concurrently, the development stages of faith as defined by Fowler[7] and the development stages of religious judgement as defined by Oser and Gmünder[8] are shown.

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[4]   Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, The Journal of Developmental and Learning Disorders, (2002) 6, p. 71-116; S. I. Greenspan and S. G. Shanker, *The First Idea: How Symbols, Language, and Intelligence Evolved from Our Primate Ancestors to Modern Humans*, Cambridge MA, Da Capo Press, 2004, p. 51-91.

[5]   Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, p. 71-116.

[6]   Cf. M. Cvetek, *Živeti s čustvi: čustva, čustveno procesiranje in vseživljenjski čustveni razvoj*, Znanstvena knjižica 41, Ljubljana, Teološka fakulteta, 2014, p. 95-167.

[7]   Cf. J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*; J. W. Fowler, H. Streib and B. Keller, *Manual for Faith Development Research*, Atlanta and Bielefeld, Candler School of Theology and Universität Bielefeld, 2004, p. 30-59.

[8]   Cf. F. K. Oser and P. Gmünder, *Religious Judgement: A Developmental Perspective*, Birmingham AL, Religious Education Press, 1991.

Table 1: *Comparison of the development stages of three theories: Fowler's theory of faith development, theories of the development of religious judgement by Oser and Gmünder, and Greenspan's theories of lifelong functional emotional development.*

Fowler's theory of faith development	Oser and Gmünder's theory of the development of religious judgement	Greenspan's theory of functional emotional development
Primal faith (pre-stage of faith)		0-2 months Emotional regulation and shared interest in the world
		2-4 months Engagement and relating
		4-8 months Two way intentional communication
		9-18 months Complex, problem solving gestures (Mutual social problem resolution)
		18-30 months Creating representations or ideas
3-7 years Intuitive-pro- jective faith		2.5-4 years Building bridges between ideas
		4-7 years Multiple-Cause and triangular emotional thinking
7-15 years Mythic-literal faith	6-12 years First stage: Deus Ex Machina / Absolute Heteronomy Orientation	6-10 years Grey Area, Relativistic Thinking
		9-12 years Reflective thinking with an internal standard
Adolescents Synthetic-conventio- nal faith	8-18 years Second stage: Do Ut Des Orientation	After 12 years Extended reflective thinking
		Reflections on the individual's future
	16-25 years Third stage: Deism / Abso- lute Autonomy Orientation	Stabilisatio n of the separate sense of self
Young adults: Individual-reflective faith	Fourth stage: Mediated Autonomy and Salvation-Plan Orientation	Long-term intimate commitment
		Responsible care for another
Mature adults: Conjunctive faith		Responsible care for the broader social community
Rarely attained by anyone: Universalising faith	Fifth stage: Intersubjective Religious Orientation (rarely attained by anyone)	Wisdom

2. Development of the emotional capacities

In the field of development psychology the term emotional competency is understood as a specific ability to emote which an individual develops at a specific development stage of their lifelong emotional development. Stanley Greenspan, who first developed the theory of lifelong functional emotional development, understands emotional competencies as the abilities of an individual at a specific development stage to perceive, express and communicate emotions and to integrate them into their own sense of self[9]. In an individual's lifelong emotional development, emotional competencies become increasingly integrated and interwoven with the higher mental functions, like the use of symbols, logical thought, ability for self-reflection and similar[10]. Emotional competencies significantly contribute to an individual's partaking in interpersonal relationships both in understanding interpersonal dynamics as well as in effectively regulating emotional exchanges between participants in a social interaction[11].

Greenspan divided his lifelong theory of functional emotional development into 16 development stages, from which 16 central emotional competencies can be derived[12]. Because the main interest of this article is children's understanding of the religious story, only the first nine emotional competencies that derive from this theory will be briefly described. The following briefly describes the emotional competencies in the same sequence as they appear during an individual's lifelong development.

Emotional regulation or emotional calmness in a children's early development is understood as the ability to calm down with the support of a comforting caregiver. This fundamental emotional capacity further enables the children to focus their attention outwards, which is noticeable as the child's *shared interest in the world*.

The state of experiencing intimate *engagement and relating with another* is the second fundamental emotional competency. In the children's interaction with their caregivers we notice this especially when the children intentionally stare into the caregiver's face, that is the eyes. It is a relationship with a basic trust that is characteristic in the safe prox-

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[9]   Cf. S. I. Greenspan and S. G. Shanker, *The First Idea: How Symbols, Language, and Intelligence Evolved from Our Primate Ancestors to Modern Humans*, Cambridge MA, Da Capo Press, 2004, p. 51-91; M. Cvetek, *Živeti s čustvi*, p. 95-167.

[10] Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, p. 71-116.

[11] Cf. D. Nelis, I. Kotsou, J. Quoidbach, M. Hansenne, F. Weytens, P. Dupuis and M. Mikolajczak, *Increasing Emotional Competence Improves Psychological and Physical Well-Being, Social Relationships, and Employability*, Emotion, 11 (2011) 2, p. 354-366; S. A. Denham, *Dealing with Feelings: Foundations and Consequences of Young Children's Emotional Competence*, Early Education and Development, 12 (2001) 1, p. 5-10.

[12] Cf. M. Cvetek, *Živeti s čustvi*, p. 95-167.

imity of another person, a global sense of contact, inclusion and connection with another.

(1) *Two way intentional communication* represents the ability of mutual sharing common interests, mutual surrender to a common activity and meaningful and intentional responding to each other.

(2) The emotional competency of *mutual social problem solving* can be understood also as the ability to cooperate with others, as it involves mutual assistance in meeting one's needs and wants mutual assistance in attaining goals, respectively.

(3) *Creating representations, ideas and symbols* can be understood as the ability of representing emotional states with the help of mental ideas, symbols and words. At first, symbols and ideas are non-verbal; later, especially verbal symbols which facilitate expressing emotions become important.

(4) *Building bridges between ideas* and also logical thinking about emotions enables an individual to connect his/her emotional state with its cause, and also facilitates our ability to predict which emotional state is likely to follow a particular happening.

(5) *Multiple-Cause and triangular emotional thinking* represents the ability to connect emotional states with a larger number of possible causes or consequences. Mastering this competency enables the individual to take into account different viewpoints, to compare different individuals, behaviours or circumstances with each other, and similar.

(6) *Relativistic thinking or emotionally differentiated thinking* represents the ability to notice and discern many shades of emotional experience and to distinguish between various intensities of emotional states. Consequently, the individual's reactions to emotional circumstances become more refined, which enables the individual to behave more tolerantly and flexibly in interpersonal relationships.

(7) *Reflective thinking with an internal standard* represents an individual's ability of self-reflection and comparison of their current emotional state and behaviour with the internalised standard of their usual state, and also with their desired and ideal states. This emotional competency, when mastered, enables the individual to accept responsibility for his/her state and also includes the autonomous desire to change one's self (e.g. in the direction of the desired image of one's self).

The individual develops the emotional competencies presented above in a typical, universal sequence. Greenspan[13] believes that the order of developmental stages in the emotional development cannot be skipped.

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[13] Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, p. 71-116.

Table 2: *Overview of the emotional competencies and some aspects of social reality that a child can understand based on the mastered emotional competencies, from birth until the age of 12 years. The aspects of social reality that can be found in the religious story are foregrounded.*

Emotional competency	Aspect of social reality, mastered by the child by the end of the stage
Emotional regulation and shared interest in the world (0 to 2 months)	The child can *calm down* near another person.
Intimate engagement and relating (2 to 4 months)	They can establish a *trusting relationship* with the person close to them. They can intentionally watch another person, follow them with their eyes, and pay attention to them.
Two way intentional communication (4 to 8 months)	They begin to notice *individual people* (especially their faces) and *individual objects* that they come into contact with in an emotional exchange with an adult. They pay attention especially to people and objects that have emotional value for them (bring them pleasure, are interesting to them etc.).
Mutual social problem resolution (9 to 18 months)	They recognise *individual acts* related to them which the person close to them daily performs. They understand acts which are often repeated in their everyday life and are familiar to them.
Creating representations or ideas (18 to 30 months)	They recognise individual *acts in context*: they can conceive an act and also the area the act is performed in. They understand the acts and the areas which they know from experience.
Building bridges between ideas (2.5 to 4 years)	They are able to *connect individual acts into a story*, i.e. into a sequence of logically connected events. They understand stories that are based on events which are connected to *external behaviour*.
Multiple-Cause and triangular emotional thinking (4 to 7 years)	They begin to differentiate between external behaviour and internal states (emotional experience and thought). They understand *the entanglements that occur on the level of emotions or the content of thoughts.*
Relativistic Thinking (6 to 10 years)	They recognise different roles of individuals in a group and begin to understand *social and moral rules* (what is expected in a community and what is not, what is right and what is wrong), they can already take into account multiple opinions when judging something.
Reflective thinking with an internal standard (9 to 12 years)	They can discern the moral of the story; *they can compare their life with the moral of the story* and judge whether they live in accordance with that moral or not.

Each next development step, in particular developmental competency, encompasses all preceding developmental competencies and means an upgrade of preceding competencies.

3. The emotional capacities and the understanding of social reality

Having reached the emotional competencies or not determines to a significant degree how the child will understand himself/herself, in relation to others and in relations between people in general. Since the religious stories are put into the context of people's social reality, the child's understanding of interpersonal relationships is vital for understanding the religious story. Table 2 shows the key aspects of social reality which a child is capable of understanding at a specific stage of emotional development. Since this article deals primarily with children's development, the table encompasses the first nine development stages that cover the time period from birth until the age of 12 years.

4. Example of a religious story

Due to children's predominantly concrete way of thinking it makes sense to choose those Biblical stories for the religious education of children where the language of the story is concrete. For the purposes of this article we chose the story of the multiplication of the loaves as an example of such a story: Jesus feeds five thousand men (Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-15).

The first two development stages

At the beginning of a child's life we can hardly speak of the child's understanding of social reality and stories, since the child is simply psychologically not mature enough for that. And yet this earliest stage is important for understanding the child's later participation in activities, related to understanding stories. The competencies of being able to calm down and direct attention into the world and to establish a trusting relationship with the storyteller, which the child begins to develop in the first two stages of emotional development, form the base which needs to be established in every relationship between a storyteller and a child, even when the child is older.

Stage three

In the third developmental stage of a children's emotional development, when the children can recognize individual objects or people, the children can only grasp the key objects, like bread, fish, boy, basket, in the story about the multiplication of the loaves. The children understand individual objects in so far as these have been introduced to them in a physical

form and if they have an emotional value for him/her. The children can observe attentively individual images of these objects, if each individual image is portrayed with contrasting colours and set on a uniform background. This is reminiscent of the first step of exegetic Bible study methods as understood by Butler[14], where the starting point of the study is to identify the keywords used by the author of the story in order to write down the story's key message. In the adult world these keywords can also represent more abstract ideas, like justice, mercy and similar, with small children, however, it makes sense to foreground only very concrete objects that the children are in contact with in their daily life.

At this stage the child can establish an emotional relationship also to Jesus as a person, whereby it makes sense to take into account the child's predilection to ascribe the same emotional value to people who are not their caregivers as is ascribed by their caregivers. In connection to this, developmental psychologists speak of social referencing and conclude that in this early stage of development children already exhibit one of the key components of this ability, namely social observation of people important to the child. The child adjusts their behaviour to what they notice in their caregiver[15]. The kind of relationship that the child will establish on a psychological level with Jesus and other religiously important individuals thus depends largely on the way the child's caregiver will express the relationship with the mentioned individuals.

Stage Four

At the beginning of the fourth development stage (9 to 12 months) the children still mostly perceive individual concrete objects or individuals, but are able to observe more of them (e.g. on one page of a picture book the children can observe three or four individual and clearly defined objects). Later, in the second half of this stage (12 to 18 months), the children master the ability to understand individual acts. For example, in the story about the multiplication of the loaves the children can well recognize the picture of a boy with the bread, or the picture of a praying Jesus or that of Jesus dividing the bread, the picture of the boy eating the bread and similar. The children can recognize the acts portrayed in the pictures if they have observed and performed the same acts in their daily experience.

From an emotional standpoint the child develops at this stage the ability to signal their needs and wants to another person, whereby this

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[14]   Cf. T. C. Butler, *Six Ways to Study the Bible*, St. Louis MO, Chalice Press, 2010, p. 41.

[15]   Cf. G. C. Mireault, S. C. Crockenberg, J. E. Sparrow, C. A. Pettinato, K. C. Woodard and K. Malzac, *Social Looking, Social Referencing and Humor Perception in 6- and-12-Month-Old Infants*, Infant Behavior & Development, 37 (2014) 4, p. 536-545.

emotional signalling largely takes place on the level of actions[16]. The children non-verbally gesture what they want, point to the goals they want to attain, attract others into interacting with them, which very clearly shows the children's ability of their own intentional activity. In relation to this, Fonagy[17] talks about the so-called teleological agency of the self, whereby the children experience their intentions and actions as a connected whole (in this stage they do not yet distinguish the internal states or intentions from external action). The children become acquainted with the characters of the religious story also through their performed and externally visible acts and are not yet capable of understanding the intentions as the separate internal states.

Stage Five

In the fifth development stage the child can situate the image of a person doing something into a familiar context. This means that upon the person's act the children can also conceive of the space where the person is performing the act. In the story about the multiplication of the loaves, for example, the children can grasp that the traveller leaves the town to find Jesus; that he meets Jesus in a meadow; that the apostle places bits of the leftover bread from dinner into the baskets and the like. The children's understanding is still very concrete, tied predominantly to the meeting of two people (they cannot yet imagine multiple relationships that emerge in the meeting of the crowd with Jesus). The children thus understand those acts and circumstances that they run into in their everyday life. From the children's viewpoint, the image is still the fundamental story telling medium.

From the emotional viewpoint, the children in this stage already attain the ability to imagine emotional states with the help of mental ideas, symbols and words. This is mirrored in the children's speech where we already notice simple descriptions of persons, objects and spaces[18], and in the vocabulary of children whose parents use emotional talk we already meet with individual expressions for simple emotions. The children can mentally picture the intentions and desires leading an individual to a specific action. They can imagine emotional states that result from behaviours and the like, which the literature on psychology marks with the term

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[16]   Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, p. 73.

[17]   Cf. P. Fonagy, G. Gergely, E. L. Jurist and M. Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*, New York, Other Press LLC, 2005, p. 222.

[18]   Cf. S. Kranjc, U. Fekonja Peklaj and L. Marjanovič Umek, *Language Development in Early Childhood: Developmental Changes between the Ages of Three and Four*, 2006, p. 729-730 in 737.

mentalisation[19]. In the story about the multiplication of the loaves the children can understand that the traveller who came to Jesus was hungry. They can understand the boy's aspiration to help Jesus (by bringing him bread and fish). They can understand the traveller's happiness upon receiving the bread and so on.

Stage Six

According to Fowler, in this stage the children's primal faith transforms into intuitive-projective faith[20], and at the level of emotional development the children become capable of connecting emotions and the reasons for emotions, respectively reasons and emotional consequences[21]. The ability to connect ideas into logical wholes enables the children to connect individual acts into a meaningful story. The children understand the time sequence of events and simple causal relationships between them, they also understand that the character which appears in different pictures of the same story is one and the same person[22]. Such children already understand that, for example, Jesus, who is portrayed at different pages of the book, is always the same person. In this development stage the children can understand events that transpire on the behavioural level, therefore on the level of actions that the children can observe from outside. In the story about the multiplication of the loaves, for example, the children are able to follow the key flow of the "outer" story: they can understand that the apostles went with Jesus to get some rest (in a solitary place), that people hurried after them, that Jesus accepted them and told them stories, that they became hungry, were searching for food, that the boy brought some bread and fish, that Jesus prayed and that he then divided the bread and fish among everyone, and so forth.

Stage Seven

In this stage the children's thinking becomes expressly comparative, which enables them to differentiate between and compare emotions of different people and objects. The child begins to differentiate between external behaviour and internal states (emotional experience and thought). The story is thus no longer understood only on the level of outer behaviour,

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19   Cf. P. Fonagy, G. Gergely, E. L. Jurist and M. Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*, p. 237.

20   Cf. J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, p. 122.

21   Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, p. 74.

22   Cf. S. Kranjc, U. Fekonja Peklaj and L. Marjanovič Umek, *Language Development in Early Childhood*, p. 738-739.

seen from the outside, the children also understand what is happening inside people's minds. In the story about the multiplication of the loaves the children can understand people's internal desires – to meet Jesus, to learn something from him or to be healed by him, they can understand the distress of the disciples who did not have enough food for dinner, they can understand Jesus's inclination to help people and so on. The ability to compare thoughts also makes it possible for children to understand the religious stories from other viewpoints. Children in this stage begin to differentiate between what is real and what is not, whereby they judge the religious stories differently than non-religious stories. Most children are convinced that the characters from religious stories actually exist and that the actions from these stories actually happened or could happen, whereas they are sure that the characters from non-religious stories only exist in fantasy[23]. Likewise, most children of this age are convinced that God has a different creational power than humans. Thus, for example, children differentiate between small houses being built by people and mountains by God[24].

Stage Eight

Children's recognition of different aspects and shades of reality additionally increases in this stage. The child progressively differentiates between a growing palette of emotions and other internal states of persons, likewise they discern an increasing number of roles that people play in different life situations. The growing ability to understand different social perspectives[25] gives the child an ever better understanding of interpersonal relationships and the different roles of individuals in a group, at the same time facilitating their participation in social groups[26]. Thus in the story about the multiplication of the loaves the child understands the negotiations between the disciples and Jesus regarding how much food is needed for dinner for the entire crowd and where to obtain it. They differentiate well between events which follow natural laws and events which deviate from them. In the story about the multiplication of the loaves they thus see that the multiplication of the loaves is a miracle (=sign) that deviates from the usual, natural course of events. In addition

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[23] Cf. V. Cox Vaden and J. D. Woolley, *Does God Make It Real? Children's Belief in Religious Stories from the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, Child Development, 82 (2011) 4, p. 1120-1135.

[24] Cf. J. L. Barrett and R. A. Richert, *Anthropomorphism or Preparedness? Exploring Children's God Concepts*, Review of Religious Research, 44 (2003) 3, p. 302.

[25] Cf. S. Diazgranados, R. L. Selman and M. Dionne, *Acts of Social Perspective Taking: A Functional Construct and the Validation of a Performance Measure for Early Adolescents*, Social Development, 25 (2016) 3, p. 587-589.

[26] Cf. H. Gülay Ogelman, V. Oğuz, Ö. Körükçü and A. Köksal Akyol, *Examination of the Effect of Perspective-Taking Skills of Six-Year-Old Children on Their Social Competences*, Early Child Development & Care, 187 (2017) 1, p. 63.

to that, children in this stage of development begin to understand social and oral rules (what is expected in a community and what is not, what is right and what is wrong). Thus children of this age can discuss, for example, whether the disciples ought to feed the crowd or not.

Stage Nine

The central development milestone of this stage is the development of an individual's ability of self-reflection. The children are increasingly aware of their own self, they start differentiating between the actual state of their self and the desired or ideal state[27]. This enables them to think upon hearing the story about what the story is telling them personally. The children can compare their life with the moral of the story and judge whether they live in accordance with that moral or not. Along the story about the multiplication of the loaves they can, for instance, think about their similarities to the apostles or the boy who brought the loaves and the fish. They can consider what their own wishes and expectations would be upon approaching Jesus. They can reflect on how they would answer Jesus's question: "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" and similar. In this stage the children are capable of increasing control over their emotional state, they can direct their emotions in the desired direction likewise they begin to express their autonomous desire for change of self. Thus a comparison of themselves with the religious story motivates the children to try and align their behaviour to the perceived moral of the story. We could say that the attained competencies of this stage represent the basis of what Butler calls the devotional study of the Bible[28], which presupposes the ability of self-reflection.

Conclusion

An integration of findings from the field of emotional development and children's perception of the content of religious stories shows that it is possible to take a much broader look at the development of children's faith in this early life stage than mainstream theories on faith development and religious judgement are taking. Knowing the micro-changes in the children's way of understanding the religious story enables parents and caregivers to choose a way of presenting the religious story suitable to the children's capacity for understanding at a certain development stage and in which the children can actively participate according to their development level.

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[27] Cf. J. Greenspan and S. I. Greenspan, *Functional Emotional Developmental Questionnaire (FEDQ) for Childhood: A Preliminary Report on the Questions and Their Clinical Meaning*, p. 77-80.

[28] Cf. T. C. Butler, *Six Ways to Study the Bible*, p. 101-102.

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THE CHALLENGES OF EMPATHETIC PARENTING AFTER DIVORCE AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Abstract

As well as the formation of general values, the formation of religious attitude, beliefs, and religious values is a lifelong process. An increasing number of studies show, however, that the foundations, on which the adult religiousness will be formed, are generally established in the very early childhood, and the child-parent relationship has a pivotal role here. In addition to the parents' authentic and deep religiousness, the quality of bonding in this relationship is an important factor that plays a decisive role in whether children will adopt parents' (religious) values and beliefs or they will be distance themselves from them or even reject them. Parenting is much more difficult in circumstances such as parents' divorce. Divorce always brings change which may cause the lower quality of the child-parent relationship. This article aims at illustrating the basic dynamics of the family relations and parenting which are relevant to the formation of social, interpersonal, and religious values, and at pointing out those aspects where complications are most probable to occur. In this context, divorce is a challenge that renders everyone involved highly vulnerable.

