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## **Catechesis and new evangelization in the face of contemporary challenges of social communication**

### **Katecheza i nowa ewangelizacja wobec współczesnych wyzwań komunikacji społecznej**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The article is the outcome of pending research. It raises a broad and complex issue of new evangelization and catechesis in the face of contemporary challenges of social communication. Pursuant to the framework of a research project, this article juxtaposes Polish and Italian literature in recent years. The effect of the scientific research is presented in three points. The first one sets out contemporary challenges of social communication.

The next one presents a contemporary illustration of evangelization and catechesis. The last one sets forth concrete rules and solutions. Amongst them we can list the following ones: appropriate order of ministry – catechesis should be preceded by evangelization; the whole work of the Church should have a positive message and lead to hope; preachers and religion teachers should be required to testify with authentic faith and dynamic engagement.

#### **KEY WORDS:**

catechesis, evangelization, social communication

#### **ABSTRAKT**

Artykuł jest efektem prowadzonych badań. Podejmuje szerokie i skomplikowane zagadnienie nowej ewangelizacji i katechezy wobec współczesnych wyzwań komunikacji społecznej. Zgodnie z założeniami projektu badawczego artykuł zestawia literaturę języka polskiego i języka włoskiego z ostatnich lat. Efektem przeprowadzonych poszukiwań naukowych jest przedstawienie zagadnienia w trzech punktach. Pierwszy prezentuje współczesne wyzwania komunikacji społecznej. Kolejny przedstawia współczesne ujęcie zagadnień: ewangelizacji i katechezy. Ostatni punkt jest propozycją konkretnych zasad i rozwiązań. Pośród nich wyróżnić można: odpowiednie uporządkowanie całej posługi – katecheza ma być poprzedzona ewangelizacją; całe dzieło posługującego Kościoła powinno mieć pozytywny przekaz i prowadzić do nadziei; przed ewangelizatorami i katechetami należy stawiać wymagania autentycznej wiary i dynamicznego zaangażowania.

#### **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**

katecheza, ewangelizacja, komunikacja społeczna

## INTRODUCTION

In 1971, so less than 50 years ago, Klemens Tilmann began his scientific article devoted to religious education with the description of some situation: „A three-year-old Peter is playing with blocks, while his mother is sitting on a couch busy with sewing. Suddenly he leaves his blocks on the floor, comes up to his mother and wants to climb onto her lap. The mother puts away her work and lets him sit on her lap. He hugs his mum and says: mummy I love you so much. She also hugs her son and says: Oh Peter, I also love you very much. How lovely that we love each other so much”. After a while she adds: „How good God must be if He bestows His love upon us. Next she kisses her son. After a while happy Peter comes back onto the floor and to his toys”<sup>1</sup>.

A traditional model of upbringing and communication that was in force by the first half of the XX century put a real person (implicitly a family) in the first place. A wide spectrum of social, cultural and communication changes led to a situation in which the mass media have become a leading „educator” or a partner in communication. This rule also applies to the education in faith. A scene described in an article from 1971 seems to be improbable these days, and the method of communication seems naive. This change is well described through a shift from a traditional question: „What to do in order to attain salvation?” to a modern reflection: „What is the most important for me and for others?”<sup>2</sup>.

This paper does not aim at discussing the contemporary model of religious education, but it wants to draw attention to contemporary challenges which occur in the course of evangelization and catechesis. It is the result of statutory research which invites to further discussion and scientific analysis. The research has been focused on catechesis and new evangelization in the face of contemporary challenges of social communication. The author’s intention is to juxtapose Polish and Italian realities. The framework of the research project does not concentrate on differences in approaching the subject in Italy and in Poland, but it is meant to obtain a broader perspective of the problem and involve a wider variety of literature.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Tilmann, *Wychowanie religijne dawniej i dziś*, „ColletaneaTheologica” 41(1971) 2, s. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. B. Wiczorek, *Wokół religii mediów*, „Kultura – Media – Teologia” 11 (2012), s. 19.

