

Challenges to Religious Education in Contemporary Society

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Parents and children on the first pages of the Bible (Gen 1 - 12)

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The first pages of the Bible provide no example of children's upbringing since the first people, Adam and Eve, are presented as very old 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.

Education based on the Dialogical Relationship between God and People: Basic Characteristics of Martin Buber's Philosophy of Education

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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.

Marulić's Proposal for Christian Education

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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.

Education for Mercy – Comparative Analysis of the Pontifical Discourses

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

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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 generated 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.*

Affirmation of Humanity Based on Positive Education in Modesty According to Pope John Paul II's teaching

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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*

Holistic Approach and Experiential Faith Formation

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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.*

Beauty of Visual Art as a Pathway towards God

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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.*

Fluid and Fragile, or in between: Christian Identity in Crisis?

Perspectives from Pastoral Psychology

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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.

Social Engagement of Religious Education teachers in the Archdiocese of Split-Makarska

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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 extra-curricular 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.

The Educational Mission of the Church in the Migration Period of the 5th and the 6th Century

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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

Pastoral Care and Migrations

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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.

The Ecclesial Movements and New Communities as Instruments of Formation and Evangelization

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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.

Catechesis for Confirmation as a Pastoral Challenge in Slovenia

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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.

Religious didactics under the terms of plurality

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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.

Transformative Learning in Family Transitions in the Light of Religious Education

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The article¹ 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.

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Disciplining Children in Divorced Families: The Process of Change in Relational Family Therapy

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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.

Children's Comprehension of the Religious Story Affected by their Emotional Capacities

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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.

The challenges of empathetic parenting after divorce and the foundations of religious experience

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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

The Effectiveness of Relational Family Therapy on the (Religious) Life in Adulthood Affected by Losses in Childhood

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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 techniques in 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.

Violent Upbringing in the Name of Faith

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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.

The Role of Traumatic Events in Experiencing Faith, Spirituality and Existential Questions

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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

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

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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