Key words: *religious experience, parenting, child development, divorce.*

Introduction

The family is a school of humanness. In a family, people grow and develop physically, psychologically, and spiritually. It is also the first space of evangelization, of individual's meeting with faith. For individual's optimal holistic growth, a family life should be as close to the ideal as possible: however, contemporary families often find themselves in a

vicious circle of violence and abuse, burdened by social and professional demands, alienation, pessimism etc.

Many families today face divorce, which is an extremely complex phenomenon, as a special challenge for interpersonal relationships and everyday life. Research shows that divorce (or the dissolution of a partnership) is one of the most stressful and psychologically challenging trials for the individuals and the family as a system. Ex-spouses have to deal with change brought up by divorce, and parenting, especially, has to face various challenges. If this dimension is seriously affected, the child's development is endangered in its very core, since the relations with parents from the first days of his/her life are crucial for his/her development.

1. Divorce and parenting

Family relations and parenting are certainly strongly challenged by divorce which is on the increase. The transitional period immediately following divorce is especially delicate. This is often a chaotic and stressful time for family members who experience many changes. Generally, this chaos also disturbs parents-children relationship and leads to weakened parenting strategies. Research shows that divorce generally leads to deterioration of positive parenting strategies (responsiveness) and to increase of negative parenting strategies (e.g. harshness). There are quite a few studies about how parents' divorce affects children. In the process of divorce, the children are the most vulnerable. The conflicts between ex-spouses are related to an increased rate of behavioural problems in children. If the conflict remains within boundaries and the children are not directly exposed to it, they are less affected. If, however, they are involved in the conflict, feeling trapped, they experience it as very troubling and stressful. Cooperative parenting of divorced parents is, of course, most desirable, but it only takes place in a minority of divorced couples. After divorce, which is supposed to bring relief after usually long-term conflicting relations, many couples remain highly conflicting; together with difficult emotional states this leads to inadequate types of parenting.

When parents divorce and if they persist in conflict, there is usually a decline in parent-child relationship. Children of divorced parents get less emotional support and practical help from their parents. Some studies do show that parents' divorce alone does not necessarily affect parenting, but it nevertheless often leads to worrying, exhaustion, and high levels of stress in parents; these factors affect both parenting and parental control. Divorce often brings about parenting which is less caring and, on the other hand, too protective.

Divorce also affects children's religious practice. Research shows that divorce is followed by decreased family religiousness; there is also an

increased probability of children abandoning their religion and being less religious in the traditional sense.

By abandoning religious practices, children are deprived of several good effects of religiousness in various domains: marital stability, sexual restraint, higher education and income, less crime and addiction, better physical and mental health, and higher levels of satisfaction in general. Weakened child-parent relationship that follows divorce is therefore a considerable risk factor for the development of various complications, and it affects the healthy development of children in general.

2. The importance of family relations for the child's development

A man is a relational being, ever embedded in the relational matrix that characterizes all dimensions of his being. A man as a person emerges from a relationship; he enters and co-creates relationships, develops and grows within them, suffers and transforms and continues his way towards eternity, expecting new relationships. In relationships, he is constantly provided with new materials for further growth and further relationships. In the background of a relationship there are always profound dynamics of family relations which began at his birth. The dynamics of these relations will dictate every new relationship, because they are engraved in the child's intrapsychic world, and are becoming the foundation for building new relationships, the one with God among them.

Each family is the first social environment that most decidedly influences and directs the growth of a young person. The family could be defined as an emotional-social system which is, apart from blood ties, connected with interpersonal affective bonds, its fundamental task being to create a warm and secure environment where each member is able to feel that s/he belongs, to fulfill her/his basic needs, and to become an independent, healthy, and self-confident person. In the family, the child gathers new life experiences, is educated and socialized. The goal of raising a child within family, if we only focus on external and most obvious aspects of parenting, is to teach the child family values, accept the child's points of view and regulate the child's behaviour. Numerous studies researching affective atmosphere of parenting show that children who live in emotionally warm families tend to leave their homes with higher self-confidence. Due to good experience at home, they feel less worried when looking for their life challenges. On the other hand, children living in emotionally cold families search for their place in world with much more fear and distrust. Family, parenting and relationships in child's earliest life period are irreplaceable, and for healthy development, child needs her/his parents who are her/his first and most important educators. All these traits are very important in the transmission of values.

3. Family and adopting values

A good society is based on the values of respect, solidarity, and responsibility towards oneself, others, and creation. The values are universal, fundamental, and slowly changing concepts which can be the guidelines for thinking and acting. One is supposed to recognize what is valuable and good; this recognition is followed by a desire for these values to be realized.

The values regulate individuals' lives, determining their thinking, feeling and behaviour. It is believed that a man is innately good, but the value system can only be built through relating to others and it is valuable for one to experience what others feel; in this process, family relations undoubtedly hold a special place since the values are transmitted transgenerationally. As the parent-child relationship is getting warmer and more open, the similarity between parents' and children's standards for values, religiousness, and ethics is greater.

In adopting values, the relationships with parents or primary caretakers are therefore of utmost importance. The emotional background of these relations is especially significant that begins to form during the first days of an infant's life. What an individual will adopt from another, generally also depends on emotional dynamics of transferring certain contents in a relationship. The transmission of values cannot be seen as a passive copying process where the contents are simply transferred from one individual to another; it is a complex process in which an especially important role is played by the emotional aspects of relevant relations which differ from person to person. Even in the most harmonious families the children adopt some beliefs, attitudes and values, but not all of them. When examining the transfer of values, we need to primarily consider deeper intergenerational affective dynamics and the consequent quality of interpersonal relations. From the standpoint of the quality of family relations and child-raising we can say that the parents' attitude towards the children and their mutual relationship determines the emotional atmosphere because of which the children will accept or reject certain values; and the parents' attitude towards these values is important, too.

When emphasizing the importance of a quality relationship, we primarily think of sensitive and empathetic parenting where the parents are in-tune, responsive, and attentive, where the child feels safe and is able to develop compassion and maintain the vividness of spirit. The parents have the innate responsiveness to the child, so that they can provide her/him with whatever the child absolutely needs in a given moment. A child who has her/his basic physical and emotional needs met in an adequate way will feel that s/he can rely on her/his parents. Basic trust and faith are formed on the basis of 'good enough' care, and they are a fertile soil for the mother's or father's values. Otherwise, in order to psychologically survive and preserve her/his self, the child is forced to resist everything that comes from the parents, perceiving it as threatening and dangerous.

With parents who are well-tuned, responsive, loving, attentive, sensitive, and at the same time standing up for what they believe in, children feel accepted; and they develop self-awareness and self-image based on these messages. Parents who seriously and respectfully embrace their child as s/he is and as s/he feels, who sense the child's distress although they may not see a sound reason behind it, and who at the same time maintain adequate boundaries give the child the sense of security in the outer world, as well as the feeling that s/he is seen and heard, 'made known', which is crucial for her/his self-esteem due to the feeling that her/his 'self' is authentic and real.

4. Family as the cradle of religious values

The family is one of the most important places for evangelization. In the growth of individual's religiousness, we can observe interwoven influences of various structures, the so-called 'agents of religious socialization': parents, peers, school, religious institutions, mass media, etc. Their influence is either direct, through explicit religious teachings and family religious practices, or indirect (e.g. the influence of school, vocation and spouse, cultural expectations, etc.). Research examining self-assessment of parents' influence on personal religiousness shows that young generation perceives parents as the most influential.

Parents most remarkably influence the religiousness of their children, both in their early years and later, in adolescence and young adult age. For teenage period, scholars have discovered three main factors that are supposed to predict religiousness in teenagers: understanding of how significant religion is for parents, positive family environment and religious traditions at home.

This influence can extend to young adult period.

Generally, we can say that various aspects of parents' religiousness / their religious values are reliable predictors of the extent to which teenagers and young adults will adopt and maintain the family religiousness.

As far as the influence according to gender is concerned, it is interesting that mothers, generally, have stronger influence on their children's religiousness than fathers; on the other hand, there is a tendency that same sex parents have more influence on their children (i.e. fathers on sons, mothers on daughters). Parents' influence is stronger in external forms of religiousness (e.g. going to church) than inner attitudes (e.g. towards Christianity). Findings regarding the extent of either parent's influence on religious development of their children generally differ; however, the majority of studies point out that mothers' influence is stronger than that of fathers. Usually mothers, not fathers, are those who take the primary role of child raising; besides, in Western cultures women on average estimate their religiousness higher than men. Women are also sup-

posed to feel more responsibility for child raising. For example, women will earlier feel the responsibility for taking children to church and introduce them to the basics of religious teachings. It therefore comes as no surprise that people typically perceive their mothers as those who have stronger influence on their religiousness. It is probably allowed to say that if the mother's faith 'dies', the child's faith 'dies', too.

It is not enough, however, that parents possess religious values which children will simply adopt. In transferring of religiousness, the quality of family relations plays a significant role, too. If family hurts, if family relations are not good and sincere, this also affects child's growing in faith. The increasing number of studies in psychology of religion shows that the foundations on which adult religiousness will form are mostly established very early in life. The quality of bonding in the early relations is a significant factor connected with whether children will adopt parents' (religious) values and beliefs, or they will be distanced from them or even reject them.

5. The relational basis of religious experience

As other individual's dimensions grow and develop, so does religiosity. Early years are not only decisive for emotional, social, moral, physical, and cognitive development but also for the development of religious or spiritual sense. Religious sense could be described as one's innermost, deepest feelings about God and transcendence. This is not about which religion one belongs to but rather what one feels in relation to the transcendental. These contents are profound, mysterious and extremely intimate, so that sometimes they cannot be even verbalized because they transcend us, but at the same time they are something utterly natural. Religious sense is not intellectual knowledge of spiritual dimensions and theological truths: it is an authentic inner sense of the existence of something transcendental, of somebody with whom it is possible to establish a relationship; this is the basis in which religious truths and other religious knowledge can be built and anchored.

The transcendental experience laid the foundation in the first years, from child's very birth. In addition to some predispositions with which an individual is born, the relationships very strongly determine the direction of one's development. On the basis of her/his relations with others, an infant begins to build her/his intrapsychic structure which enables her/him to establish relationships with individuals surrounding her/him. The awareness of her/himself as a person begins to grow in the child, which can be described as the 'psychological birth.' In the first months, the intrapsychic structure of self and human objects is formed in an infant, and so is the structure of God's image and the relationship with Him. Even at that early stage, in relations with others, the contents are

formed which will influence individual's later relationships, including the relationship with God.

The basis of religious experience are therefore formed within human context, i.e. the context of family environment. Child's experience of relations is the basic building material from which the child builds the images of self and others. In the beginning, these images are formed on the basis of the relationship with one's parents, and they end with child creating the internal intrapsychic image of divine much sooner than the institutional aspect of religion is at child's disposal. It is therefore quite clear that these basic processes take place before child's fifth or sixth year. Child's feeling about God, her/his intrapsychic image of God and the draft of later intimate relationship with God, i.e. the entire religious experience, is connected with child's parents in a very complex way. A child can experience parents as good or bad, and the intrapsychic image of God can correspond to that; or, this image may be totally opposite, so that God is entirely good and caring, while parents are experienced as uncaring, bad, and unloving. The opposite is also possible: parents are idealized and God devalued.

The period that is crucial for forming the ability of religious experience in child begins with her/his very birth, with the first three years being of utmost importance. Relations in this period are crucial for the development of the basic feelings of security and trust built on feedback through which the child feels recognized, i.e. seen, heard, and respected in her/his basic needs. With their responses, significant others (especially parents) let the child know that her/his feelings are understood, they take care of and calm her/him. Thus child's sense of self, self-esteem ('Am I worthy of being taken seriously?'), together with understanding what s/he can expect of others, is formed. This is the basis of perceiving God and the transcendental later in life. Even in the deepest, the most intimately religious experience the most important moment is when an individual can feel truly recognized , valuable and loved by God, regardless of what s/he is. This feeling of basic trust later creates the basis for experiencing an intimate and loving relationship with God.

The quality of the child-parent relationship (especially its affective aspect) is therefore an important mechanism which should be taken into account when we speak of the transmission of religious values within the family. Based on certain studies in this field it can be said that the lack of closeness and bonding obviously creates a gap in religiousness between parents and children. Young adults, for example, who reported warm ad close relationships with their parents in their childhood, later showed less resistance to religious teachings. Others came to similar conclusions regarding the significance of parents-teenagers relationship for the transmission of religious values.

Myers concluded that the main determinants of adult religiousness in children are parents' religiousness, the quality of family relationships, and the traditional characteristics of the family structure. Among the family factors which positively affect the transmission of religious values, Jennings and Niemi pointed out non-conflicting atmosphere, connectedness within family, and parents' concordance regarding various values or attitudes.

6. Empathetic parenting and the parents' deep, authentic faith - the best 'recipe' for children to grow in faith

Research in psychology of religion showed that good bond, i.e. quality family relationships, or parents' religiousness alone do not guarantee authentically religious individuals nurturing healthy and authentic spirituality. One alone is not enough. In this context we should mention two hypotheses. The first one, the *correspondence hypothesis*, claims that children who had good bond with their parents generally follow parents' religiousness: their religiousness is not marked by dramatic breaks, it grows gradually from a very early age and is supported by a strong social network. This, of course, implies, that children will very probably follow their parents' attitude when parents do not nurture religious values. The second, the *compensation hypothesis*, relates to children who do not have good bond and quality relationship with their parents; as a rule, these children less often follow their parents' religiousness, seeking the opposite and distance from what comes from parents, because in this way, they feel safer; they often develop a less positive image of God, their religiousness often tends towards New Age spirituality, sudden twists in religious life, and tumultuous life reversals.

Even though adopting religious values is a complex process, according to the two hypotheses about the influence of parents' religiousness and the quality of the child-parent relationship based on the child's religiousness, we can roughly deduct the following scheme (Figure 1): the individual's (child's) religiousness will probably be more present if his/her parents nurture and live the authentic spirituality and have a good relationship with their child. In case that the relationship is good but parents do not have an alive and deep spirituality, the child will follow this pattern, and adopt a similar spiritual level. When the relationship is not good, however, the child will, due to being overwhelmed and because of his/her psychological need to survive, need to reject whatever comes from his/her parents, even their spirituality, even when this spirituality is alive, genuine, deep and authentic. In this case it is possible that the child will be nonreligious, or less religious than his/her parents, or religious in some other way. In case of a bad relationship and a lack of spirituality in parents, the outcome can be mixed: the child, who is actually

without a spiritual compass, will remain non-equipped for experiencing spiritual life, or spirituality (which is, however, often ambivalent, with typical searching for spirituality in different directions and resorting to New Age spirituality) and will become a safe haven who offers security and trust which was absent from his/her relationship with his/her parents.

Figure 1: Child's religiousness in relation to his/her parents' religiousness and the quality of the child-parent relationship

It could therefore be said that to form religious sense, the best 'recipe' is a combination of both warm and secure relationships and sincere faith of parents and educators from the earliest age. Trust and security is the soil from which mother's, father's, educators' understanding and beliefs can grow; hopefully, their spirituality is true and authentic. In the developmental process of a child having warm relationships, a basis is formed on which later in life a treasure of living faith develops, which does not consist of a mere sense of duty. This is only possible, however, if the individual has the foundation for experiencing God as something internal, not only as a superficial and external tradition. It can be said that in this process, transcendent God becomes immanent God.[1] In this union, God is alive, with the energy of a live person. Otherwise, God is perceived as dead and we often witness a paradox of imposing 'God' from without building such pressure that one is forced to turn his/her back to religion (or an institution) to feel alive again.[2]

[1]   A. Belford Ulanov, *Finding space: Winnicott, God, and psychic reality*, p. 29-39.

[2]   C. Gostečnik, *Psihoanaliza in religiozno izkustvo*, p. 361.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RELATIONAL FAMILY THERAPY ON THE (RELIGIOUS) LIFE IN ADULTHOOD AFFECTED BY LOSSES IN CHILDHOOD

Abstract

Despite of the severity of the loss of a parent and frequency of parental divorce there has been no assessment of the impact of resolving the unspoken and unmourned losses from childhood through relational family therapy and its impact on adult everyday life.

The aim of this paper was to estimate and assess the impact of relational family therapy on posttraumatic growth and to reduce symptoms of unresolved grief such as panic disorder, anxiety and depression.

Two cases of relational family therapy are described, with two adult women who experienced their fathers' death at an early age. One of them came into therapy with anxiety and panic disorder, the other with depression and frozenness.

In twelve sessions of relational family therapy they reached, together with an empathic therapist, the deepest grief they have never spoken of before. In both, the results were reduced symptoms and a more optimistic view of life.

This paper points at the value of relational family therapy techniquesin resolving grief and reducing symptoms of panic disorder, anxiety and depression. A wider impact of relational family therapy on posttraumatic growth should be considered in future research.

Key words: *loss, bereavement, relational family therapy.*

Introduction

In today's society, grief is a phenomenon we often want to conceal. But grief is a feeling so deep and complex that its denial or dissociation may lead to psychopathological problems later in life (such as depression, or complicated grief, or panic disorder, or some other psychosomatic disease).

Grieving the loss of a close person is among the most painful experiences in human life.

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In the case of Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, God shows deep compassion for human sorrow although he knows that Lazarus will be revived. It shows how to get in touch with sadness deep inside in order to start a new life, to raise Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44).

The loss of a parent in childhood is a traumatic experience that can bring about several difficulties in adaptation and psychopathological problems during child's development (Cerniglia et al. 2014, 545).

Most of the studies have not considered the differences in adult functioning and religious life of an adult person after the unspoken loss is resolved in psychotherapy (relational family therapy).

This article will therefore present the relational family model of resolving trauma associated with the traumatic loss of a parent in childhood. In doing so, we will use the description of two cases. Both illustrate the connection between trauma and dissociation, with consequent painful sensations felt by our clients due to dramatic past experiences that have not been mourned.

In many ways, these cases are about relational trauma: in their very core, the losses were marked by traumatic events that resulted in the loss of significant relationships. Relational family therapist is therefore repeatedly faced with the challenge of how to approach a traumatized client without re-traumatizing her. Above all, this is the challenge of how to approach the newly discovered trauma with extreme sensitivity, address it and start to empathetically process it.

The experience of death is followed by bereavement, which is a common human response to any loss of change in life (Marques et al. 2013, 1214) (Rothschild 2000, 136) (Bowlby 1980, 192). Death is not the only loss that triggers the process of mourning; this process also accompanies changes such as divorce, chronic illness, the loss of a job or home, or disability. There is also the loss of our dreams or expectations. Every change in life occurs through loss, after all. All losses awaken sadness and grief is necessary, because only with the knowledge that one needs to let go one can transform this experience, own its essential parts, and allow oneself to move on (McGoldrick, 1997, 143). Life events which are sufficiently stressful and traumatic can result in the perception which is similar to mourning; so they are accompanied by symptoms such as shock, distress, anger and despair, as well as intrusive thoughts related to the traumatic event (Stroebe, Abakoumkin and Stroebe 2010, 89). Similarly to other stressors, stress caused by a loss may increase the probability of problems or deterioration of physical and mental health (Shear et al. 2011, 110).

When the current loss becomes one of a series of various losses in one's life (including the departure of one of the parents, moving places, and trauma and abuse) that have never been mourned and processed,

this can trigger a difficult reaction shown as a complication in mourning. Complications in grief affect approximately 6–18% of the bereaved adults (Marques et al. 2013, 1213). All these studies mainly discuss about the complexity of unmourned contents which consequently deeply affect interpersonal relationships that can become highly dysfunctional.

It is a true paradox that precisely through the loss in adulthood; children repeat the traumatic experience of loss, all because of their unconscious needs and desires to resolve a trauma.

It can be said that the likelihood that complications arise in mourning is affected not only by the current circumstances of death but primarily by the historical background of the individual's losses, e.g. whether the individual, before this latest loss, suffered from any anxiety disorder (Marques et al. 2013, 1214).

1. Family system and loss

The death of a family member strongly shakes the balance, creates large changes in the family structure and requires an entirely new family strategy. There is no common response to the death of a family member. The response of each family member and the family as a whole is determined by the context of the family. This context consists of several factors such as the nature of death, the position of the deceased in the family, the family history of previous losses; the family involvement in social, cultural, religious environment – family orientation. The time of death within the family life cycle is also important (Anderson and Sabatelli 2007, 123).

Families need to reorganize a new system without the deceased, which is an extremely complex and painful process. This may mean a shift in guardian or managerial functions, changes in social networks and family orientation shift (McGoldrick, 1997, 145).

As far as the death of a parent is concerned, studies show that the psychological profile of the surviving parent and the quality of the bond between surviving parent and bereaved child can impact the psychopathological symptoms of the pre-adolescent and adolescent (Cerniglia et al. 2014, 545) (Luecken 2000, 841).