The outcome of the scientific query thereof is the presentation of the subject in three points. The first will outline contemporary challenges of social communication. The next will show a contemporary illustration of evangelization and catechesis. The last will set forth concrete rules and solutions, the application of which seems to be justified. The latest documents of the Church and selected Polish and Italian literature (if possible, the recent publications) constitute the sources of the research. The method of the research consists in the elaboration of the sources and a coherent presentation of the conclusions and postulates.

### **New challenges of social communication**

The process of communication is one of the oldest processes. It has been accompanying a human being since they started to get organized and form groups. In this day and age it is impossible to imagine a society which does not communicate. It might be considered that communication constitutes the basis and foundation of a contemporary society. A notion of social communication may be defined in many ways. Charles Cooley, one of the precursors examining this area of science defined communication as „a mechanism thanks to which human relationships exist and develop and symbols created by human brain are passed on in space and retained in time”<sup>3</sup>. Relating to a recently formed universal definition, we may state that social communication is „a process of communication between individuals, groups or institutions. Its aim is to exchange thoughts, share the knowledge, information and ideas”<sup>4</sup>.

This process has many features that define it and determine its effectiveness. A communication process always takes place in a given context. It is creative, dynamic, constant, symbolic, interactive, conscious, deliberate and irreversible<sup>5</sup>. A contemporary model that determines the functioning of a communication process bears a number of challenges. A human being exists in the centre of the reality created by a communication process. Man is both a creator and a recipient of messages. Communication chaos takes place in a human being. It is man that is subject to all sorts of stimuli from the world of culture, politics, entertainment,

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<sup>3</sup> J. Nikolajew, *Jak usprawnić komunikację w przestrzeni społecznej*, „Master of Business Administration” 1/2011 (116), s. 45.

<sup>4</sup> B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Podstawy komunikowania społecznego*, Wrocław 2004, s. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. W. Głodowski, *Komunikowanie interpersonalne*, Warszawa 2006, s. 16–26.

labour, and religious space. Modern world goes through such a rapid technological and communication transformation that we cannot even speak about a generational change<sup>6</sup>. The changes that take place in the development of new media and communication technologies do not reflect even a decade. Those changes, however, do not reflect the way of life and the functioning of all the people in the macro scale. They usually refer to a young generation<sup>7</sup>.

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the biggest challenges will be a search for the answer to the following phenomena: firstly, a media character of religiousness and the presence of it in the media. Secondly, an adventure style of life, which consequently leads to superficial human relationships. Thirdly, visual communication plays a prime role (a word has been replaced by an image

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A panorama of challenges and difficulties facing contemporary social communication is wide and comprehensive. For the needs of this elaboration, the scope of research has been narrowed to the area of the transmission of faith, evangelization and catechesis. Here the biggest challenges will be a search for the answer to the following phenomena: firstly, a media character of religiousness and the presence of it in the media. Secondly, an adventure style of life, which consequently leads to superficial human relationships. Thirdly, visual communication plays a prime role (a word has been replaced by an image)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. T. Huk, *Pedagogika medialna. Aspekty społeczne, kulturowe i edukacyjne*, Kraków 2014, s. 9–15.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. Pyżalski, *Agresja elektroniczna i cyberbullying jako nowe ryzykowne zachowania młodzieży*, Kraków 2012, s. 10–14; J. Przybyłowski, *Komunikacja pastoralna*, „Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne” 12 (2017), s. 7–27.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. B. Wiczorek, *Wokół religii mediów*, „Kultura – Media- Teologia” 11(2012), s. 18–31; M. Eliade, *Sacrum a profanum: o istocie sfery religijnej*, Warszawa 2011; P. Boschini, *Dire Dio nel mondo secolarizzato, w: Un pensiero aperto sull'evangelizzazione*, red. M. Marcheselli,

## **A media character of religiousness**

Modern sociology describes a phenomenon which consists in leaving an institutionalized religiousness. Religion becomes „a manifestation of individual secularization”<sup>9</sup>. In such religiousness „without the Church”, the institution does not play an important part. Neither personal nor inner experience of transcendent God matters. What matters is immanent sensation. Due to this, religiousness itself becomes a product which sells well in the media. The media get also engaged in questioning and undermining moral norms and values arising from the gospel<sup>10</sup>.