Successful resolution of mourning depends on the ability of a family to deal with several important tasks: how each member of the family is able to accept the reality of death, if they can share the feelings of pain and sorrow, if the family system can be restructured as a response to the loss, if they can move towards future by forging new relationships and setting new goals (Anderson and Sabatelli 2007, 124). However, when families are unable to grieve, they remain frozen in time – they dream of the past, their feelings are in the present and they await the future with horror (McGoldrick, 1997, 133).

2. Childhood and loss of a parent

Many previous studies have identified the relationship between parental loss and psychopathology later in life. Even in developed countries with low adult mortality, parental death during childhood is not a rare event. But even more children are exposed to disrupted family relationships due to temporary separation or divorce. Permanent separation from a parent following divorce has been associated with worse psychological outcomes than parental death (Nicolson 2004, 1017) (Takeshi 2014, 404).

In one of the studies participants reporting a history of parental divorce show a significantly higher prevalence of psychiatric disorders, particularly alcohol and drug abuse disorders compared with control subjects with no such experience. Participants having experienced the death of a parent reported poorer overall health, but the prevalence of psychiatric disorders after 17 years of age was not significantly higher than that of the control subjects (Tebeka et al. 2016, 678).

At this point it is worth mentioning the results of a developmental psychology theory, according to which children between 6–9 years become aware that they are separated from their guardians and at the same time they depend on them. The loss of a parent or a guardian during this period when the child recognizes his dependence of carers can undermine the child's survival and create the experience of helplessness and sheer horror. According to development theory, from the child's perspective the loss of a guardian due to permanent separation equals the guardian's death: for the child, the psychological impact is the same in both cases.

Individual experiences of loss and mourning in childhood are individually unique and embedded into the context of social environment. According to research, the impact of such losses was reflected particularly in the areas of trust, relationships, self-image and sense of self-worth, loneliness and isolation, and the ability to express feelings (Ellis, Dowrick and Lloyd-Williams 2013, 57). Recent studies have even shown that due to the loss of parents, either because of death, or abandonment, or separation, in the brain of a child and later adult permanent lifelong impairment of the stress regulating system can occur (Preter, Klein 2014, 346).

Early experience of parental loss has long-term effects on HPA axis activity. Higher basal cortisol levels in healthy adult men who had experienced early parental death shows that disturbances of primary attachment in childhood can have long-term effect on the HPA axis and was associated with increased cortisol responses (Nicolson 2004, 1017) (Tyrka et al. 2008, 1148).

The effect of loss was moderated by levels of parental care; participants in this research who had been abandoned by parents and had experienced very low levels of care had attenuated cortisol responses. According to these findings, early parental loss induces enduring changes in neuroendocrine function (Tyrka et al. 2008, 1147).

In addition to that, genetically informative studies showed that genetic and environmental risk factors act and interact to influence liability to panic disorder, its childhood precursor separation anxiety disorder, and heightened sensitivity to CO_2, an endophenotype common to both disorders. Childhood adversities including parental loss influence both panic disorder and CO_2 hypersensitivity (Battaglia et al. 2014, 455).

The exact mechanisms through which loss and other difficult experiences exert these effects are as yet unknown, but may include sensitization to later life events and chronic stressors, mediated by some combination of neurobiological changes and detriments to psychological protective factors such as self-esteem, coping efficacy, and ability to maintain positive social relationships (Nicolson 2004, 1017).

Several decades of research link childhood parental loss with the risk of major depression and other forms of psychopathology. Neurobiological systems that regulate stress reactivity are likely involved in the vulnerability to psychiatric disorders after exposure to childhood parental loss (Tyrka et al. 2008, 1148).

However, these risk factors varied depending on the kind of loss, the parent involved, and the type of psychopathology.

In one study, authors examined the association between parental loss (any loss, death, and separation) during childhood and lifetime risk for seven common psychiatric and substance use disorders. They also examined the extent to which the influence of parental loss contributes to adult psychopathology. Parental separation was associated with a wide range of adult psychopathology, whereas parental death was specifically associated with phobia and alcohol addiction. Maternal and paternal separations were almost equally associated with most forms of psychopathology. The results in this study suggested that parental loss is connected with adult psychopathology, but parental separation had the strongest impacts on the risk of depression and drug abuse/addiction. According to findings in this study there is a suggestion that early parental separation has stronger and wider effects on adult psychopathology than parental death (Takeshi 2014, 404).

3. Posttraumatic growth and religion in adult life

Posttraumatic growth has gained more popularity in the recent years as an important concept to consider when working with traumatized youth and adults. Posttraumatic growth is defined as positive changes stemming from a traumatic experience. Posttraumatic growth is further understood to be the ability to create meaning from traumatic events. In other words, despite terror and pain, there is an opportunity for a traumatic experience to lead to positive growth (Tedeschi, Calhoun 2004, 15). Common domains of posttraumatic growth include changes in the

perception of self, enhanced interpersonal relationships, changes in life philosophy, altered religiousness and spirituality and new life directions.

In a study of traumatized adolescents authors estimate that adolescents with psychotherapeutic support showed reduction in many psychiatric symptoms compared with adolescents with no such treatment. So these results highlight the need of psychotherapeutic support for traumatised adolescents and their parents to prevent long-term psychological impairment and to develop posttraumatic growth (Vloet et al. 2014; 622, 624).

Posttraumatic growth is now being studied within the context of religion and spirituality. Research shows that positive religious coping, religious openness, readiness to face existential questions, religious participation and intrinsic religiousness are associated with posttraumatic growth (Nelson, 2011, 2). Research in this area is being conducted with varied populations of children, adolescents and adults, including children and adolescents experiencing chronic illness and parental divorce and adults who are returning from military deployments. While this research is still in its early stages, the impact that posttraumatic growth has on positive health outcomes warrants special attention. Exploration of the role that religion and spirituality play in individuals' everyday lives, especially following trauma exposure and experiences, is recommended by the authors (Tedeschi, Calhoun 2004, 16).

In a study of connection between attachment theory and religion they found that people with avoidant childhood attachment style reported significantly higher rates of sudden religious conversions during both adolescence and adulthood, irrespective of parental religiousness. These results suggest that God and religion may function in a compensatory role for people with a history of avoidant attachment; which means that God may serve as a substitute attachment figure (Kirkpatrick, Shaver 1990, 315).

4. The resolution of mourning according to the relational family therapy model

Relational family therapy emphasizes the importance of resolving affects in primary families. Affects are psychobiological states which are compulsively repeated throughout life in order to be resolved.

Traumatic experiences, such as various losses and abandonment, are recorded in neurobiological, somatic structure of an individual's mental structure, staying there, especially if no system member was able to accept the child exposed to trauma and help him process, recognize and regulate the affect caused by trauma. In such cases, traumatic experiences or dysfunctionally stored stressful experiences persist not only throughout this individual's life, but are transferred to next generations.

If loss is recorded in human psyche already in childhood (abandonment, abuse), in addition to heavy emotions accompanying present loss or death of a close person, unprocessed affects from the past are unintentionally reactivated and compulsively repeated (Gostečnik 2011, 6; Gostečnik 2012, 13). Unmourned and unprocessed losses in the past can affect one's functioning today. All losses and traumas that have not been processed can be transmitted to next generations and thus affect the functioning of an individual who has not even experienced them. Losses that are traumatic and, as such, often unprocessed, unmourned and non-integrated, are transmitted transgenerationally, as claimed by the author, as an established and statistical phenomenon (Cvetek, 2009, 145). When examining the multigenerational effect of loss, we can learn a lot about how families work, what happens when everything stops, and how to change these patterns. Loss can make survivors stronger, awaken their creativity, and encourage them to aim at achievements, or leave behind a devastating legacy which is even stronger when nobody has faced the loss. So we can follow the pattern of losses left by previous generations about which we know nothing (McGoldrick 1997, 133), while they live on (Gostečnik, 2011, 6).

5. The application of relational family therapy in resolving complications in bereavement

Case 1

The client came to therapy because of ongoing health-related agony. She was visiting a doctorbecause of the terrible fears that she would get sick and die and her father suggested that aconversation with a psychologist could prove very useful. Her whole body shuddered at this advice. She felt deep shame, anger and fear that her body literally betrayed her. But the doctor's words stayed with her, and finally she decided to visit a therapist.

After the initial time and punctuality related problems she eventually met the therapist.

The therapist soon sensed that the most fundamental dynamics of the most painful experiences of client's youth played out between the two of them. The client's father died in her childhood due to some strange complications that she had failed to grasp. An uncle entered her world – a person who in many ways started to play the role of her father. She felt as if her father was substituted. Even in therapy she initially made an agreement to meet one therapist, but then, due to a strange incident, agreed to work with another.

When she finally came to her initial session, she experienced deep shame and occasionally a poignant pain caused bybetrayal and deceit.

The client's body quickly began to reflect even deeper shame and concealed disgust which triggered a genuine repulsion reaction during therapy. Soon after the first few meetings, the therapist began to feel a slight irritation, and it did not take long to discover that the client had been sexually abused by her uncle, who had been a kind of a surrogate father. This led to further complications regarding the time of their sessions, because the client behaved in an extremely confused manner, as if she was re-entering a dangerous place where she would have no control. She feared what would be revealed there. However, the therapist with her empathetic approach created a safe space which the client passionately embraced, at the same time being utterly afraid of commitment.

Here the therapist started to feel extreme shame and irritation. When she regulated these feelings of shame and utter repulsion, the client slowly began to understand thatshe was irritated by the helplessness of a child who had been naked and ashamed, without the protection of a father. She had actually never mourned this loss and abuse. Soon she started to rememberthat she had missed her father, looking for a 'substitute' in her uncle who had been very friendly, as her mother had persuaded her. But the uncle soon began to sexually abuse her, and thus she lost the last protective figure. She could not confide in her mother, fearing that she would hurt and therefore lose her, too. She was convinced that her mother would not understand and believe her, and would even harshly reject her. She attempted to deeply suppress all of these painful, unresolved feelings, but her body spoke in an even more radical way, through the fears of getting ill. Actually, the fear of illness was a covert alliance and the only identification with her father, because he had been ill, too; her brain identified her father with illness. On the other hand, being ill was the only safe feeling, on the basis of which she could deny all the other fears, the feelings of shame, painful trauma, and being rejected. Over and over again, she concealed helplessness, which she hated most, withillness or the fear of it, and constantly turned to people who, because of her illness or fears, took care of her.

She also wanted the therapist to repeatedly tell her she would be okay: something she had never heard in her life in spite of her profound longing to hear this very sentence since her father's death. This was the fundamental need of security which she had never been able to admit to herself; and this need also led her to marriage. But as one would expect, her marriage was full of new fears and horror. Even her motherhood did not bring any resolution; with her husband as well as children she lived an alienated life, which she was deeply ashamed of.

In the therapeutic process, all these feelings of shame, deep rejectedness, and above all the abuse, kept surfacing. She has always wanted to give the impression that she is capable of managing everything by herself, that she did not need anyone, therefore she allowed nobody to enter

her world. Consequently, she let her husband to be present at therapy sessions, but only as an observer, watching from afar how his wife slowly tried to 'fix herself', as he quietly uttered during therapy several times.

Later, also due to her husband's frequent absences, she started to feel very unsafe during therapy. In every possible way she began to look for other sources of help, from esoteric to self-help groups. The therapist felt being substituted, at times rejected, discarded and betrayed, which she began to gradually address. This aroused the deep shame in the client, and slowly she managed to start talking about herself. The therapist understood that the feelings which the client triggered in her with substituting therapists were a central theme in the client's life. When they started to consistently address this theme, both felt that they were opening a new chapter which they would be able to continue.

Case 2

The client came to therapy due to depression, as she herself described her condition. She could not move forward in life, as if being stuck. Recently she has broken up with her boyfriend, which resulted in even deeper feelings of helplessness and sheer abandonment. Although she had long ago foreseen this breakup and did not feel a true connection in this relationship, when it actually happened, she suffered immensely and was constantly thinking about this person. She was not able to study for university exams, or to seek a job, even though she lived at home and was financially dependent on her parents. It was as if she hasfrozen her life.

In the beginning, the therapist saw helplessness, guilt and humiliating shame. Very soon they arrived at a deeply traumatic experience in the client's life: as a young girl, she had lost her father to whom she was attached on a very deep level.

During treatment, the client constantly gave the impression that she was to blame because she did not behave properly or decide correctly. Her vision and perception were not real; and sometimes she felt that she could have changed a lot had she reacted at the right time. Now and then she had irrational thoughts that could have prevented the death of her own father if she had reacted at the right time.

In therapy sessions, the therapist addressed strong injustice and shame for which the client could not understand where it came from, but with the therapist's help, she soon realized that whenher fatherhad died she had felt extremely exposed. The fear of a repeated exposure created defence mechanisms that did not allow anyone to enter her inner world. Therefore she skilfully turned every relationship to a caring one, which enabled herto feel control, while she did not need to confront her own vulnerability, which still pursued her in a rather catastrophic form.

In the therapeutic relationship, the therapist deeply felt this wounded little girl, overwhelmed by guilt and shame. When she and the client

started to address this, the client began to cry violently. Tears poured down her cheeks as if they would never stop, as if now for the first time she started to mourn the long repressed loss that she has never dared to address directly.

Shame and guilt were nothing but very strong defensive postures, which she cultivated to protect the deep feelings of being rejected and abandoned.

The therapist was aware that there were many steps, a long process of waiting for the two of them, which basically meant that together with the therapist, in a secure relationship, the client would be able to relive the most critical departures in her life, from her father to the boyfriend, friends, colleagues, etc.

And when anger emerged for the first time, the therapist knew that the client finally began the process of enteringher deep world. All distressing vibrations accompanying the loss of her father had been recorded in the fibers of her body where they had simply frozen.

These insights opened a whole new world for the client. Gradually, she could part from those heavy feelings and thus look more optimistically at the future.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that one of the most effective therapeutic approaches to unresolved trauma and unmourned contents, which are often darkened with abuses, is the therapist's deep, respectful and empathic attitude. We maintain that the relational family therapy model is especially applicative in these cases, since due to its basic organization, it addresses psycho-organic structures with implicitly stored organic memory, the memory of the trauma that has been dissociated. Such empathic and respectful attitude enables the client to first recapture old traumas. And then later on, which is also essential, through the relationship with the therapist, which is different from previous relationships, she can not only address old unresolved contents, but emerges from them on the basis of new experiences enabled by such a therapeutic relationship. Gradually, layer by layer, the therapist reveals the contents which are very fragile and vulnerable. We could compare the therapist to an archaeologist who has to touch the most fragile findings with utmost sensitivity.

This enables the client to find the way out of this sore situation of unmourned contents and to begin fully, or at least more fully, to live life and relationships that were previously covered with old, unresolved sediments. Through relational family therapy, the therapist could establish a new relationship at the point where this relationship had been lost because of the trauma.

From this point of view, even a very traumatic experience, such as the death of a close person, brings new, added value and finally gets a meaningful place in client's life and memory.

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VIOLENT UPBRINGING IN THE NAME OF FAITH

Parents are the first catechists who communicate faith to their children. Their educational mission is to create a positive family atmosphere where, by showing unconditional love, respect and sympathetic attitude, they help their child establish a positive relationship with God. When parents, due to their inability to regulate their aggressive impulses, use religion as a tool of educational manipulation, they can create a wrong image of God, simultaneously with their violent behaviour create feelings of unworthiness in a child, which s/he later manifests in various ways of harming his/her body. A multitude of harmful effects for the body and relationships often leads the survivor to seek help through therapy in adulthood. They are usually drawn to therapy due to their feelings of incompetence, unworthiness, shame, guilt, purposelessness and utter despair. Based on the clinical practice, this article will present the consequences of manipulative, violent upbringing, manifested in psychological and physical experience of survivors, intertwined with a desire for salvation. We want to broaden the understanding of these consequences in the light of the physical structure that is a precondition of the psychological structure, and show how an individual can construct a new attitude towards his/her own body with the help of his/her spirituality.

Key words: *childhood violence, body, psyche, image of God, spirituality, relational family therapy.*

Introduction

Corporal punishment of children is the most visible form of violence against children. It is defined as any punishment in which physical force is used with the intent to cause pain and discomfort to the child and a violation of children's rights to dignity and physical integrity.[1] For quite some time, the Council of Europe has been committed to a complete legal ban on corporal punishment of children in all member states. In Slovenia, it was not until 2008 that the organic Law on Prevention of Domes-

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[1]   Cf. Council of Europe http://www.coe.int/en/web/children/corporal-punishment

tic Violence was adopted; however, it did not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children, the latter being – on the basis of warnings – prohibited by the Law novel only eight years later, in 2016.[2] With this amending act, domestic violence was more precisely defined; and it prohibited any use of physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence by one family member against another, as well as corporal punishment of children, which ranks every physical, cruel or degrading punishment of children, or any action taken to punish a child with the elements of physical, psychological or sexual violence or neglect as educational methods. By enacting the ban on corporal punishment of children, various web forums witnessed heated debate, which was also covered by the media. Quite a few parents were upset, saying that no one will tell them how to raise their children and that they had also got a slap from their parents from time to time, which had caused no harm. This indicates that in Slovenia we are still far from attaining zero tolerance towards violence, which was previously demonstrated by an empirically supported research in which it was found that 40% of secondary school students were exposed to high levels of violence in their own families.[3] Violent upbringing also echoes in individuals who consider themselves to be religious, justifying their violence by faith.[4] These cases resonate strongly in the USA, where the ban on corporal punishment of children is not enacted. Moreover, in some states the law even allows parents to physically punish their children, while the provisions of the laws for the prevention of abuse and violence are not understood as the prohibition of all corporal punishment in child-rearing.[5] Some parents believe that certain passages from the Bible can be taken literally and use them to subordinate their child by means of violence.[6] They present violence to their children as God's will, by which they justify their educational methods, i.e. inability to control their own aggressive impulses. In addition to physical violence, they express emotional violence, because their religious beliefs instill the feel-

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[2]   Cf. ZPND-A, Official Gazette of RS, No. 68/16

[3]   Cf. K. Domiter Protner, *Sociološki vidiki izpostavljenosti slovenskih srednješolcev nasilju v družini in možnosti ukrepanja [Sociological aspects of Slovenian secondary school students exposure to domestic violence and possibilities for action]*, University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts, 2012, doctoral dissertation.

[4]   Cf. J. Price Wolf and N. Jo Kepple, *Individual-and County-Level Religious Participation, Corporal Punishment, and Physical Abuse of Children An Exploratory study*, Journal of Interpersonal Violence (2016) p. 1-12.

[5]   Cf. Council of Europe; Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children in dissertation Andrej Del Fabro, Normativno urejanje preprečevanja nasilja v družini v Sloveniji in primerjava z ureditvijo v ZDA *[Normative regulation of prevention of family violence in Slovenia and comparison with the United States]*, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2016.

[6]   Cf. C. G. Ellison and M. Bradshaw, *Religious beliefs, sociopolitical ideology, and attitudes toward corporal punishment*, Journal of Family Issues 30, (2009) 3, p. 320-322.

ings of fear, guilt and inadequacy in children, so that the child feels as if there is something wrong with him, he feels lonely, inadequate, and even cursed.[7] As an example, a passage from the Book of Sirach says, 'Whoever loves a son will chastise him often, that he may be his joy when he grows up'.[8] This is not only about child abuse but also about the abuse of God's word and faith per se. Media paid much attention to three children beaten to death by their parents[9] who supposedly have been 'influenced' by the book *To Train up a Child* [10] in which the authors publicly advocate the physical abuse of children and give detailed instructions on how and in what way to punish a child and train him/her to obedience and submission. For example, for a child under one year old, a willowy branch or a 30cm ruler is recommended; for older children, a larger branch or a belt. It is frightening that their book has been reprinted several times in twenty years and, according to the author, in 2015[11] more than 1.2 million copies were sold, and it has been translated into several languages. The Pearls find their excuse for physical violence, inter alia, in Proverbs (13, 24):[12] 'Whoever spares the rod hates the child, but whoever loves will apply discipline.' Individual passages from the Old Testament (OT) are thus taken from the context of the New Testament and interpreted literally, without counterbalance. Such "educational" approaches present God to the children as a sentencing judge who is cruel, but ignore God's mercy which has no limits. Unfortunately, the mentioned book is not an isolated case; however, at this point it is not our intention to present this type of literature, but rather the effects which such education has on the body, experiencing oneself and, of course, God.

1. Family relationships and violent punishing

The family is supposed to provide the child with a feeling of safety and acceptance, of belonging and of being loved. If the child is surrounded instead by abuse, trauma, violence, horror and intimidation, he will not feel safe, accepted and loved[13] and he will form insecure attachment

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[7]   Cf. D. Capps, *The child's song: The religious abuse of children*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1995, p. 51-53.

[8]   Cf. Društvo Svetopisemska družba Slovenije. *Sveto pismo Stare in Nove zaveze.* [Slovenski standardni prevod iz izvirnih jezikov]. Ljubljana: Svetopisemska družba Slovenije, 1997.

[9]   Cf. http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25268343

[10] Cf. M. and D. Pearl, *To train up a child*. No Greater Joy Ministries, Incorporated, 2013, p. 9.

[11] Cf. M. and D. Pearl, *To train up a child*. No Greater Joy Ministries, Incorporated, 2015.

[12] Cf. Društvo Svetopisemska družba Slovenije.

[13] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Relacijska paradigma in travma [Relational Paradigm and Trauma]*, Ljubljana: Brat Frančišek in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, 2008, p. 26-31.

to his parents.[14] A child's brain and his psychological structure develop through interpersonal relationships. Especially child's early relational experiences with parents or guardians primarily develop child's brains.[15] Violent parents instill long-lasting traumatic states with a negative effect. The right hemisphere is strongly activated, which points at the exaggerated perception and expression of unpleasant feelings.[16] A lot of the stress hormone cortisol is released, which reduces the volume of the corpus callosum and inhibits the integration between the left and right cerebral hemisphere.[17] In addition, the child's brain cells, as a result of the violence, will form different neural connections than they would have otherwise[18] with possible emotional, behavioural and dissociative consequences.[19] This affects child's future development and these consequences will follow him to adulthood. Later in life, he will unconsciously seek situations that will invoke and reproduce the primary atmosphere and the basic effects, as in his intrapsychic world, these indicate a sense of belonging and familiarity.[20]

2. Understanding the consequences of abuse to the body: self-harm

Childhood violence takes various forms – emotional, physical or sexual – and its consequences are devastating. Sexual abuse is the worst as it hurts the individual in his complex entirety and can have a particularly destructive effect on his whole emotional, bodily and cognitive dimension of experiencing and understanding.[21] Spanked children learn that their bodies are not their personal property and that their sexual areas are subject to the will of adults. Being struck on the buttocks can stimulate also sexual feelings. Some children who have been punished by spanking could form a connection between pain, humiliation and sexual arousal that endures for the rest of their lives.[22] Heymann reported in 1991

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[14] Cf. K. Lyons Ruth and D. Jacobvitz, Attachment disorganization: Unresolved loss, relational violence, and lapses in behavioral and attentional strategies,1999 in: Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*, Guilford, New York, p. 520-554.

[15] Cf. D. J. Siegel and T. Payne Bryson. *The whole-brain child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind*, Družinski in terapevtski center Pogled, 2013, p. 19-24.

[16] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Relacijska paradigma in travma,* p. 29.

[17] Cf. M. D. DeBellis, *Abuse and ACTH response to corticotropin releasing factor*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 159 (2002) 1, p. 157.

[18] Cf. J. A. Cohen, A. P. Mannarino and E. Deblinger, *Treating trauma and traumatic grief in children and adolescents*, Guilford Press, 2006, p. 14.

[19] Cf. M. D. DeBellis, *Abuse and ACTH response to corticotropin releasing factor*, p. 157-158.

[20] Cf. T. Repič, *Nemi kriki spolne zlorabe in novo upanje [Silent cries of sexual abuse and new hope]*, Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba in Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2008, p. 74.

[21] Cf. T. Repič, *Nemi kriki spolne zlorabe in novo upanje*, p. 34-35.

[22] Cf. D. Bakan, *Slaughter of the Innocents*. San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 1971, p. 113

that more the 1 million American children are spanked each year; near-
ly 20,000 of them are seriously injured as a result of the punishment.[23]
A research about the corporal punishment of children shows that it is
related to poorer mental health, the lack of trust and assertiveness, an
increase in the feeling of helplessness, humiliation[24] and anxiety.[25] It is
often linked with various behavioural problems, including higher levels
of immediate compliance and aggression and lower levels of moral inter-
nalization and mental health.[26] Furthermore, corporal punishment fails
to teach pro-social behaviors, and teaches that the use of aggression is
an acceptable option in social problem-solving.[27] Experiences of corporal
punishment are also statistically significantly connected with depressive
states in adulthood.[28] A child who was abused even by his parents can-
not turn to them in his distress and has no one to protect him. He has to
face his ongoing trauma alone. The consequences of such trying period
in his life often come in the form of inappropriate behaviour, alcohol and
drug abuse, aggression to others and himself, coupled with a desire for
someone to recognise his distress and provide him with the love for which
he yearns.[29] However, the parents often see only the child's inappropriate
behaviour and respond by punishing, criticising and blaming him. Grad-
ually, abused children begin to believe they are bad and worthless and
as such deserve to be mistreated. This opinion persists into adulthood.
Later, such individuals will often pick a strategy for dealing with their
early trauma, which then leads to additional problems. A typical exam-
ple is 'drowning' the trauma in alcohol, which in turn leads to addiction,
health issues, financial difficulties, conflicts with people close to them,
etc. Similar issues can be experienced by individuals who turn to eating
chocolate, or working too much and consequently neglecting their families
and themselves.[30] The most common psychological behavioural disorder

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[23] Cf. T. Heymann, *The unofficial US census*, 1991.

[24] Cf. M. R. Larsky, *Family genesis of aggression*, Psychiatric Annals, 23 (1993) p. 494-499.

[25] Cf. J. R. Cryan, *The banning of corporal punishment*, Dimensions of Early Childhood, 23 (1995) 3, p. 36-37.

[26] Cf. E. Thompson Gershoff, *Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behav-iors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review*, Psychological Bulletin, 128 (2002) 4, p. 539-579.

[27] Cf. S. R. Shaw and J. P. Braden, *Race and gender bias in the administration of corporal punishment*, School Psychology Review, 19 (1990) 3, p. 378-383.

[28] Cf. S. Poljak, *Ali lahko izkušnjo kaznovanja v vzgoji iz otroštva povezujemo z depresivnimi ali s tesnobnimi stanji v odraslosti? [Can an experience of a punishment episode in child-hood period be connected with depressive or anxiety conditions in adulthood?]*, Psihoro-ška obzorja, 21 (2012) 3 and 4, p. 29-36.

[29] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Neustavljivo Hrepenenje [Irresistable desire]*, Brat Frančišek in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, 2006, p. 418-453.

[30] Cf. C. Ainscough and K. Toon, *Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse Workbook: Practical Exercises For Working On Problems Resulting From Childhood Abuse*, Tuscon, Da Capo Press, 2000, p. 50-53.

stemming from childhood sexual abuse is self-harm – cutting the skin with knives, razor blades, scissors or any number of sharp objects from bottle caps to broken glass. It may also include burning the skin with cigarettes, matches, lighters, or even chemicals such as lye or acid, bruising by hitting limbs against hard surfaces, and eating disorders – anorexia and bulimia nervosa, which include starvation, self-induced vomiting, laxative abuse or burning calories by overexertion with no target weight in mind. They turn to these methods in an attempt to regain control and to stop being unconditionally available to someone".[31] In order to understand this, one should know that these individuals experienced intense feelings of powerlessness as children. These feelings only grew stronger if they turned to someone and were not believed. Thus they experienced fear and a sense of not being able to control the situation. The feeling of being victimised and unable to attain control can lead to panic attacks, anxiety, phobias and nightmares. The survivors can run from their fears and feelings of powerlessness by skipping classes, running away from home, or withdrawing emotionally. Emotional withdrawal can manifest itself in the form of feelings of utter emptiness, various forms of depression, blocks or retreating into fantasy worlds.[32] "If the response or impulse to self-harm becomes habitual, it can become an addiction. The behaviour escalates in the same way as other addictive behaviours such as drinking, gambling, and binge eating worsen and intensify. This self-imposed mental and emotional preoccupation takes the place of unsolvable emotional problems both past and present".[33]

3. Images of God

Experiencing God or the image of God reflects personal experience, in particular concrete experiences in the primary family. Particular experience with the father and mother contribute a major share to the creation of early childhood image of God.[34] Individuals' perception of God is associated with how they perceived their parents, but also how they perceive themselves and their self-esteem.[35] Punishing parents directly affected punishing / judging God images in their children.[36] They haven't felt their parents' acceptance and thus couldn't conceive a God who would accept

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[31] S. Levenkron, *Stolen tomorrows: Understanding and treating women's childhood sexual abuse*, New York – London, W. W. Norton & Company, 2008, p. 31.

[32] Cf. C. Ainscough and K. Toon, *Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse Workbook*, p. 39-40.

[33] S. Levenkron, *Stolen tomorrows*, p. 31-32.

[34] Cf. K. Frielingsdorf, *Podobe o Bogu: Kako povzročijo bolezen kako ozdravljajo [Images of God: how they cause illness - how they heal.]*, Ognjišče, Slomškova založba, 2016, p. 17.

[35] Cf. J. R. Buri and R. A. Mueller, *Psychoanalytic theory and loving God concepts: Parent referencing versus self-referencing*, The Journal of psychology, 127 (1993) 1, p. 17-27.

[36] Cf. J. R. Dickie et al., *Mother, father, and self: Sources of young adults' God concepts*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 45 (2006) 1, p. 57-71.

them[37]. Based on the research of life and religious stories, Frielingsdorf (2016) derived four most common negative images of God: God as a punishing judge who punishes, the God of death, God the bookkeeper, and the God of productivity who overwhelms.[38] Individuals who have been abused and rejected by their own families are particularly susceptible to the notion of God who is constantly judging, and thus the belief that they are disgusting, reprehensible and unworthy of love and attention grows stronger. Their religious truths are tailored accordingly (themes of punishment, deadly sin, doom) and then serve to further deepen the conviction they are unworthy of any form of forgiveness and deserve damnation. They always question the idea of forgiveness and love, in the sense that they do not apply to them, that they do not deserve them.[39] If they imagine a punishing God the Father, they can develop a problematic relationship with him. They can be imbued with fear and distrust, which later manifests as obedience, which can lead to a blind trust in authority and lack of personal responsibility. They can relate to the unrelenting God the Judge with self-deprecation, in order to escape punishment, suppressing the rage which they direct to themselves. They perceive God as violent parents in their childhood – as if they are not worthy of life and love and are not accepted by God. They may try to avoid the dangerous judging God by suppressing their fears and experience God as loving, but it does not take long until fears surface again.[40] The worst of all, however, is the betrayal of trust, since the latter is necessary for survival, the same as breathing and worship[41] which is strongly reflected in interpersonal relationships. But since the wounds were caused in a relationship, they can only be healed in one.[42]

4. A therapeutic relationship

These individuals usually seek therapy because of the consequences that are manifested in the present and which they do not attribute to childhood violence. "Many individuals in their late teens or older have forgotten their childhood abuse"[43]. The psyche suppresses the events but the feelings remain; improperness, inferiority, shame, disgust, and guilt. These individuals have low self-esteem and see themselves as someone who is bad, incompetent and unworthy. They perceive their bodies as ugly

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[37] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Neustavljivo hrepenenje,* p. 391-392.

[38] Cf. K. Frielingsdorf, *Podobe o Bogu,* p. 6.

[39] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Neustavljivo Hrepenenje,* p. 410-411.

[40] Cf. K. Frielingsdorf, *Podobe o Bogu,* p. 48-50.

[41] Cf. D. Allender, *The wounded heart: Hope for adult victims of childhood sexual abuse.* Tyndale House, 2016, p. 27.

[42] J. Lewis Herman, *Trauma and recovery,* Basic books, 1997, p. 133.

[43] C. Ainscough and K. Toon, *Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse Workbook,* p. 39-53.

and unclean; a powerful feeling of guilt joins in, triggered by self-harming behaviour, which they do not realise once served as a survival strategy that helps them to move the focus from the past trauma and to deal with certain feelings they had internalised as children in dysfunctional family relationships. These feelings demand resolution. This is manifested through a self-harming behaviour towards the body which is repeated again and again, with an unconscious hope that one day they will form a relationship in which they will be heard and understood. The therapist is well aware that the therapeutic relationship is extremely important, particularly in relational trauma, in order to bring back to life the complete traumatic image. The individual is given an opportunity to resolve, with the therapist being present, the essential elements of the trauma that stand in the way of healthy functioning. It is crucial that the individual in his relationship with the therapist first experiences a sense of respect towards his own body and realises that his body is still beautiful, clean and sacred, and that all disgust and shame are exclusively the result of abuse. The relational therapist keeps revisiting issues such as self-respect and dignity and repeatedly evaluates the body that has memorised everything and stored the most important information in its somatic, implicit memory. This information will enable the process of healing through its resounding power. For the relational therapist, body language is the most essential aspect in healing traumatic memories, which is why the body's dignity and respect must be restored[44]. When a client in therapy feels safe and respected, he can confront the images of God that he developed in childhood or that were communicated by his parents.

5. Spiritual aspects

"One of the fundamental values of a man is his religiousness, his relationship with God, which is primarily grace. Yet it is also a relationship, which could be seen through past relationships. The way of establishing and maintaining the relationship with God and the characteristics of this relationship will be at least partly based on the past relationships where the individual experienced some depth and contact with others, which was important for his survival. The quality of the attachment (either secure or insecure) parenting in childhood is often the basis for later relationships, where certain patterns of the past relationships will be repeated. The individual is included in these relationships, within them he looks for his identity and for the contact with important others including God."[45]

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[44] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Relacijska paradigma in travma*, p. 362-369.

[45] B. Simonič, *Antropološko-psihološke in teološke osnove prenašanja vrednot: zgodnja navezanost na starše in temelji religioznosti [Anthropological-psychological and theological basis of transmission of values: Early attachment to parents and foundations of religiosity]*, Bogoslovni vestnik, 66 (2006) 1, p. 123.

"Besides the sensory relationship of experiencing one's self and the other, there is the equally powerful experience of the sacred, the transcendent or the holy and the in-depth experience of the self and the other, the unstoppable longing represented by the I–You relationship and, of course, also the relationship towards God. The image of God that is felt in the longing of a religious, devout individual, the feeling of safety, protection and tender safe-guarding can be completely distorted if based purely on organic touch, and on the lack of early acceptance, or relationships that are not loving and safe. This is why, in later development, this individual could experience God as cruel, even evil, or as an abusive 'figure' playing with human destiny. He/she will take no interest in God or will develop an exceptionally careless and even hostile relationship towards him".[46] The Individuals who have been abused, neglected or rejected by their own families are particularly susceptible to the notion of God who is constantly judging, and thus the belief that they are disgusting, reprehensible and unworthy of love and attention grows stronger. Their religious truths are tailored accordingly (themes of punishment, deadly sin, doom) and then serve to further deepen the conviction they are unworthy of any form of forgiveness and deserve damnation. They always question the idea of forgiveness and love, in the sense that they do not apply to them, that they do not deserve them.[47] Example: A boy who was abused in childhood was constantly confessing the same sin, that of him attempting to take his own life with pills and alcohol. He felt guilty and he attributed these feelings to the suicide attempt. However, his guilt stemmed from a past trauma and consequently he saw God as condemning and himself as guilty and inadequate. Despite regularly attending mass, his own feeling of worthlessness and his self-contempt keep affirming his belief that others can't forgive him when it is in fact him who can't forgive himself. He sees himself as revolting and wicked until he chooses to accept the embrace of God, open himself to his mercy and let God resolve him from his sins.[48] Understanding the latter is important for all who encounter victims of abuse as religion plays an important part in dealing with distress. The religious coping is one of the ways in which people encounter and also resolve stressful or traumatic experiences. Theorists and researchers have discovered that the impact of faith in dealing with distress is often positive, which means that it helps people to accept the event in question, seek suitable solutions to improve the situation, and also to recover and grow from the consequences of stressful and traumatic events.[49]

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[46] C. Gostečnik, *Sexuality and the Longing for Salvation*, Journal of Religion and Health, 46 (2007) 4, p. 581.

[47] C. Gostečnik, *Neustavljivo hrepenenje*, p. 410-411.

[48] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Neustavljivo hrepenenje*, p. 412.

[49] Cf. B. Simonič et. al, *Religija kot vir pomoči pri soočanju s stresnimi in travmatičnimi dogodki (Religion as a source of help in coping with stressful and traumatic experiences*, Bogoslovni vestnik, 66 (2007) 2, p. 275-276.

Conclusion

From the moment of conception, the child's development is influenced by what is going on around him. Upon birth, he enters a certain emotional atmosphere where specific relationship patterns play out between him and his parents. Parents' attitude can influence the development of a child's brain, thus providing the best foundation for a healthy and happy life.[50] When parents, however, treat their children with violence, they leave indelible traces on their bodies, which are significantly related to adolescent and adult self-harm, including cutting, eating disorders and suicide attempts. These harmful behaviours turn into addiction. Often, children who have been abused report having lost faith in themselves, other people and even their religious belief. They tend to lean towards an image of God who is disapproving and judgmental. They have not felt their parents' acceptance and thus could not conceive a God who would accept them. This is why harmful behaviour towards one's body should be viewed as a call for help, a desire for salvation. It must be understood how a relationship can influence the way such individual sees himself and accepts his body, and last but not least, how he accepts God. In relational family therapy an individual is always treated within a context of the family in which he grew up. We are trying to find out and to understand the power of previous experiences in the present life. With the help of therapeutic programmes we reformulate inner emotional relational patterns of an individual, a couple or a family. We stress out the importance of respect and compassion in all intimate relationships. Parents are the ones who communicate faith through their behaviour, not using their words, and insofar as it is communicated through violence, the individual needs to confront the faith which was adopted through and communicated by his parents; the objective of this confrontation being a personal relationship with God, which includes making a decision and taking the responsibility of one's own life.[51]

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[50] Cf. D. J. Siegel and T. Payne Bryson. *The whole-brain child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind*, Družinski in terapevtski center Pogled, 2013, p. 19.

[51] K. Frielingsdorf, *Podobe o Bogu,* p. 23.

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THE ROLE OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS IN EXPERIENCING FAITH, SPIRITUALITY AND EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS

Abstract

Research shows that severe traumatic and stressful experiences can have serious negative consequences for survivors' psychological and spiritual health. On the other hand, research reveals the so-called posttraumatic growth that occurs after such events. Among important aspects of post-traumatic growth, authors describe positive changes in individuals' spirituality, religion and faith. Numerous studies also show that spirituality, religion and faith can be of great help in recovering from trauma. Healing elements in these areas, which can be found in literature, are primarily finding or transforming the purpose and meaning in life, and finding control and helping to forgive people who caused those traumas. Although literature offers some findings about the characteristics of an individual or his environment which can turn his posttraumatic development into something useful, further research is necessary which would enable individuals to more easily transform the negative characteristics of trauma into spiritual and positive ones for an individual.

Key words: *trauma, posttraumatic growth, spirituality, religion, faith.*

1. Traumatic experiences

Traumatic experience in the strict sense is understood as an experience when a person has been exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence.[1] Exposure could be direct, but it is considered that the experience was also traumatic if a person has witnessed such event, has been told about violent or unfortunate death of a close person, or has been repeatedly or extremely exposed to the details of a traumatic event (e.g. paramedics, police officers who are repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse, etc.), but not through the media, unless it is linked with one's job.[2] One can also suffer severe consequences of

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[1]   Cf. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5™ (5th Ed.)*, American Psychiatric Publishing, Arlington, VA, US, 2013, p. 271.

[2]   Cf. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5™ (5th Ed.)*, 271.

less stressful experiences (such as divorce or abandonment in childhood, for example), which some also call small 't' trauma.[3] Research indicates that, for example, divorce is very often at the top of the stress scale and can have serious consequences for all family members.[4] Affects, images, sensations and body reactions that are part of a traumatic experience can be very deeply imprinted in memory and can persist in its more or less original form for months, years or even decades after the event.[5] Various stimuli in one's environment, reminiscent of the trauma, can trigger re-experiencing the trauma in a very strong form. For example, for someone who was sexually abused, a simple friendly touch can trigger high levels of terror and agitation.

In such situations people's reactions are typically not in accordance with the real danger but rather in line with their past experience. Such a person does not live in the present but in the past. Wiesel[6] points out that time does not heal all wounds and that some of them remain open and sore. Traumatic experiences thus return again and again with all accompanying emotions, continuing to torture the victim's conscious and unconscious mind, until they are appropriately stored in memory, grieved and processed in a secure, healthy relationship.[7] Some recent studies show that some traumatic experiences (such as the experience of concentration camps) cause lasting consequences even in the next generation.

According to some research, as many as 60% of men and 50% of women experience a traumatic event at some point in their lives[8], but if we slightly expand the definition of traumatic experiences, almost everyone is exposed to them. Shalev[9] reports on a research of the likelihood to experience traumatic events, which among adult men in the USA reaches 97%.

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[3]   Cf. F. Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing: Basic Principles, Protocols and Procedures*, 2. ed., Guilford Press, New York, NY, 2001, p. 55.

[4]   Cf. N. Rijavec Klobučar - B. Simonič, *Risk Factors for Divorce in Slovenia: A Qualitative Study of Divorced Persons' Experience*, Journal of Family Studies (Online version), (2016) p. 1-16; B. Simonič - N. Rijavec Klobučar, *Experiencing Positive Religious Coping in the Process of Divorce: A Qualitative Study*, Journal of Religion and Health (Online version), (2016) p. 1-11.

[5]   Cf. B. A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress*, Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 1 (1994) 5, p. 6; B. A. van der Kolk - J. W. Hopper - J. A. Osterman, *Exploring the Nature of Traumatic Memory: Combining Clinical Knowledge and Laboratory Methods*, Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 4 (2001) p. 16.

[6]   Cf. E. Wiesel, *A Jew Today*, Random House, New York, NY, 1978, p. 222.