The media, which by their very nature, are a dynamic reality lead to the so-called medialization of religious messages. It is a complex social process, induced by a growing importance of the mass media, which leads to the transfer of the activities from the real-life reality into a virtual one. In the long run it may even result in shaking or altering certain values<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, the people who participate in religious events contribute to them being seen as media events.<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon consists in publishing information, photos and online broadcasts in social media. From the point of view of promotion it seems quite right. However, it also has a side effect. Sacred reality consisting in intimate experience is equalized with other information available online. It is also difficult to mark borders between being a creator and a recipient. Modern social or communication plat-

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Bologna, 2019, s. 115–138; J. L. Moral, *Modernità e cambio epocale. Prospettive culturali e teologiche con temporee*, Roma 2019; C. Meneghetti, *Elementi della teologia della comunicazione*, Padova 2015, s. 31–48; G. Filoramo, *Religione e religioni*, Milano 2014; A. Spadaro, *Cyberteologia. Chrześcijaństwo w dobie Internetu*, Kraków 2013, s. 5–17.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. Mariański, *Religia i religijność w zsekularyzowanych społeczeństwach*, „Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 59 (2016) 4, s. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Tamże, s. 3–26.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. Zduniak, *Duchowość w epoce mediów elektronicznych*, w: *Media i religia. Nowy kontekst komunikacji*, red. R. Sierocki, M. Sokołowski, A. Zduniak, Toruń 2016, s. 38–41; J. Iwanicki, *Medializacja treści religijnych w kulturze internetowej i popularnej*, „Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe” 18 (2017) 2, s. 17–28.

<sup>12</sup> An example of this way of thinking might be an event „ which took place during baptism – when a priest took a little baby out of water and lifted them up, a five-year-old brother of a baptised child shouted with excitement: „The Lion King”. The baptism became an important religious event for that boy thanks to which he referred the whole ceremony to a well-known scene from a famous cartoon” (B. Wiczorek, *Wokół religii mediów*, „Kultura – Media-Teologia” 11(2012), s. 31).

forms give a chance to comment on and co-create information. There comes a risk of blurring its initial character. It results in a phenomenon which might be defined as „pop religion”. Pop religion is based on the fact that a religious message is replaced with unverified and subjective messages of pop culture. Faced with such messages man who is not rooted in faith is not able to select information. It can be observed then that man starts to build their religious identity on the basis of what they have heard or seen in the media. Intimate religious experiences both in vertical dimension (addressed to God) and horizontal (addressed to another man) get marginalized or cease to exist completely<sup>13</sup>.

As a consequence of those phenomena, a traditional method of the transmission of values through a family and catechesis has become unsettled. Medialized reality takes the place of a real-life religious socialisation<sup>14</sup>. An excess of information also causes a problem in the life of a young person. We may state that the media „deprive every meaning of its meaning. There is no possibility of transcendence. The culture keeps spinning around more and more – everything becomes everything. By wiping out the meanings, the media deprive people of the ability to assess the world they live in. We lose this reference system which in the past was created by stable, intersubjective, verifiable notions and categories, which could be used to describe and criticize the world”<sup>15</sup>.

### **Superficiality of relationships**

Another challenge in social communication in the context of catechesis and evangelization is an adventure style of life, which in consequence leads to superficial human relationships. Difficulty in relationships may arise from many reasons. However, modern world of media engages people so much in virtual reality that it brings about difficulty in building real communication processes between people. At present, face-to-face communication gives way to interface-to-interface communication. Social media are to blame for that. A modern model of media audience differs from a classic formula. These days people do not get satisfied only

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Tamże, s. 28; K. Skowronek, Z. Pasek (red.), *Nowa duchowość w kulturze popularnej*, Kraków 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J. Dobrołowicz, *Mediatyzacja współczesności a procesy socjalizacji i wychowania*, „*Peedagogia Christiana*” 34 (2014), s. 137–150.