[7]   Cf. N. P. F. Kellermann, *The Long-Term Psychological Effects and Treatment of Holocaust Trauma*, Journal of Loss and Trauma, 6 (2001) p. 198.

[8]   Cf. A. N. Schore, *Dysregulation of the Right Brain: A Fundamental Mechanism of Traumatic Attachment and the Psychopathogenesis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 36 (2002) p. 9.

[9]   Cf. A. Y. Shalev, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Diagnosis, History and Life Course, in: D. Nutt, J. R. T. Davidson and J. Zohar (ed.) *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Diagnosis,*

Solomon and Johnson[10] report on studies which have shown that in the general population 89% of people experience a traumatic event and that 20% of the population have experienced a traumatic event only in the previous year. One could say that trauma is a part of our lives.

2. The consequences of trauma

Not everyone who has experienced trauma suffers serious consequences, but these are very frequent and numerous. Traumatic experience can greatly affect all levels of functioning: biological, psychological, social and spiritual[11].

Post-traumatic stress disorder is the most frequently mentioned result of unprocessed traumatic events. Approximately 10% of people at least once in their lives experience this disorder. It has four groups of symptoms. The first group comprises the imposition of burdensome memories and dreams, sometimes with dissociative reactions (flashbacks, intense and prolonged psychological distress or reactions when exposed to trauma stimuli). The person avoids stimuli (both internal and external), reminiscent of the trauma. Adverse changes in cognition and mood are possible (the person is not able to recall important aspects of the trauma, has negative beliefs about themselves or the world, distorted cognition about the cause or consequences (blaming themselves or others), persistent negative emotional state (terror, fear, shame, guilt etc.), decreased interest in important activities, feelings of alienation from others, persistent inability to experience positive emotions). The last group of symptoms encompasses visible changes in arousal and reactivity, which may contain reactive behaviour or angry outbursts, reckless or self-destructive behaviour, excessive vigilance / alertness, excessive alarm response, problems with concentration and sleep disturbances.[12]

Post-traumatic stress disorder is by no means the only result of traumatic experiences. There are many others. Researchers[13] mention the

Management and Treatment, American Psychological Association, Washington, 2000, p. 1-15.

[10] Cf. S. D. Solomon - D. M. Johnson, *Psychosocial Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Practice-Friendly Review of Outcome Research*, Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58 (2002) p. 948.

[11] Cf. B. A. van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score: Approaches to the Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, in: B. A. van der Kolk, A. McFarlane and L. Weisaeth (ed.) *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society*, Guilford Press, New York, NY, 1996, p. 214-241.

[12] Cf. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Dsm-5™ (5th Ed.)*, p. 271-272.

[13] Cf. R. Cvetek, *Bolečina preteklosti: Travma, medosebni odnosi, družina, terapija*, Društvo Mohorjeva družba, Celjska Mohorjeva družba, Celje, 2010; repr., 2010; C. Gostečnik, *Sodobna psihoanaliza*, Brat Frančišek in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana,

following: depression, increased aggression towards others and oneself, depersonalization, dissociation, compulsive behavioural repetition of traumatic scenarios, changes of value systems, and the decline in family and work functioning. Problems of victims of trauma may further include affective dysregulation, amnesia and dissociation, somatisation, distrust, shame, blame and hatred towards oneself, self-destructive behaviour. Many also have a feeling that they are permanently damaged and deprived of a normal future. In the study by Ferčak, Kutnar, Milovanovič, Verbič and Cvetek[14], we found a number of differences in experiencing emotions among those who have experienced trauma and those who have not.

Researchers also note changes in the brain after traumatic experiences. For example, the volume of the hippocampus in traumatized subjects with PTSD was significantly lower than in non-traumatized subjects, ranging from 8 to 26%.[15] Studies of brain anatomy in abused children have shown that the reduced overall size of their brain and the detriment of the development of the corpus callosum which enables the transfer of information between the two halves of the brain.[16]

Especially victims of the Holocaust studies suggest that the effects of trauma are 'transferred' to the next generation.[17] There is not enough research to understand how the traumatic experience is passed on from one generation to another, although the discovery of the DNA of cells as a source for such transfer opens great opportunities in medicine.[18]

Especially some types of interpersonal trauma (e.g. abuse and neglect during childhood) can have devastating consequences for victims through-

2002; C. Gostečnik, *Relational Family Therapy*, Routledge, New York, 2017; B. A. van der Kolk, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the Nature of Trauma, in: D. J. Siegel and M. F. Solomon (ed.) *Healing Trauma: Attachment, Mind, Body and Brain*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 2003, p. 168-195; R. Yehuda - A. C. McFarlane, *Conflict between Current Knowledge About Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Its Original Conceptual Basis*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 152 (1995) p. 12.

14 Cf. K. Ferčak - B. Kutnar - T. Milovanovič - P. Verbič - R. Cvetek, *Posledice travme pri posamezniku: Depresija, agresija, čustva in regulacija čustev*, unpublished data, Teološka fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2006.

15 Cf. D. J. Nutt - A. L. Malizia, *Structural and Functional Brain Changes in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 65 (2004) 1, p. 11-17.

16 Cf. D. Fosha, Dyadic Regulation and Experiential Work with Emotion and Relatedness in Trauma and Disorganized Attachment, in: D. J. Siegel and M. F. Solomon (ed.) *Healing Trauma: Attachment, Mind, Body, and Brain*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 2003, p. 282-321, here: p. 222.

17 Cf. D. Rowland-Klein, The Transmission of Trauma across Generations: Identification with Parental Trauma in Children of Holocaust Survivors, in: D. R. Catherall (ed.) *Handbook of Stress, Trauma, and the Family*, Brunner-Routledge, New York, NY, 2004, p. 117-136, here: p. 117-121.

18 Cf. K. Gow, Overview: Conceptualising Trauma as a Deeb Wound, in: K. Cow and M. J. Celinski (ed.) *Individual Trauma: Recovering Grom Deep Wounds and Exploring the Potential for Renewal*, Nova Science Publishers, New York, 2012, p. 3-13, here: p. 10.

out life. These may include problems in bonding, eating disorders, depression, suicidal behaviour, anxiety and anxiety disorders such as panic disorder, PTSD and generalized anxiety disorder, alcoholism, violent behaviour, mood disorders and others.[19] The fact that 40 to 70% of adult psychiatric patients were victims of child abuse is quite revealing.[20]

3. Spirituality and religion

Researchers are not unanimous in defining spirituality and religion / faith. The majority sees them as two different constructs with some overlapping aspects; in the context of research related to health, however, both constructs are often used alternatively.[21] When researchers separate them, they often conceptualize spirituality as an individual's understanding, experience and connection with what goes beyond (transcends) the individual's life[22] and as a private and personal experience that promotes one's growth.[23] Some researchers[24] link spirituality to the search for the sacred. It is a subjective experience of the sacred and refers to emotional connection or relationship with God, or the sacred, or the transcendent, which goes beyond self. It represents the essence of what one is and defines the individual's ability to transcend the present moment.[25] On the other hand, religiousness and faith are often defined as a commitment to the beliefs and practices supported by certain organized institutions. These may include praying, reading the Bible and regularly attending

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[19] Cf. D. M. Fergusson - J. L. Horwood, *Exposure to Interparental Violence in Childhood and Psychological Adjustment in Young Adulthood*, Child Abuse & Neglect, 22 (1998); J. D. Ford - P. Kidd, *Early Childhood Trauma and Disorders of Extreme Stress as Predictors of Treatment Outcome with Chronic Ptsd*, Journal of Traumatic Stress, 11 (1998); C. B. Nemeroff, *Neurobiological Consequences of Childhood Trauma*, Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 65 (2004), 1; B. D. Perry, *Traumatized Children: How Childhood Trauma Influencess Brain Development*, The Journal of the California Alliance for the Mentally Ill, 11 (2000), 1.

[20] Cf. J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, Basic Books, New York, NY, 1992, p. 88.

[21] Cf. J. M. Hulett - J. M. Armer, *A Systematic Review of Spiritually Based Interventions and Psychoneuroimmunological Outcomes in Breast Cancer Survivorship*, Integrative Cancer Therapies, 15 (2016) 4, p. 406.

[22] Cf. C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion, in: K. Gow and M. J. Celinski (ed.) *Individual Trauma: Recovering from Deeb Wounds and Exploring the Potential for Renewal*, Nova Science Publishers, New York, 2012, p. 53-72, here: p. 55.

[23] Cf. T. Bryant-Davis - M. U. Ellis - E. Burke-Maynard - N. Moon - P. A. Counts - G. Anderson, *Religiosity, Spirituality, and Trauma Recovery in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, Pofessional psychology-research and practice, 43 (2012) 4, p. 307.

[24] Cf. For example J. M. Hulett - J. M. Armer, *A Systematic Review of Spiritually Based Interventions and Psychoneuroimmunological Outcomes in Breast Cancer Survivorship*, p. 2.

[25] Cf. T. Bryant-Davis - M. U. Ellis - E. Burke-Maynard - N. Moon - P. A. Counts - G. Anderson, *Religiosity, Spirituality, and Trauma Recovery in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, p. 307.

services. Of course, these very activities aim at promoting personal and sacred feelings, beliefs and experiences, so they are strongly associated with spirituality; actually, spiritual experiences often occur within the context of organized religion. Some also distinguish between faith, which denotes more personal and private characteristics, and religiousness, although the terms are often used interchangeably.

Some data suggest that spirituality can be a special dimension of personality.[26]

Some authors[27] distinguish the intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation. In extrinsic religion the main objective should be to provide comfort and safety. Practices of extrinsic religion are guided not as much by individual's religion but rather encouraged through the experience of guilt, anxiety and / or external sources of pressure. Extrinsic religious coping is less effective than intrinsic orientation. Research shows that extrinsic orientation is associated with the perceived threat and a feeling of inability to cope with a situation in addition to a reduced feeling that there is a potential for growth from the stressful experience.[28] Intrinsic religiousness is an internalized understanding of who the transcendent being is; understanding on the basis of faith, hope and love for others, God and ourselves. It includes altruistic motivation that is closely linked to the search for meaning and significance, with the ultimate goal in these two. Intrinsic religiosity has demonstrated a positive role in the healing process, as well as a predictor of the decrease in depression over time.[29]

Psychology and especially psychotherapy usually did not use to include spiritual aspects[30], which is not in accordance with the research that has shown that the spiritual beliefs and religious behaviours contribute to better coping with disease as well as to physical health.[31] American Psychiatric Association has called for greater sensitivity for spiritual matters in psychiatric practice.[32] One of the most recognized experts in the field of

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[26] Cf. J. M. Hulett - J. M. Armer, *A Systematic Review of Spiritually Based Interventions and Psychoneuroimmunological Outcomes in Breast Cancer Survivorship*, p. 2.

[27] Cf. e.g. K. I. Pargament - C. L. Park, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice*, Guilford Press, New York, NY, 1997.

[28] Cf. T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, Canadian Psychology Psychologie Canadienne, 46 (2005) 2, p. 92.

[29] Cf. T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 92.

[30] Cf. J. J. F. O'Rourke - B. A. Tallman - E. M. Altmaier, *Measuring Post-Traumatic Changes in Spirituality/Religiosity*, Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 11 (2008) 7, p. 726.

[31] Cf. J. A. Sigmund, *Spirituality and Trauma: The Role of Clergy in the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, Journal of Religion and Health, 42 (2003) 3, p. 222.

[32] Cf. American Psychiatric Association, *American Pychiatric Association Practice Guidelines for Psychiatric Evaluation of Adults*, American Journal of Psychiatry Supplement,

death and loss of family members, Monica McGoldrick, and her colleague Froma Walsh[33] argue that it is important that therapists do not exclude the spiritual dimension of the experience of death, dying and loss from their therapeutic work and that they, if necessary, consult with the pastoral counsellors, or even refer individuals to them. They also believe that all cultures throughout history have approached spirituality as a strong source to support life, so it is not understandable why we should neglect this useful source today.

Renowned researchers and experts in psychotherapy, such as McCullough et al.[34], even argue that the spiritual needs are one of the core areas where the self operates (in addition to biological, psychological / emotional, sexual and social needs).

4. The importance of spirituality and religiousness for mental and physical self

Religious faith and spiritual life are essential part of human nature; they are related to hope, psychosocial resilience, religious values and generational wisdom, among others.[35] Numerous studies provide evidence of a positive link between religiousness and spirituality on the one hand and healthy psychosocial adaptation on the other.[36] Faith is associated with happiness, hope and optimism, altruism, marital satisfaction, it establishes positive social norms that promote acceptance, solidarity and validation by others, and provide for healthier life styles.[37] Intrinsic religiosity, in particular, is associated with an internal locus of control, sociability, a sense of well-being, responsibility, self-control, tolerance, peak experiences, greater confidence, and above all a more profound sense of

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152 (1995) 11, p. 29.

[33] Cf. F. Walsh - M. McGoldrick, When a Family Deals with Loss: Adaptational Challenges, Risk, and Resilience, in: D. R. Catherall (ed.) *Handbook of Stress, Trauma and the Family*, Brunner-Routledge, New York, NY, 2004, p. 393-415, here: p. 405.

[34] Cf. L. McCullough - N. Kuhn - S. Andrews - A. Kaplan - J. Wolf - C. L. Hurley, *Treating Affect Phobia: A Manual for Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy*, Guilford Press, New York, NY, 2003, p. 247-249.

[35] Cf. N. Abi-Hashem, Religious and Pastoral Responses to Trauma, in: C. R. Figley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2012, p. 542-544, here: p. 542.

[36] Cf. T. Bryant-Davis - M. U. Ellis - E. Burke-Maynard - N. Moon - P. A. Counts - G. Anderson, *Religiosity, Spirituality, and Trauma Recovery in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, p. 308; C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, *Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion*, p. 56; J. J. F. O'Rourke - B. A. Tallman - E. M. Altmaier, *Measuring Post-Traumatic Changes in Spirituality/Religiosity*, p. 726.

[37] Cf. C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, *Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion*, p. 56; G. R. Schiraldi, Resilience, Growth and Thriving, in: C. R. Figley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2012, p. 549-553, here: p. 552.

purpose and the meaning of life.[38] Religious activities may give individuals a sense of community, to a certain extent they prevent involvement in risky behaviours (drinking, drug use, smoking, early and risky sexual pursuits) and self-destructive behaviour (e.g. suicidal)[39]; they also give a sense of meaning, self-esteem, coherence and purpose in life; and the relationship with God or a holy being can promote happiness by reducing stress and promoting positive coping strategies.[40]

A review of previous studies regarding adolescents by Vis and Battestone[41] summarizes the research and recognizes that an adolescents' positive relationship with God influences his/her well-being; adolescents who believe in God will less likely consume alcohol or engage in binge drinking; Christianity, in particular, influences adolescent's well-being through expanded adolescent's health support network, emotional functioning, coping and avoidance of risky behaviour. Similarly, an adolescent's positive relationship with God can influence her or his ability to recover from adversity and trauma. Klobučar[42] in her research found out the great importance of spirituality in helping spouses in the transition to parenthood.

5. Traumatic experiences and a negative impact on spirituality / faith

Today, with the development in understanding the impact of traumatic events on the whole human being, communities and relationships, we have reached even beyond integrative biopsychosocial approaches – to theories that integrate the role of spirituality and the creation of meaning and purpose, and we search for strengths, resources and resilience.[43] In this context, we see individuals as bio-psycho-socio-spiritual beings,

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[38] Cf. C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, *Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion*, p. 56.

[39] Cf. G. R. Schiraldi, *Resilience, Growth and Thriving*, p. 552.

[40] Cf. T. Bryant-Davis - M. U. Ellis - E. Burke-Maynard - N. Moon - P. A. Counts - G. Anderson, *Religiosity, Spirituality, and Trauma Recovery in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, p. 308-309.

[41] Cf. J.-A. Vis - A. Battistone, *Faith-Based Trauma Intervention: Spiritual-Based Strategies for Adolescent Students in Faith-Based Schools*, Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work, 33 (2014) 3/4, p. 220.

[42] Cf. N. Rijavec Klobučar, *The Role of Spirituality in Transition to Parenthood: Qualitative Research Using Transformative Learning Theory*, Journal of Religion and Health, 55 (2016) 4, p. 5-13.

[43] Cf. For example Karen W. Saakvitne, Foreword: Psychological Interventions for Victims of Disaster and Trauma, in: Laura Barbanel and Robert J. Sternberg (ed.) *Psychological Interventions in Times of Crisis*, Springer Publishing Co, New York, NY, 2006, p. xix-xxiii, here: p. xx.

where spirituality refers to the framework of meaning through which we experience the world in spiritual dimension.[44]

Research has found both positive and negative effects of traumatic experiences on spirituality and religious faith. Numerous negative consequences described in the initial section of this article are certainly also reflected in relation to God, spirituality and religion. The lack of control in certain cases of trauma, combined with the violent nature of the event, triggers the process of existential questioning in victim. As part of their search for meaning, many victims of trauma re-evaluate their spiritual beliefs in light of traumatic experience.[45] Psychological trauma can be conceptualized as an existential injury, a wound in spirit – as an attack on the self and self-concept, distortion in the search for a meaningful purpose, career, relationships and personal development.[46] It undermines the basis for our existence, seriously changes how we see the world and how we make sense of it – it destabilizes our frames of meaning, our spiritual and existential foundations.[47] Because trauma often contains the threat of death and brings the awareness that our life is finite, it may cause high levels of horror and distress, excruciating terror and an overpowering fear of annihilation.[48] On the other hand, Frankl[49] and Yalom[50], for example, note that clients with trauma experience the level of death awareness which also allows them to more clearly and fully experience joy, meaning, value and purpose of life. After the trauma some individuals more fully experience and appreciate life; for example, even food has better taste and smell, friendships are stronger, as are connections with God and religious community.[51]

There is a decreasing number of studies specifically addressing the changes in spirituality and faith after a traumatic experience. Schiraldi[52] reports that at the beginning in about 30% of trauma survivors their faith

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[44] Cf. L. Corbett - M. Milton, *Existential Therapy: A Useful Approach to Trauma?*, Counselling Psychology Review, 26 (2011) 1, p. 63.

[45] Cf. L. I. McCann - L. A. Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor: Theory, Therapy, and Transformation*, Brunner/Mazel Psychosocial Stress Series, No 21, Brunner/Mazel, Philadelphia, PA, 1990.

[46] Cf. N. Thompson - M. Walsh, *The Existential Basis of Trauma*, Journal of Social Work Practice, 24 (2010) 4, p. 378.

[47] Cf. N. Thompson - M. Walsh, *The Existential Basis of Trauma*, p. 379.

[48] Cf. J. P. Wilson, Trauma Archetypes and Trauma Complexes, in: J. P. Wilson (ed.) *The Posttraumatic Self: Restoring Meaning and Wholeness to Personality*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 157-209, here: p. 171.

[49] Cf. V. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, New American Library, New York, NY, 1969.

[50] Cf. I. D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, Basic Books, New York, NY, 1980.

[51] Cf. S. Claire McCreary DeMoss, Spiritual and Religious Growth, in: C. R. Figley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Trauma : An Interdisciplinary Guide*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2012, p. 646-648, here: p. 647.

[52] Cf. G. R. Schiraldi, *Resilience, Growth and Thriving*, p. 552.

weakens – they feel numb, angry, cynical and / or rejected. For example, the survey which included sexually assaulted women[53] revealed that two weeks after the event, only 25% reported positive changes with regard to the spiritual well-being, and 51% experienced negative changes. Similarly, 40% reported positive changes in their feeling of proximity to God, and 34% reported negative changes. Negative changes are usually related to the question of how God could let the event happen, or to experiencing the event as punishment from God. Trauma may negatively impact the belief in the good in people and the safety and honesty in the world.[54] After one year from the sexual assault, positive changes in spirituality / religion were reported in 40% and negative changes in 32%[55]. As far as the feeling of proximity to God, after two months positive changes were reported in 46%, and after one year in 40%. 17% reported negative changes in the feeling of proximity to God after one year. Negative changes were associated with increased distress and depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. The survey by Falsetti and Resick[56] found that 16.7% of individuals who have experienced a variety of powerful stressors (e.g. a natural disaster, physical attacks), reported spiritual decline. The survey examining the responses of women in difficult situations, such as a chronic disease and a lack of resources,[57] found that 30.2% had a stronger sense of meaning and purpose, and 8.5% of people experienced reinforced spirituality and faith in God. It should be understood that spiritual growth is not simple, fast, or necessarily linear.[58]

As far as negative consequences on one's spirituality, victims reported a feeling that God in whom they believed and trusted, betrayed or left them.[59] In some cases they experienced not only that God had left them but that he had betrayed them and laughed in their face.[60] Victims often ask questions such as 'Why me,' 'How could God let this happen' and 'Where was God'. Traumatic events can also negatively impact pre-existing religious and / or spiritual beliefs when people respond to trauma by

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[53] Cf. P. Frazier - A. Conlon - T. Glaser, *Positive and Negative Life Changes Following Sexual Assault*, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 69 (2001) 6, p. 1048-1055.

[54] Cf. P. Frazier - A. Conlon - T. Glaser, *Positive and Negative Life Changes Following Sexual Assault*, p. 1053.

[55] Cf. P. Frazier - A. Conlon - T. Glaser, *Positive and Negative Life Changes Following Sexual Assault*, p. 1048-1055.

[56] Cf. S. A. Falsetti - P. A. Resick - J. L. Davis, *Changes in Religious Beliefs Following Trauma*, Journal of Traumatic Stress, 16 (2003) 4, p. 395.

[57] Cf. A. F. Abraído-Lanza - C. Guier - R. Marie Colón, *Psychological Thriving among Latinas with Chronic Illness*, Journal of Social Issues, 54 (1998) 2, p. 405-424.

[58] Cf. G. R. Schiraldi, *Resilience, Growth and Thriving*, p. 552.

[59] Cf. K. Gow, *Overview: Conceptualising Trauma as a Deeb Wound*, p. 6.

[60] Cf. K. Gow, *Overview: Conceptualising Trauma as a Deeb Wound*, p. 6.

examining and / or rejecting previously held commitments.[61] Some feel that God has disappointed and left them, and become bitter, life for them no longer has any meaning and there are few things in which they could still believe at all. Others who are struggling with survival guilt may feel that their sins are so great that God will never forgive them. This affects the individual's sense of protection (which represents security) by God, the sense of belief in God's constancy (which is trust), spiritual values (self-image) or individual's sense of coherence (representing intimacy) of a higher power.[62] Bryant-Davis et al.[63] claim that trauma can make it difficult, for example, for children and adolescents to maintain their religious beliefs, believing that their God or divine being is rough, unfair and distant or not very loving when he let the trauma occur. In many religions in which God is omnipotent, for example, there is a potential danger of understanding that one has been punished for their sins or the sins of their ancestors.[64] Children, in particular, who have experienced abuse may have difficulties in spiritual trust, which was formed at the beginning of their lives, and this may lead to prejudiced views of and relationship with the divine being, which can lead to shame, guilt and negative self-image.[65] In the study we conducted[66] we often observed anger towards God and complaints to God, such as 'I complained to God why he let this happen. I was angry with him.' But we can assume that in some cases of processing trauma, the ability to express anger can be helpful.

In case of a negative view of God's role in a traumatic event, a person lacks support stemming from spiritual connection; moreover, one typically bears additional burden, feeling rejected and / or punished.[67] Negative relationship with God (e.g. punishment, withdrawal) could further be linked to an individual experiencing more distress in stressful situations – for example, one stays in hospital for a prolonged time and has difficul-

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[61] Cf. J. J. F. O'Rourke - B. A. Tallman - E. M. Altmaier, *Measuring Post-Traumatic Changes in Spirituality/Religiosity*, 2. 3503

[62] Cf. L. I. McCann - L. A. Pearlman, *Psychological Trauma and the Adult Survivor: Theory, Therapy, and Transformation.*

[63] Cf. T. Bryant-Davis - M. U. Ellis - E. Burke-Maynard - N. Moon - P. A. Counts - G. Anderson, *Religiosity, Spirituality, and Trauma Recovery in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, p. 309.

[64] Cf. S. C. M. DeMoss, *Spiritual and Religious Growth*, p. 647.

[65] Cf. T. Bryant-Davis - M. U. Ellis - E. Burke-Maynard - N. Moon - P. A. Counts - G. Anderson, *Religiosity, Spirituality, and Trauma Recovery in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, p. 309.

[66] Cf. M. Čuk - R. Cvetek, *Duhovnost v času stiske*, unpublished data, Teološka fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2006, podatki.

[67] Cf. R. Schwarz, *Tools for Transforming Trauma*, Brunner-Routledge, New York, NY, 2002, p. 10.

ties adapting.[68] A person with a negative view of God's role is extremely vulnerable to the downward spiral and may react with anger, which is reflected in the relation to God and to himself. The fear associated with trauma becomes part of a more general fear that he is left alone in a hostile universe.[69] Negative religious coping pattern resulting from the frightful relation to God is linked to an anxious view of the world and to complications in searching for the meaning of life.

Numerous studies, however, note the possibility of the positive impact of traumatic experiences on spirituality and faith / religiousness, often in the context of post-traumatic growth. Robinson[70] summarizes how a traumatic experience can impact faith and spirituality, describing three basic responses: 1. Some lose faith in a good God who allowed such tragedy, 2. Some retain faith, trust in divine providence regardless of the circumstances and find solace in this faith; 3. Others find new faith and deep spirituality, which helps them compensate disillusionment with natural or social environment, which has caused trauma, with the hope in a higher power or the future, especially the one after death.

6. Posttraumatic growth

Post-traumatic growth is an important human experience for those who are interested in spirituality and religious faith; it is also an important component of understanding trauma. Spirituality and religiousness are significantly related to post-traumatic growth. Religious beliefs may develop from this very trauma.[71] The trauma challenges whatever assumptions they may have about themselves, about the course of their lives, their expectations about the future, the importance and the meaning of their lives and the world in which they live.[72] So people need to rethink what they believe in light of what happened to them.

Researchers report high growth rates after many very stressful and traumatic events, including illness, bereavement, sexual assaults, mili-

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[68] Cf. T. G. Belavich - K. I. Pargament, *The Role of Attachment in Predicting Spiritual Coping with a Loved One in Surgery*, Journal of Adult Development, 9 (2002) 1, p. 19-27; T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 94.

[69] Cf. R. Schwarz, *Tools for Transforming Trauma*, p. 10.

[70] Cf. S. Robinson, Psychospiritual Impact of Disaster, in: C. R. Figley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2012, p. 507-508, here: p. 507.

[71] Cf. J. J. F. O'Rourke - B. A. Tallman - E. M. Altmaier, *Measuring Post-Traumatic Changes in Spirituality/Religiosity*, p. 1.

[72] Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, Growth, Posttraumatic, in: C. R. Figley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2012, p. 297-299, here: p. 298.

tary conflicts, and even terrorist attacks.[73] The research of the effects of traumatic experiences related to the process as well as to the result in which victims of trauma reject bad aspects of trauma and manage to continue to develop and grow, has established terms such as stress-related growth, resilience, flexibility and, most often, post-traumatic growth. Tedeschi and Coulhan[74] define post-traumatic growth as a positive psychological change experienced as a result of struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. Tedeschi, Park and Calhoun[75] determine post-traumatic growth as a beneficial change in cognitive and emotional life, which may have behavioural implications. The term 'growth' is used when a person has further developed in comparison to his previous stage of adaptation, psychological functioning or awareness of life.[76]

Tedeschi[77] argues that this is more common than post-traumatic stress disorder or some other psychiatric disorder. Research shows that 40 to 70% of people who experience a traumatic event, later report some form of benefit from their experience.[78] So far, research has focused on the negative psychological and emotional consequences of trauma, but more and more literature is moving towards a more positive outcome of trauma.[79] This trend has recently also corresponded with the trend of positive psychology.[80]

Positive changes are described in various areas, Tedeschi and Caulhoun[81] mention five: relationships with others, new opportunities (e.g. new interests), personal strengths, spiritual growth and appreciation of life. Some other authors[82] reported changes in seven areas: affect regu-

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[73] Cf. C. L. Park - V. S. Helgeson, *Introduction to the Special Section: Growth Following Highly Stressful Life Events: Current Status and Future Directions*, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 74 (2006) 5, p. 791.

[74] Cf. R. G. Tedeschi - L. G. Calhoun, *Target Article: "Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence"*, Psychological Inquiry, 15 (2004) 1, p. 1.

[75] Cf. R. G. Tedeschi - C. L. Park - L. G. Calhoun, Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Issues, in: Richard G. Tedeschi, Crystal L. Park and L. G. Calhoun (ed.) *Posttraumatic Growth: Positive Changes in the Aftermath of Crisis*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, London, 1998, p. 1-22, here: p. 3.

[76] Cf. R. G. Tedeschi - C. L. Park - L. G. Calhoun, *Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Issues*, p. 3.

[77] Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, *Growth, Posttraumatic*, p. 297.

[78] Cf. C. Woodward - S. Joseph, *Positive Change Processes and Post-Traumatic Growth in People Who Have Experiences Childhood Abuse: Understanding Vehicle of Change*, Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 76 (2003) 3, p. 268.

[79] Cf. R. J. Fazio - L. M. Fazio, *Growth through Loss: Promoting Healing and Growth in the Face of Trauma, Crisis and Loss*, Journal of Loss & Trauma, 10 (2005) 3, p. 225.

[80] Cf. M. E. Seligman - M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Positive Psychology: An Introduction*, American Psychologist, 55 (2000) 1.

[81] Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, *Growth, Posttraumatic*, p. 297.

[82] Cf. For example S. Armeli - K. Cimbolic Gunthert - L. H. Cohen, *Stressor Appraisals, Coping, and Post-Event Outcomes: The Dimensionality and Antecedents of Stress-Related*

lation, religiousness, treating others, self-understanding, belongingness, personal strength, optimism and life satisfaction. Salter and Stallard[83] in summarizing their research identify three specific forms of positive growth: changes in self-perception, changes in relationships with others, and changes in the philosophy of life, basic values and goals. Changes in self-perception consist of three elements. The first is that the person renames her/himself from victim to survivor and begins to realize that survivors have special status and power. The second element is a sense of increased self-confidence, which can be characterized by thoughts such as, 'If I survived that, I can handle anything.' The third element is a sense of vulnerability, characterized by, for example, an increased awareness of one's own mortality and therefore the preciousness and fragility of life: this can promote positive change in interpersonal relations, appreciation for life and setting priorities. Another form of growth is associated with interpersonal relationships. Trauma survivors have learned to disclose more about their feelings or express themselves more openly. They report, for example, that they became closer with their spouse and that their marriage grew stronger after the traumatic event. It was also shown that vulnerability increased and enhanced empathy, compassion and altruism in difficult situations. The third form of growth is characterized by a change in life priorities, appreciation of life in general and appreciation of smaller things in life, by a reflection on and appreciation of the meaning and purpose of life and inevitable death, spiritual development and growth of wisdom. The feeling that one was spared death and should take advantage of a second chance in life, which has been given, may lead to changes in individual priorities and a re-evaluation of what is important and appreciated in life[84].

Regarding post-traumatic growth it is, however, necessary to mention that some people experience post-traumatic growth and some do not; that there are different paths of growth over time and that the kind of growth among trauma survivors can vary.[85] Some research suggests that women report posttraumatic growth slightly more often than men, as well as those who use the more active and less avoidant coping processes.[86] It seems that post-traumatic growth does not necessarily free an individual from distress (such as post-traumatic stress disorder) that is associated with a life crisis; obviously, growth and distress are more

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Growth, Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 20 (2001) 3, p. 368-369.

[83]   Cf. E. Salter - P. Stallard, *Posttraumatic Growth in Child Survivors of a Road Traffic Accident*, Journal of Traumatic Stress, 17 (2004) 4, p. 337-340.

[84]   Cf. E. Salter - P. Stallard, *Posttraumatic Growth in Child Survivors of a Road Traffic Accident*, p. 337-340.

[85]   Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, *Growth, Posttraumatic*, p. 298.

[86]   Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, *Growth, Posttraumatic*, p. 299.

or less mutually independent and can co-exist.[87] It is also necessary to distinguish between post-traumatic growth and resilience, in which the person usually does not even experience any major crisis or questioning their core beliefs.[88]

7. Spirituality / faith helps trauma recovery

While coping with heavier stress and traumatic experience, people often ask questions about spirituality[89] and turn to religion. Many people think about spirituality and the process of extracting significance and positivity from trauma and suffering can be seen as a spiritual process which is not necessarily linked to religion or conscious processing.

Spirituality and religion are a particularly important source of help when individuals face hardship that is particularly challenging, and their ability to address the situation is limited.[90] The more serious event in terms of the consequences for the person, the more likely it is that spirituality-related questions are activated.[91] Numerous studies have also shown, for example, that religion is particularly effective in addressing the situation of loss or serious illness,[92] provided that experiencing God is positive and not negative, as described above. When an individual is faced with a serious, even fatal disease, it can be expected that the religious coping (or faith) will often be strongly awakened. This is particularly noticeable in the case of serious illness, such as, for example, cancer.[93] Having such a disease, a person quickly begins to wonder about death and its inevitability. For cancer patients, it is quite typical that they do not blame God but rather trust that God will help them to get healthy.[94]

Within this positive sample of coping we find methods deriving from a secure relationship with God, a sense of connection with him and the

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[87]   Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, *Growth, Posttraumatic*, p. 299.

[88]   Cf. R. G. Tedeschi, *Growth, Posttraumatic*, p. 299.

[89]   Cf. J. A. Sigmund, *Spirituality and Trauma: The Role of Clergy in the Treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*, p. 222.

[90]   Cf. J. E. Kennedy - R. C. Davis - B. G. Taylor, *Changes in Spirituality and Well-Being among Victims of Sexual Assault*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37 (1998) 2, p. 325-326; R. W. Hood - P. C. Hill - B. Spilka, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 4. ed., Guilford Press, New York, NY, 2009, p. 460.

[91]   Cf. R. Schwarz, *Tools for Transforming Trauma*, p. 10.

[92]   Cf. E. L. Idler - M. A. Musick - C. G. Ellison - L. K. George - N. Krause - M. G. Ory - K. I. Pargament - L. H. Powell - L. G. Underwood - D. R. Williams, *Measuring Multiple Dimensions of Religion and Spirituality for Health Research: Conceptual Background and Findings from the 1998 General Social Survey*, Research on aging, 25 (2003) 4, p. 343.

[93]   Cf. J. E. Taylor, *Factors Associated with Meaning in Life among People with Recurrent Cancer*, Oncology Nursing Forum, 20 (1993) 9, p. 1399-1405.

[94]   Cf. S. C. Johnson - B. Spilka, *Coping with Breast Cancer: The Roles of Clergy and Faith*, Journal of Religion and Health, 30 (1991) 1, p. 21-33.

members of the religious community, the positive belief that one can find a meaning in life and learn something.[95] In positive coping we can see a cooperative, sympathetic relationship with the divine and an effort to let go of anger, to find forgiveness and move towards growth.[96] For positive forms of religious coping it is typical that people perceive God as a partner who can help in time of distress. They can turn to him for help, guidance, love and strength, and as a result, their hope and the feeling that their situation is manageable increase.[97]

Relationship with God can fulfil a variety of roles, e.g. providing comfort, social support and a sense of belonging, encouraging of inner strength and acceptance, strengthening and control, relief after emotional distress, the decrease of specific fears (e.g. due to death) and creating purpose.[98] It is related to optimism, hope and inner strength in the face of disease.[99] If a person feels or believes that God was with her at the time of trauma and he helped during the event, she will more likely recover.[100] Similarly, one of the most renowned authors in the field of trauma recovery, Babette Rothschild,[101] argues that spiritual pursuits and spiritual resources can be an extremely powerful aid in the treatment of trauma and that the establishment of the relationship with the spiritual may be a critical phase during treatment.

In a study on 36 in-depth studies of clinical cases of individuals with trauma,[102] according to therapists' data there was a statistically significant negative correlation between the importance of faith in the individual and the impact of traumatic events in his life (r = –0.491), but not between the importance of faith in the individual and the experience of stress dur-

[95] Cf. For example K. I. Pargament - A. Mahoney, Spirituality: Discovering and Conserving the Sacred, in: R. C. Snyder and S. L. Lopez (ed.) *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, American Psychologocal Association, Washington, DC, 2002, p. 646-662, here: p. 653-654.

[96] Cf. C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, *Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion*, p. 61.

[97] Cf. J. B. Meisenhelder, *Terrorism, Posttraumatic Stress, and Religious Coping*, Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 23 (2002), p. 775.

[98] Cf. T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 93-96.

[99] Cf. T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 94.

[100] Cf. R. Schwarz, *Tools for Transforming Trauma*, p. 10.

[101] Cf. B. Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 2000.

[102] Cf. R. Cvetek, *Travma v terapiji*, Teološka fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2006, podatki.

ing that event. Researchers[103] describe that during a traumatic event it is possible that individuals help themselves with a prayer or a meditation, or by singing religious songs, they can also create a connection with the spiritual and temporarily, functionally dissociate. Many call God to help them, especially during a long-lasting or repeated trauma. Feeling the fear of near death, people can repent, confess or convert, but also bargain with God (for example, a person promises something if God will let him live, which can later present a problem if he thinks that he has to do something which God did not even want in the first place). In the case of a traumatic event, if a person is experiencing that God was with her and he helped during the event, experiencing the sense of communion with God is a powerful resource that has an almost unlimited ability of calming and regulating the affect.[104] Fallot,[105] who investigated the recovery of the female trauma victims who have gotten mentally ill, found out that for as many as 58% religion was very or even extremely important during recovery. For some, the ability to be in a relationship with God led to improved capabilities for building such relationships which have proved to be supportive. Our qualitative research,[106] with admittedly small number of participants (6), has shown that having a relationship with God, at least according to participants' estimates, had a very positive impact on coping with and managing distress. The participants said, for example, 'I experienced that the almighty Father was the one providing security, taking away my fears, and giving me a motherly shelter.' The study by Simonič and Klobučar[107] found out that such a relationship or positive forms of religious coping can decrease the damaging effects of stressors, leading to positive forms of adaptation to stressful situations such as divorce.

The frequency of religious or spiritual coping varies greatly depending on various factors (cultural environment, the type of stress or traumatic events, etc.), but in different groups it is often considerably high.[108] Koenig[109] found that 42.3% of ill, hospitalized patients spontaneously

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[103] Cf. For example S. C. M. DeMoss, *Spiritual and Religious Growth*, p. 646.

[104] Cf. R. Schwarz, *Tools for Transforming Trauma*, p. 10.

[105] Cf. R. D. Fallot, Spirituality in Trauma Recovery for People with Severe Mental Disorders, in: M. Harris and C. L. Landis (ed.) *Sexual Abuse in the Lives of Women Diagnosed with Serious Mental Illness*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1997, p. 337-355, here: p. 337-355.

[106] Cf. M. Čuk - R. Cvetek, *Duhovnost v času stiske, unpublished data.*

[107] Cf. B. Simonič - N. R. Klobučar, *Experiencing Positive Religious Coping in the Process of Divorce: A Qualitative Study*, p. 7.

[108] Cf. M. O. Harrison - H. G. Koenig - J. C. Hays - A. G. Eme-Akwari - K. I. Pargament, *The Epidemiology of Religious Coping: A Review of Recent Literature*, International Review of Psychiatry, 13 (2001), p. 88.

[109] Cf. H. G. Koenig - L. K. George - B. L. Peterson, *Religiosity and Remission from Depression in Medically Ill Older Patients*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 155 (1998) 4, p.

talked about the fact that one or more religious factors helped them cope with the disease or life in general; 73.4% of patients have chosen religion as a coping strategy, and to a great extent. In the sample of persons hospitalized in London, 79% of patients reported that their religious beliefs helped them cope with their problems.[110] Among hospitalized and long-term patients, according to a study by Ayelet, Mulligan, Gheorghiu and Reyes-Ortiz,[111] 86% chose religious activities for coping with problems. Prayer, too, can be effective in many stages of coping with crisis. Ai, Dunkle, Peterson et al.[112] in a study of heart surgery (bypass) patients found that 67.5% chose private prayer as the most frequent technique from the list of 21 non-medical coping behaviours and that it was related to the least distress after surgery. Although some studies found the relatedness between the incidence of prayer and difficulties in life, this can also be due to the fact that when people are in trouble, they pray more. Some studies[113] have shown that prayer or hope strategy predicted reduced pain. The type of prayer was said to be important, too: conversational and meditative prayer were more strongly associated with happiness and well-being than other types. According to data from another study,[114] among solely long-term patients, 59.1% turned to religion to cope with problems, and 34.5% of patients described religion as the most important coping strategy.

A meta-analysis of studies exploring religious coping and various stressful or traumatic situations has established that generally positive religious coping (characterized by a loving, compassionate and forgiving divine presence) has a medium positive correlation with positive adaptation such as well-being, hope, growth, optimism and satisfaction, while in negative coping (characterized by an attitude to the Divine who is absent, rejecting or punishing) there is very strong positive correlation with nega-

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536-542.

[110] Cf. M. King - P. Speck - A. Thomas, *The Effect of Spiritual Beliefs on Outcome from Illness*, Social Science and Medicine, 48 (1999) 9, p. 1291-1299.

[111] Cf. H. Ayele - T. Mulligan - S. Gheorghiu - C. Reyes-Ortiz, *Religious Activity Improves Life Satisfaction for Some Physicians and Older Patients*, Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 47 (1999) 4, p. 453-455.

[112] Cf. A. L. Ai - R. E. Dunkle - C. Peterson - S. F. Bolling, *The Role of Private Prayer in Psychological Recovery among Midlife and Aged Patients Following Cardiac Surgery*, Gerontologist, 38 (1998) 5, p. 591-601.

[113] Cf. According to T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 94.

[114] Cf. H. G. Koenig - D. K. Weiner - B. L. Peterson - K. G. Meador - F. J. Keefe, *Religious Coping in the Nursing Home: A Biopsychosocial Model*, International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine, 27 (1997) 4, p. 369.

tive adaptation. This type of coping can lead to increased hardship.[115] It is not clear what the type of coping by means of faith or religion depends on. Some researchers assume that this depends on personal factors (personality, religion, or demographics), the nature of the stressor, as well as broader context.[116] It is not entirely clear how an individual will experience the relationship to God through trauma and what exact factors determine whether the trauma will cause positive or negative patterns in spirituality and religiosity. To a large extent this also depends on the relational experience of the individual.[117] In the period following trauma, it can be helpful for an individual to normalize his spiritual issues through psycho-education, to encourage a discussion on issues that may arise with trauma (e.g. the question of why God allowed trauma, the feelings of being tested by God, anger, blaming God or oneself for suffering).[118] It helps to search for meaning and purpose in the event, to provoke negative cognitive distortions, for example, by reading about God's unconditional love in the Bible, and it is also important to allow survivors to express different emotions. A clear line should be drawn between forgiveness and pretending that trauma was not important or that it was even helpful; and in forgiveness, the survivors should be helped to see emotional benefits for themselves, rather than seeing forgiveness as a religious obligation or even a gift for offender.[119]

Considering the role of spirituality and faith or religion in recovering from traumatic experiences, researchers especially pointed to three key positive elements set out below: the question of meaning and purpose, the issue of control and the issue of forgiveness.

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[115] Cf. C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, *Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion*, p. 61.

[116] Cf. K. I. Pargament - C. L. Park, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice*, p. 144.

[117] Cf. C. Gostečnik - T. Repič Slavič - M. Cvetek - R. Cvetek, *The Salvational Process in Relationships: A View from Projective-Introjective Identification and Repetition Compulsion*, Journal of Religion and Health, 48 (2009) 4; C. Gostečnik - T. Repič - R. Cvetek, *Potential Curative Space in Relational Family Therapy*, Journal of family psychotherapy, 20 (2009) 1; C. Gostečnik - T. Repič Slavič - R. Cvetek, *Insecure Attachment in Couples' Relationships*, Journal of Pastoral Care and Counselling, 63 (2009) 3/4; C. Gostečnik, *Inovativna relacijska družinska terapija*, Brat Frančišek, Teološka fakuleta in Frančiškanski družinski inštitut, Ljubljana, 2011; C. Gostecnik - T. Repič Slavič - T. Pate - R. Cvetek, *Sanctity of the Body and the Relational Paradigm*, Journal of Religion and Health [Online ed.], (2012).

[118] Cf. S. C. M. DeMoss, *Spiritual and Religious Growth*, p. 647.

[119] Cf. S. C. M. DeMoss, *Spiritual and Religious Growth*, p. 647.

8. Existential questions in the search for meaning and purpose of life after a traumatic experience

Research confirms that the meaning and significance in life predict a person's positive well-being.[120] The meaning of life is an important concept in existential and humanistic psychology.[121] As a response to tragedy and loss, for thousands of years humankind resorted to various spiritual and religious communities to find strength, protection and meaning.[122] A traumatic experience can destroy meaning and purpose, but they can be found anew and strengthened.[123] In order to successfully deal with tragedy and adapt to its consequences it can be crucial that one understands this tragedy and finds some meaning (purpose).

Trauma is an opportunity to help the survivors discover, paradoxically, the respect for life, which occurs in response to a near death.[124] People often become more reflective and contemplative after a major loss or trauma.[125] In everyday life in the modern world, values, beliefs and expectations about life, its meaning and purpose, are rather narrow or unrealistic, and in a traumatic experience they are thoroughly shaken. Religion and religious coping can greatly assist in finding meaning and purpose. A religious meaning that people attach to a specific event helps in dealing with life's trials. Fichter[126] estimates religion as the only way to find meaning and purpose in pain and suffering. One can find meaning in suffering, for example, that with heightened empathy he can help others who are suffering in a similar way or that he can experience the beauty of and satisfaction in life.[127]

9. Spirituality and faith help to gain control after a traumatic experience

When an individual is confronted with a situation that is out of control, such as physical assault, he strives to gain control. Stories of people

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[120] Cf. S. Zika - K. Chamberlain, *Relation of Hassles and Personality to Subjective Well-Being*, Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 53 (1987) 1, p. 157-161.

[121] Cf. V. Frankl, *From Death Camp to Existentialism*, Beacon Hill Press, Boston, 1959; V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Washington Square Press, New York, NY, 1963; V. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*; A. H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 3. ed., Harper & Row Publishers, New York, NY, 1987; Rollo May, *Love and Will*, W. W. Norton & Company, Oxford, England, 1969.

[122] Cf. C. B. Eriksson - D.-A. Yeh, *Grounded Transcendence: Resilience to Trauma through Spirituality and Religion*, p. 55.

[123] Cf. G. R. Schiraldi, *Resilience, Growth and Thriving*, p. 552.

[124] Cf. L. Corbett - M. Milton, *Existential Therapy: A Useful Approach to Trauma?*, p. 67.

[125] Cf. N. Abi-Hashem, *Religious and Pastoral Responses to Trauma*, p. 542.

[126] Cf. J. H. Fichter, *Religion and Pain*, Crossroads, New York, NY, 1981.

[127] Cf. G. R. Schiraldi, *Resilience, Growth and Thriving*, p. 552.

who are faced with some of life's greatest trials (such as the diagnosis of cancer) show that the loss of control is a particularly important and painful aspect of traumatic experience.[128] When out of control, people look for more power. Turning to religion brings them into contact with God (or a higher power), whom they perceive as the one having control. In a similarly interesting way, the question of control is reflected in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). In contact with God, one's sense of control and certainty about the future is higher. Handing over whatever cannot be controlled in the hands of a transcendent power can also encourage the adoption of human limitations and give the feeling of peace and security.[129]

In relation to the concept of control and the role of religion in the face of adversity, Pargament[130] speaks of three different types of achieving control over a situation. The first is called the deferring mode. This is, for example, resorting to prayer; the individual surrenders his problem and his entire situation in the hands of God, thus getting the feeling that it is manageable. In this way, control comes from the outside. Another type is collaborative mode, described as cooperation with God and seeking support for it when the individual actively works on coping with distress. In the self-directive approach, however, one believes in God but does not count on him; the individual himself approaches the problem, the solution of which requires personal engagement rather than God's help. In this case, people rely on the skills and resources given by God. In cooperative and self-directed approach, the individual retains a sense of internal control, which is better for dealing with problems than external control. These two types are more related to positive results of coping with their physical and mental issues than the first approach whereby the individual delegates problem solving to God.[131]

10. Spirituality and faith as an aid to forgiveness

Christianity, in particular, is a religion that strongly emphasizes the importance of forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Rokeach[132] in his study of values noted that salvation and forgiveness are the most distinctive Christian values; also numerous other studies found that reli-

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[128] Cf. Neil Fiore, *Outsmarting Cancer: How to Build the Mental Muscle You Need to Fight a Winning Battle*, Prevention, 43 (1991), p. 55-59.

[129] Cf. B. Cole - K. I. Pargament, *Re-Creating Your Life: A Spiritual/ Psychotherapeutic Intervention for People Diagnosed with Cancer*, Psycho-Oncology, 8 (1999), p. 411-413.

[130] Cf. K. I. Pargament - C. L. Park, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice*, p. 180.

[131] Cf. K. I. Pargament - B. W. Smith - H. G. Koenig - L. Perez, *Patterns of Positive and Negative Religious Coping with Major Life Stressors*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37 (1998) p. 720-721.

[132] Cf. M. Rokeach, "Value Systems in Religion", 1969, 3.

gious and spiritual individuals value forgiveness higher.[133] Although it is necessary to carefully interpret the results, Paz et al.[134] found that Christians participating in their study were more forgiving and less resentful than the comparison group (Buddhists). Factors influencing forgiveness in religions are supposed to be primarily teaching the values of forgiveness, providing role models, offering teaching in parables and promoting emotions such as empathy and compassion.[135] Some studies do suggest that religiousness may be unrelated to forgiving a specific offense, however, if forgiveness is assigned spiritual significance, this means greater forgiveness. If an individual cannot forgive, this is often associated with negative emotions such as resentment, anger and preoccupation with revenge, which can reduce the quality of life.[136] Forgiveness can play a very significant role in recovery from trauma. Forgiveness is a way in which individuals can cope with heavy interpersonal wounds, which can lead to spiritual transformation.[137] It is necessary to distinguish between genuine forgiveness and maladapted, dysfunctional defence against anger. In true forgiveness (unlike pseudo-forgiveness) one fully recognizes the extent of the injury and abandons unhealthy defence responses. True forgiveness is a healing response which can offer hope and confidence that affected individuals will live with a lesser burden of past emotional pain.[138]

Forgiveness mainly depends on motivation (scholars cite a) the belief that forgiveness is the right thing to do; b) the awareness that sometimes forgiveness is necessary to maintain a relationship; c) the knowledge that forgiveness leads to many positive consequences in mental health as well

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[133] Cf. J. M. Schultz - E. Altmaier - S. Ali - B. Tallman, *A Study of Posttraumatic Spiritual Transformation and Forgiveness among Victims of Significant Interpersonal Offences*, Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 17 (2014) 2, p. 122.

[134] Cf. R. Paz - F. Neto - E. Mullet, *Forgivingness: Similarities and Differences between Buddhists and Christians Living in China*, International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 17 (2007) 4, p. 296-300.

[135] Cf. J. M. Schultz - E. Altmaier - S. Ali - B. Tallman, *A Study of Posttraumatic Spiritual Transformation and Forgiveness among Victims of Significant Interpersonal Offences*, p. 123.

[136] Cf. M. Cvetek, Živeti S Čustvi: Čustva, čustveno procesiranje in vseživljenjski čustveni razvoj, Teološka fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2014, p. 91-94; M. Cvetek, *Čustveno odpuščanje v medsebojnih odnosih*, Bogoslovni vestnik, 72 (2012) 2, p. 281-295; B. W. Lundahl - M. J. Taylor - R. Stevenson - K. Daniel Roberts, *Process-Based Forgiveness Interventions: A Meta-Analytic Review*, Research on Social Work Practice, 18 (2008) 5, p. 466.

[137] Cf. J. M. Schultz - E. Altmaier - S. Ali - B. Tallman, *A Study of Posttraumatic Spiritual Transformation and Forgiveness among Victims of Significant Interpersonal Offences*, p. 123.

[138] Cf. B. W. Lundahl - M. J. Taylor - R. Stevenson - K. D. Roberts, *Process-Based Forgiveness Interventions: A Meta-Analytic Review*, p. 465.

as physical health)[139] and capabilities that may include deeper psychological characteristics of each individual.

There are many studies exploring the benefits of forgiveness, some caution is justified. Some critics warn that forgiveness can be harmful, for example for the survivors of rape, incest or domestic violence, as it could allow further interpersonal violence.[140] Freedman and Zarifkar[141] observe that this can only happen if the victim does not understand it properly. It is of utmost importance to know that forgiveness is an active process that contains several steps. To forgive does not mean to forget, either: if someone forgets, forgiveness is impossible; with forgiving, the event remains in the memory so that it is available as a basis for different choices in life. The individual who forgives, is under no obligation or incentive to return to a dangerous environment or relationship. Forgiveness also does not mean that one should not look for justice. In true forgiveness the damage that was done to the victim is not denied or justified; it is necessary for the victim to face his/her own pain and the accompanying effects; the individual should know that he/she would have deserved different treatment. It is also crucial to know that the timing of forgiving is extremely important, because if you rush, forgiveness can lead to avoid dealing with pain; one should be extremely careful with the external pressure to forgive when the individual is not yet ready. An extremely important stage of forgiveness is to forgive the expression of anger, because it tells the client that s/he was wronged and severely affected; it also allows appropriate assertiveness.

An important aspect of forgiveness in trauma victims is also to forgive oneself for one's possible contribution and to reduce one's guilt.[142] Posttraumatic guilt is a frequent phenomenon, especially in those who suffer from 'survivors' guilt', including the relationship with someone who died in trauma, wherein the understanding of forgiveness by God can be an important part of the healing process.[143]

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[139] Cf. W. K. Jeter - L. A. Brannon, *Increasing Awareness of Potentially Helpful Motivations and Techniques for Forgiveness*, Counseling & Values, 60 (2015) 2, p. 188-189.

[140] Cf. S. Freedman - T. Zarifkar, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Forgiveness and Guidelines for Forgiveness Therapy: What Therapists Need to Know to Help Their Clients Forgive*, Spirituality in Clinical Practice, 3 (2016) 1, p. 45-46.

[141] Cf. S. Freedman - T. Zarifkar, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Forgiveness and Guidelines for Forgiveness Therapy: What Therapists Need to Know to Help Their Clients Forgive*, p. 45-46.

[142] Cf. G. R. Schiraldi, *Resilience, Growth and Thriving*, p. 552.

[143] Cf. S. Robinson, Psychospiritual Impact of Disaster, in: C. R. Figley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of trauma: An interdisciplinary guide*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2012, p. 507-508, here: p. 507.

11. Other elements of recovery from a traumatic experience using spirituality and faith

In addition to the mentioned elements of coping through spirituality and religion or faith, researchers emphasize others, which may also be intertwined with the two mentioned above. Relationship with God, for example, increases the feeling of hope and the perception of sources and internal strength.[144] Hope has a significant impact on the emotional well-being as well as the process of cognitive assessment and coping behaviours. Psychosomatic medicine research has shown that hope positively affects healing and is associated with many aspects of physical and mental well-being.[145]

Another important element mentioned by many researchers[146] is connectedness with others. For most people, religious faith is also synonymous with a religious community, which connects people in a supportive environment where pain can be identified and one can find comfort. It also reduces the feeling of isolation and increases intimacy with others. Researchers mention also assistance in developing one's own identity and self-image due to stressful and traumatic events – such as illness[147], search for the sacred – for example, the perception of one's marriage as sacred in marital distress;[148] helping rituals – particularly by directing emotions and by allowing the emotions to be involved in the wider social context – in transitions from one phase of life to another and especially in traumatic crisis.[149]

Conclusion

Trauma certainly can be seen as evil as it often has severe and long-lasting consequences for both mental health and often spiritual health of an individual and for his relationship with God. However, research

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[144] Cf. J. B. Meisenhelder, *Terrorism, Posttraumatic Stress and Religious Coping*, p. 774.

[145] Cf. T. L. Gall - C. Charbonneau - N. H. Clarke - K. Grant - A. Joseph - L. Shouldice, *Understanding the Nature and Role of Spirituality in Relation to Coping and Health: A Conceptual Framework*, p. 93.

[146] Cf. For example J. B. Meisenhelder, *Terrorism, Posttraumatic Stress and Religious Coping*, p. 775.

[147] Cf. B. Cole - K. I. Pargament, *Re-Creating Your Life: A Spiritual/ Psychotherapeutic Intervention for People Diagnosed with Cancer*, p. 400.

[148] Cf. A. Mahoney - K. I. Pargament - T. Jewell - A. B. Swank - E. Scott - E. Emery - M. Rye, *Marriage and the Spiritual Realm: The Role of Proximal and Distal Religious Constructs in Marital Functioning*, Journal of Family Psychology, 13 (1999) p. 322-323.

[149] O. van der Hart, *Rituals in Psychotherapy: Transition and Continuity*, Irvington Publishers, New York, NY, 1983; A. Mahoney - K. I. Pargament - T. Jewell - A. B. Swank - E. Scott - E. Emery - M. Rye, *Marriage and the Spiritual Realm: The Role of Proximal and Distal Religious Constructs in Marital Functioning*, p. 323.

shows that in certain individuals, trauma can also encourage post-traumatic growth which makes room for deeper spiritual life, especially with the reflection on meaning and purpose of life. More research will be necessary to find out which are the characteristics and especially ways that turn a negative or harmful post-traumatic development into a positive or useful one, or, assuming a more independent development of both positive and negative consequences, how to encourage positive developments in spirituality and religiousness after trauma.

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THE ROLE OF CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN FORMING THE IMAGE OF THE MERCIFUL GOD

Arriving at the Image of the Merciful God Through the Previous Experience of Mercy in Interpersonal Relationships

Abstract

In this article we will attempt to show and explain the connection that exists between the Christian community and a believer's idea of a merciful God. We will make use of attachment theory and try to apply it to the relationship between the believer and God. We will try to use it to explain the dynamic that brings someone to experience God as benevolent and merciful while someone else perceives God as a strict judge or has become indifferent to God.

With the help of the compensation and correspondence hypotheses we will try to explain the correspondence (or continuing) and compensation (or substitute) role of the Catholic community in forming the image of a merciful God.

Considering the results of past investigations which confirm the connection and similarity between the relationship of a child with its mother and that of a believer with God, we will attempt to connect the concepts from attachment theory such as attachment figure, safe haven and safe base with the Catholic community. We want to show that the Catholic community can also be a substitute attachment figure, a safe haven and a safe base for the believer. If the believer truly experiences it as such then it is our hypothesis that the conditions have been created for his/her possibly not so positive image of God to have changed into a more positive image of God who is close and who supports him/her. We verified and confirmed this hypothesis with semi-structured interviews of 10 members of the Catholic Emmanuel Community.

Key words: *attachment, image of God, community, compensation hypothesis, correspondence hypothesis.*

Introduction

The main aim of this article is to show the connection that exists between the Catholic community and a believer's idea of a merciful God. We will make use of attachment theory[1] and try to apply it to the relationship between the believer and God. We will use them to try and explain why someone experiences God as benevolent and merciful while someone else perceives God as a strict judge or has even become indifferent to God. We are aware of the limitations of psychological concepts, which are only ever an approximation and can never fully explain the spiritual relationship with God.

There have been attempts in history to use the best possible metaphors and concepts to explain the mysterious relationship between God and man in such a way that people would understand. In the Bible we come across metaphors of shepherds and sheep, parables from viticulture and agriculture, and metaphors from the world of commerce[2]. Nowadays, we also try to explain this relationship in a way that people will understand. Sometimes we use relational approaches from the field of interpersonal relations.

In this article we will use findings from attachment theory and relational family therapy. First of all we will try to summarise the past findings, which show a connection and similarity between the mother-child relationship and a believer's relationship with God[3]. With the help of both theories we will try to explain to what extent a person's ability to form relationships is marked by his primary family[4] both in horizontal and vertical relationships. This does not mean that everything is determined in advance but a person is always strongly marked by them or even partly limited by them. This does not mean we negate personal freedom but only want to emphasise even more strongly the need for mercy and a transformational[5] external intervention for a person to be freed. The latter is not possible without entering into sincere relationships both with God and fellow human beings. What should be the correct sequence is not a negligible pastoral question. Is it right to invite someone who has been badly hurt in his/her interpersonal relations and finds it hard to trust anyone, to turn to God and entrust himself/herself to him when he/she

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[1] Cf. J. Bowlby, *Attachment: Attachment and Loss*, Vol. I., New York, Basic Books, 1969, p. 3-24.

[2] Cf. Matt 25:32; Luke 20:16; Matt 13:46.

[3] Cf. L. A. Kirkpatrick and P. R. Shaver, *Attachment theory and religion: childhood attachments, religious beliefs and conversion*, Journal for the scientific study of religion, (1990), p. 315-320.

[4] Cf. C. Gostečnik, *Relational Family Therapy: The Systemic, Interpersonal, and Intrapsychic Experience*, New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 15-45.

[5] Cf. C. Gostečnik, T. Repic and R. Cvetek. *Redemptive experience in relational family therapy: a christian perspective*, Journal of Religion and Health, 47 (2008) 3, p. 386.

may also feel forgotten by him and is consequently also angry with him? Or should we first ensure that this person feels accepted and understood in his/her interpersonal relationships if he/she cannot directly turn to God or he/she still doesn't have a personal relationship with him? What should be our pastoral approach so as not to fail to see an individual's distress and that we do not remain simply on a psychological level which Christian therapists are often accused of doing?

There are two possible sequences, the so-called compensation[6] way and the correspondence[7] way, depending on the individual. Someone who is in distress will first of all be able to sincerely connect himself/herself with God which will give him/her a sufficient feeling of security and courage to be able to gradually risk opening up in human relationships. Someone else who has been hurt in his/her primary interpersonal relationships may shut himself/herself off both from God and from people. The path to God for such a person can be opened up by a transforming human relationship in which he will again feel favour, stability and security, which are usually preconditions for a further exploration and opening up in relations with people and God.

In this article we will concentrate above all on this second part – to what extent and in what way can human relationships and hence a particular Catholic community help an individual to form an image of God who is merciful and who loves us. For this purpose I carried out a qualitative investigation with the help of semi-structured interviews with members of the Catholic Emmanuel community in Slovenia who answered the questions on whether the life in the Emmanuel community affected their experience of God and in what way.

In this article we will use the past research, clinical and pastoral practice and the above qualitative investigation to confirm the hypothesis that a Catholic community which promotes good interpersonal relations also helps its members to have a better relationship with God.

1. Attachment theory

Originally introduced by John Bowlby[8] as an alternative to psychoanalytic object-relations theory, attachment theory postulates a primary, biosocial behavioural system in the infant that was designed by evolution to keep the infant close to his/her primary caregiver, thereby protecting the infant from predators and other natural dangers. This postulated motivational system is distinct from other systems involved in nutrition

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[6]   Cf. M. D. Ainsworth, *Attachments across the life span*, Bulletin of the New York Academy of medicine, 61 (1985) 9, p. 792.

[7]   Cf. L. A. Kirkpatrick and P. R. Shaver, *Attachment theory and religion*, p. 330-324.

[8]   Cf. J. Bowlby, *Attachment*, p. 3-24.

and reproduction, and is intended to replace the out-dated psychic energy model of motivation with a model more consonant with modern biology and ethology.

Active functioning of the system has its earliest roots in the mother – infant relationship. The infant emits social signals (crying, clinging) to which the mother (or other attachment figure) is more or less responsive, which in turn influences subsequent infant behaviour etc. When the system functions optimally, the infant develops a secure attachment to the mother in which she is perceived as a reliable source of protection and security. The secure attachment relationship is characterized by a confident exploration of the environment under normal circumstances and by proximity-seeking and comfort-seeking if a threat occurs. In the language of attachment researchers, the mother serves alternately as a secure base and as a safe haven for the infant. The attached person experiences the process in terms of the regulation of feeling secure.

The differences in infant–mother attachment have received considerable research attention in developmental psychology. In addition to a secure attachment, two insecure patterns have been widely researched: the avoidant type in which the infant seems to regard the mother as neither a secure base for exploration nor as a safe haven, and the anxious / ambivalent type in which clinging, proximity and comfort-seeking behaviour alternates episodically with anger and resistance. Anxious/ ambivalent infants also generally appear more anxious and do not consistently evince confident exploration of the environment in the mother's presence. There is considerable evidence now that links the differences in infant attachment classifications to maternal caregiving behaviours and attitudes.

Longitudinal studies have shown that the social behaviour of 5 and 6 years old can be predicted reliably from their early attachment relationships[9]. Patterns of attachment have also been shown to perpetuate themselves across generations, from mother to child.

Although Bowlby's development of the attachment theory was based primarily on the attachment system's evolutionary function of providing protection to human (and other primate) infants, he strongly maintained that the attachment system exerts an important influence on behaviour "from the cradle to the grave". Researchers provided an extensive list of striking similarities between early attachment and adult romantic love and argued that adult romantic love represents the integration of three behavioural systems – attachment, reproduction and caregiving[10]. Hazan

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[9]   Cf. A. F. Lieberman, *Preschoolers' competence with a peer: relations with attachment and peer experience*, Child Development, (1977) p. 1277.

[10] Cf. S. M. Johnson, *Love sense: the revolutionary new science of romantic relationships*, New York, Little Brown and Company, 2013, p. 59-85.

and Shaver[11] showed empirically that adult romantic love relationships tend to fall into three major patterns that closely resemble Ainsworth's three infant-mother attachment classifications – secure, anxious / ambivalent, and avoidant – and that these individual differences are correlated in theoretically predictable ways with people's beliefs about romantic love, their experiences in close relationships, and their retrospective descriptions of childhood relationships with their parents.

Several researchers have made careful attempts to distinguish attachment bonds from other kinds of close relationships[12]. Ainsworth distinguished "affectional bonds" from role-oriented relationships and emphasized the secure-base and haven functions as distinguishing features of attachment relationships per se.

2. Attachment theory and the Catholic community

With the help of the key principles of attachment theory we will try to explain the role of God and the Catholic community as the surrogate figures of attachment which have significant consequences for man's perception of God.

For people who live in faith, the connection with God is a primary source of comfort, security and equilibrium in a constantly changing world. In the Bible, God is regularly referred to as a safe haven, source of security and comfort. In John's gospel we are explicitly invited to trust our heavenly father and to come "home" to him[13]. Some places in the Bible call God father, friend and beloved[14]. This means that in our relationship with God we can find all the key elements listed by attachment theory as presented in the earliest stages of our life in relations between the child and the primary personal attachment which is usually the mother.

3. Connectedness

The first principle of attachment theory is that we all yearn for being attached[15] and in a relationship. We all have an inbuilt mechanism for connecting with someone who will react when we are in danger and will protect us. The desire to connect forms our nervous system and the mass of neurones we call the brain. The need for attachment forms our brains, which develop accordingly from the very earliest stages of child-

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[11] Cf. C. Hazan and P. Shaver, *Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process*, Journal of personality and social psychology, 52 (1987) 3, p. 511.

[12] Cf. M. D. Ainsworth, *Attachments across the life span*, p. 793-795.

[13] Cf. John 14:23.

[14] Cf. Isa 66:13; Luke 13:34; John 15:5; Isa 54:5.

[15] Cf. S. M. Johnson and V. E. Whiffen, *Attachment processes in couple and family therapy*, New York, Guilford Press, 2003, p. 18-43.

hood onwards. We feel this yearning most strongly when we experience uncertainty and we feel vulnerable. In moments of doubt, trouble and fears we naturally turn to the person who can offer us stability and comfort and can pacify us. This is confirmed by army chaplains who tell us how, when faced with the greatest dangers, many soldiers turn for help to their mothers, wives and most of them to God. So we can say that a man's search and yearning for God is similar to his yearning for a connection with a human figure. "When you call to me and come and pray to me, I shall listen to you. When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, I shall let you find me, says the Lord."[16]

Attachment theory researchers speak of the yearning and capacities of a child who is safely attached to his parents and who places everything he experiences into a complete and meaningful entity, in contrast with some interior existential and emotional fragmentation. Saint Augustine speaks of a similar yearning and intimate experience in his relationship with God when he says: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You"[17].

4. A safe haven

The second principle of attachment theory which fits in well with the Catholic faith is that the proximity of a beloved person gives us a feeling of security: peace and comfort[18]. We can find the conviction that our connection with God is our best source of security in many religious texts, songs and prayers. This is also the content of the Christmas message: "Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."[19] and "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."[20] These are two fundamental messages: not to be afraid and men on earth will have peace, which is like a summary of the second principle of attachment theory.

Many investigations dealing with connections point to the fact that when we connect with a person to whom we become attached, our nervous system calms down, the amygdala– our brain's fear centre – is turned off and emotional equilibrium is established[21]. Only then can the part of us that is most flexible, fundamental and adaptable appear. This means that we are then in the best state to learn new things.

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[16]   Jer 29:12-14.

[17]   Augustinus. *Izpovedi.* Vol. 4, Zbirka Cerkveni očetje, Celje, Mohorjeva družba, 2001, p. 5.

[18]   Cf. S. M. Johnson, *Love sense: the revolutionary new science of romantic relationships*, p. 38.

[19]   Lk 2:10.

[20]   Lk 2:14.

[21]   Cf. T. Lewis, *Fari Amini and Richard Lannon*, A general theory of love, New York, Random House, 2000, p. 66-77.

The importance of calming relationships is confirmed by research carried out amongst women who felt they were in distress and unconnected with their partners[22]. They were invited to have brain scans.

They found that no matter they lay alone in the machine, a stranger is holding their hand, or their partner is holding their hand, when they saw a red X that signalled a shock might be coming, their brain lit up in alarm, and if they were shocked on their ankles they reported that it was indeed very painful.

Their brains were scanned while their hand was held by a stranger or their partner. When a red X appeared on the screen (which the women watched during the scan) to warn them that they may feel a gentle electric shock on their ankles, an alarm went off in their brains. If an electric shock was indeed produced, the women said they felt pain in their leg no matter if they were alone or if their hand was held by a stranger or even their partner. Then these women and their husbands were offered marriage counselling where they learnt how to approach each other, how to offer each other security and how to strengthen and preserve their mutually calming closeness.

Then they were tested again and their brains were scanned again. When the women saw the red X, their brains again "turned on" the alarm when they were alone during the testing and also when a stranger held their hands. However, if their husband held their hand, they remained calm and the electric shocks were now "unpleasant" but no longer painful. This was not the result of a better control over the fear centre because the brain scans showed that this centre was not activated. The research shows the strength of the husband's touch and proximity as well as how strong is the need in our brains for connectedness and trust and how connectedness in a partnership changes our perception and reaction to threats.

5. A secure base

The third important principle of attachment theory speaks about the fact that loving connections early on in life make us stronger[23]. Such connections offer us a safe area from which we can go out into the world, explore and grow and at the same time successfully overcome fears we may come across. This principle stems from the research carried out by observing children. When the children knew that they had a so-called safe base to which they can return any time and that there will always be

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[22] Cf. S. M. Johnson et al., *Soothing the threatened brain: leveraging contact comfort with emotionally focused therapy*, PloS one, 8 (2013) 11, e79314.

[23] Cf. M. S. Ainsworth, *Infant-mother attachment*, American psychologist, 34 (1979) 10, p. 932.

someone there who will take care of them, then they were more inquisitive in exploring their surroundings. They were not afraid of taking risks and were more self-confident and more actively involved. The fact that they could rely on someone gave them strength and they became more independent.

We can also apply this to the relationship with God. If we know that we can rely on him and that he will always be there for us, then this makes us stronger. The feeling of being safely connected to Almighty God who loves us is a way of dealing with our greatest source of hurt – the fear of loss and the fear of death[24]. This is how we can understand many passages of the Bible: "On the day I called you answered me; you made me bold and stout-hearted." [25] and "He is my mighty rock, my refuge."[26] Understanding safe attachment shows us how belief in God as an attachment figure can be a successful source of personal fulfilment and growth throughout one's life. Those people who are safely attached to their loved ones react more constructively to anger, are more generous and tolerant, deal better with stress and form a positive image of themselves as someone who is worthy of being loved. Therefore we can conclude that safe attachment to people that are important to us is positively connected with a greater commitment to mature religious convictions.

6. Pain in separation

The final principle of attachment theory which we will mention here says that as a man is made for attachment, he also feels pain at the loss of this attachment. In the brain the pain of loss is located in the same place as physical pain[27]. Pain warns us of danger, and separation from someone else is a danger for a man. When we cannot connect with the people we like, including God, we suffer. Not even Jesus, the son of God, was spared the pain of loneliness and loss when he cried out from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"[28] We come across a similar experience of loneliness and abandonment in her relationship with God in Mother Teresa's diaries: "The more I want to connect with God, the less wanted I feel."[29]

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[24] Cf. L. M. McLean et al., *A couple based intervention for patients and caregivers facing end stage cancer: outcomes of a randomized controlled trial*, PsychoOncology, 22 (2013) 1, p. 28-38.

[25] Ps 138:3.

[26] Ps 62:7.

[27] Cf. M. A. Hofer, *Hidden regulators in attachment, separation and loss*, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 59 (1994) 2-3, p. 192.

[28] Mk 15:34.

[29] Mother Teresa. *Come be my light: the private writings of the saint of Calcutta*, New York, Doubleday, 2007, p. 1-2.

7. Connecting with others and connecting with God

As we have already mentioned, there are three basic ways of connecting with those to whom we turn when we are in trouble or in emotional need: searching for the other, anxious pleading and remaining at a distance (an attempt to connect without the risk of being hurt). The first approach is the most effective as it calls us to be in harmony with our emotions, to ask and to seek what we need, to identify ourselves with our yearnings and not be afraid to draw closer to our loved ones. In this way we form a strong link with the others which makes us stronger and builds a lifelong connection. However, turning to others often inspires uncertainty and so the person resorts to less effective and unreliable strategies: anxious and avoidant. When a person feels caught up in an anxious form of searching for contact, they inadvertently do everything to be rejected and are consequentially in despair while at the same time realising that they find it hard to trust or accept the concern that others are prepared to give them. With the other, avoidant strategy, as soon as the individual perceives that they may end up being too dependent on the other, they withdraw and deny any need for connection. These three strategies can be observed in all emotionally significant relationships, including the relationship with God[30].

Let us look at three different examples of connection with God:

- Ana speaks calmly about her safe connection with God: *"I know that when I need him I can always turn to him and find peace. My prayer is not always answered but the awareness that I am heard and that I can ask for help remains stable."*

- Katja has doubts about her faith and God's proximity: *"I know I should not speak like this but these days I become truly angry when I try to pray! When I began going to church again I was so certain that God helps but now I could cry out: Are you even listening to me? Do you even care about me? If you did you would help me. Maybe I am not even important to you".* Katja is overwhelmed by a feeling of anxiety and agitation and has the feeling that she cannot count on God even if she prays to him every day.

- Tomaž was brought up in the faith and goes to church but believes that it is still better to rely on yourself. *"After all, in the end you are always on your own and nobody is interested in how you are. That is why there is no point in relying too much on God. That is simply the nature of the life we must live. If it is hard, try to forget it as quickly as possible."* Tomaž obviously rejects the need to connect with God and

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[30] Cf. L. A. Kirkpatrick and P. R. Shaver, *An attachment-theoretical approach to romantic love and religious belief*, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18 (1992) 3, p. 266.

he tries to avoid depending on him. He finds it hard to put himself into God's hands.

The safest strategy for connecting with another person is the first one. It gives us the most effective way of facing the needs of attachment – the proximity for which we yearn. Those who turn to God in this way have probably turned to their parents in a similar way. There they have learnt that they can reasonably expect that figures of attachment will be accessible, responsive and faithful to them. These persons experience the world mostly as a safe place and are therefore more emotionally stable.

This is confirmed by research which shows that children that are being looked after by parents in a sensitive and loving way and are allowed to show their love for God from an early age, will also be more religious later on. However, they also say that moments of connection in a partnership lead to more love for God. This means that when an individual's relationships with those who are the most important to them – their family and partner – are loving, this opens them towards their love for God. Research also shows that people with faith are grateful and find it easier to believe in a fulfilled and happy life[31]. Another study similarly finds that safe attachment coupled with emotional stability and positive expectations often leads to a meditative and conversational form of prayer rather than prayer that is focused on the fulfilment of demands[32].

The individual who has experienced the sensitive and soothing care of his/her parents, partner or community finds it easier to trust and believe in the meaningfulness and order of the world which is permeated by God's love. This feeling of trust and increased proximity to God usually results in a greater respect for the family and the partner. This is obvious for many individuals and couples who following a retreat or community meeting testify that they can act better towards their loved ones for at least a few days.

In an anxious form of attachment the individual makes attempts to enter into relationships in the "now you see me, now you don't" way, as most of them have experienced in their early childhood. This experience leaves them uncertain as they are constantly afraid of loneliness and the feeling of neglect or abandonment. This same drama is then replayed in the relationship with God. Anxiously attached people often feel neglected by God.

Katja turns to God to compensate for her lack of safe connections in her life. She approaches God in the same way that she yearns for

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[31] Cf. P. Granqvist, *Attachment and religiosity in adolescence: cross-sectional and longitudinal evaluations*, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28 (2002) 2, p. 260.

[32] Cf. K. R. Byrd and A. D. Boe, *The correspondence between attachment dimensions and prayer in college students*, The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 11 (2001) 1, p. 9.

and enters into her relationship with her husband: sometimes she begs and at other times she accuses him angrily. This means that her prayer also frequently contains anxious elements. So even when her prayers are answered and she could relax and receive the blessing she finds it hard to do this.

In avoidant attachment people shut themselves off from the world and other people as they feel that those closest to them are insensitive to their needs or even very cruel while they themselves are most vulnerable. They can repress their needs and supress their expectations. However, this suppression of needs always demands much effort as whenever they feel vulnerable they want to suppress their emotions and escape. These people do not believe in a caring God and such an attitude can often be found even in active Christians[33]. They see others as unloving and perceive God as strict and distant. Their innate yearning for security nevertheless comes to the surface and then these people try to turn to God although they are incapable of accepting his love.

8. The role of the Catholic community

Studies have shown that if an individual has a new experience of connection and receiving loving responses from their partner or they experience security in their relationship with God, they can then connect more safely both in their family and religious relations[34]. The individual can then begin to perceive both God and his/her partner as persons who accept them and do not condemn them.

We can speak of the significance of the Catholic community in forming an individual's image of God above all through the prism of the correspondence and compensation hypotheses[35]. The correspondence hypothesis maintains that persons with a positive image of themselves and others, i.e. believing and securely attached individuals, are supposed to have a positive image of God – a God who supports you and on whom you can rely. These persons will sooner choose the kind of Catholic community that presents God as merciful and will continue to connect with the kind of God they knew before and perhaps this image will become even more concrete. According to this hypothesis, persons with an avoidant attachment would be closer to an agnostic/atheistic attitude, which is founded on a negative image of God or an image of God who is distant

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[33] Cf. T. Clinton and J. Straub, *God attachment*, New York, Howard books, 2010, p. 83-85.

[34] Cf. J. R. Dickie et al., *Parent-child relationships and children's images of God*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, (1997) p. 25.

[35] Cf. P. Granqvist and B. Hagekull, *Religiousness and perceived childhood attachment: profiling socialized correspondence and emotional compensation*, Journal for the scientific study of religion, (1999) p. 254.

and unattainable while persons with an ambivalent attachment would have an emotionally changeable relationship with God.

However, if we take into account the findings of attachment theory and relational family therapy[36], we know that the need and yearning for connection runs deeper than what our personal, genetic or family past may determine. Compensation theory speaks about this. If we bear in mind the action of grace, which in a therapeutic sense is the transformative event after which the emotional patterns of the way a person reacts when in crisis change as do the forms of connecting with other people, we can understand why some adults change the way they are attached to those that are closest to them and to God.

Many experience the missing substitute figure of attachment in the Catholic community where they can safely attach to someone for the first time in their lives and open up. This openness, vulnerability and acceptance of the feeling of powerlessness is important for a person to be able to open up to God's merciful action. This dynamic is well summarised by the following statements of community members on how they experience the community:

"When I converted and became a Christian I entered the community the same year and was accepted as a person and brother on the road following Christ. No-one judged me. The welcome I experienced from certain people brought me closer to God. The road to him opens up through our brothers and sisters."

"I met some young people who really lived the faith, who prayed and followed the teaching of the Church and were happy. And they took interest in me without wanting anything from me; they accepted me as I am. I really felt this was God touching me. I was touched by the brotherly care for one another and the example of life with the Lord that makes one happy."

These two statements confirm both of the above hypotheses. Someone from a safely attached relationship probably will not join a community where he would have to be afraid of God's proximity and would have to establish a so-called dangerous form of connection with him. At the same time, someone who has not experienced safe attachment in their primary relationships continues to yearn for God's merciful touch to soothe and heal him. We could conclude that Augustine's famous line: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You" could at least partly fit into the framework of the compensation hypothesis – even though I am not yet at peace, I yearn for this peace and will not stop searching until I achieve it or receive it.

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[36] C. Gostečnik, *Relational Family Therapy*, p. 5-20.

A Catholic community can therefore offer a believer both a safe refuge and a safe base, which is essential for everyone in order to continue making safe connections or even to make their very first safe attachment.

This can be achieved by means of a more intensive and at the same time safe form of association. These two features of a modern community are achieved through weekly meetings in small groups and also thanks to the rule that forbids one to criticise others.

"Many people have said "welcome" to me. And this felt so nice inside."

Without sufficiently intensive relationships there can be no changes in the form of attachment. It is interesting that therapeutic models as well as anonymous alcoholics[37] and new Catholic communities all emphasise the importance of weekly meetings alongside Sunday masses. This is how the community is built and people feel united as brothers and sisters.

"What a joy it is to meet so many people you like and who you know also like you. Doing everything together: praising, going to mass, listening to lectures, walking, adoration, eating, everything creates a feeling of joyful togetherness that is a gift of God's grace."

At the same time, the founder of the Emmanuel Community Pierre Goursat[38] emphasised that abstaining from criticising other members of the community should be one of the community's most important rules. The importance of this attitude is confirmed by contemporary research which shows how harmful criticism[39] can be. *"The fact that there is this rule of no criticism makes me relaxed and I find it easier to be myself. It also strengthens the feeling of being welcome and God's mercy when I realise my mistakes."*

Conclusion

The research shows just how important the community is and it speaks of the strong link between the culturally prevalent form of parenthood and society's general idea of the Supernatural. This means that if an individual feels accepted by his parents there will be a much higher probability that he will experience God as merciful and vice versa. That is why the subconscious convictions of the members of the community are important as they often reflect on the subconscious interiorised form of parenthood. And the transmission of the faith to the children is

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[37] Cf. J. D. Levin, *Couple and family therapy of addiction*, London, Jason Aronson 1998, p. 34-44.

[38] Cf. M. Catta, *Pierre Goursat: besede ponižnega ustanovitelja*, Ljubljana, Založba Emanuel, p. 20-25.

[39] Cf. J. Gottman, J. Mordechai and R. Wayne Levenson, *The timing of divorce: predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14-year period*, Journal of Marriage and Family, 62 (2000) 3, p. 737.

very closely linked to this too. Secure attachment in the community and elsewhere enables learning and accepting the values of the environment because the individual's feeling of security means he is more open and therefore more likely to accept his parents' or the community's suggestions and invitations.

Let us conclude this article with Freud who emphasised the importance of primary relationships in the family and the creation of an intra-psychic image of God. Despite the fact that Freud mistakenly interpreted that God is simply a person's fictional defence mechanism or a projection of a person's image of his/her own strong father. But by doing this he attracted the attention of later researchers who actually began to uncover that an individual's image of God is very strongly determined by the relationship which this person had with the primary guardian or figure of attachment. Just as the family plays a decisive role in the first years of a child's life, in later years this role is also played by relations with peers and other important relations or absence of relations. And these other relations, which have an important positive influence on an individual and his/her experience of God can or should be provided by every Catholic community.