<sup>15</sup> Z. Melosik, *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży. W niewoli władzy i wolności*, Kraków 2013, s. 174.

with being the audience, but they aim at being a creator<sup>16</sup>. People want to participate actively in the communication process. The essence and the aim of functioning of social media is defined by their name – social media. This term „expresses social aims and functions of this kind of new media. Thus, they are a combination of relationships, behaviors, feelings, empiricism and user interactions where multidisciplinary communication of information, ideas and experience by means of advanced tools takes place”<sup>17</sup>. Thanks to social media, people realize their communication needs, but at the same time they lose an ability to build deeper relationships in the real world. By being a co-creator of the virtual reality, people get used to the absence of a real-life person. The feeling of anonymity fills them with courage when acting in the virtual world, but simultaneously it makes a person shy and closed in the real world. The desire and the mechanism of being online lead to the loss of touch with reality. The desire to communicate online results in losing a real, personal contact with another person. It bears the risk of cynicism and global negation<sup>18</sup>.

As a result of online contacts, ties between people are weak and superficial, deprived of stability. It should be noted that virtual communication creates the conditions for quantitative contacts as opposed to qualitative ones. They are characterized as deeply individualized and disengaged<sup>19</sup>. This superficiality acquired in virtual world translates into real world. It causes also superficiality in faith and problems with accepting the truth of faith. Faith loses its personal dimension. The authority of the Church as an institution also disappears<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. A. Andrzejewska, *Świat wirtualny miejscem nawiązywania i utrzymywania relacji przez młodzież*, w: *Edukacja – relacja – Zabawa*, red. A. Wrońska, R. Lew-Starowicz, A. Rywczyńska, Warszawa 2019, s. 68–89.

<sup>17</sup> M. Chmielewski, *Media społecznościowe jako narzędzie nowej ewangelizacji*, „Świat i Słowo” 1(22) 2014, s. 216.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. Klus-Stańska, *Cyfrowi tubylcy w szkole cyfrowych imigrantów, czyli awatar w świecie Ptysia i Balbinki*, „Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji” 9(2013) 4, s. 6–14; M. Wilkowski, *Cyfrowi Tubylcy i ich społeczny potencjał*, w: <https://www.edunews.pl/badania-i-deбаты/badania/1095-cyfrowi-tubylcy-i-ich-spoeczny-potencjal> (dostęp: 16.07.2019).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. B. Kanclerz, *Młodzież w rzeczywistości „globalnej zmiany” z perspektywy rówieśników*, „Kultura-Społeczeństwo-Edukacja” 2 (10) 2016, s. 281–294; B. Jankowiak, *Wczesna inicjacja seksualna młodzieży – przyczyny i konsekwencje*, „Kultura-Społeczeństwo-Edukacja” 1 (5) 2014, s. 171–187.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. J. Kostorz, *Problematyka wiary w refleksji współczesnych polskich katechetyków*, „Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana” 1(2014), s. 135–149; A. Żurek, *Komunikacja interpersonalna*

### A leading role of visual communication

Thomistic look at the order of things in the world and faith presumed theocentrism. As a result of the changes sweeping through the second half of the XX century we can speak about the dominance of anthropocentrism. Today's position of the media in the world establishes a basis to use a term mediocentrism<sup>21</sup>. The synergy of parallelly functioning and developing culture and communication has resulted in the dominance of the visual communication. The whole communication process is subject to the dominance of an image. It has happened so at the expense of a traditional message based on a word. A new anthropological situation has caused that a *homo audiens* has become a *homo videns*<sup>22</sup>. A rational and thinking person has been replaced with a looking and watching one<sup>23</sup>.

An image starts to affect human senses not their intellect. Cultural analysis indicates a primary role of an image also in contexts neutral about religious matters<sup>24</sup>. People who put an image in the first place in a communication process very often present a diminished ability to think abstractly. It is a vital threat especially in terms of a concern for faith. Religious cognition presumes acquisition of abstract terms and symbols. Another dangerous phenomenon is a reduction of language competence. The scope of vocabulary gets limited. A language which is deprived of abstract elements becomes only a tool of communication on a basic level. Looking at a picture people give it their own interpretation without searching for the right and true one. A person with reduced abstract thinking has problems with concentration and tends to demand an immediate effect. It forms

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*drogą do Chrześcijańskiego Braterstwa*, „Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeskie” 23 (2016), s. 277–289; M. Rusiecki, *Pedagogika w Służbie wiary*, „Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne” 11 (2012), s. 161–191.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. J. Pyżalski, *Agresja elektroniczna i cyberbullying jako nowe ryzykowne zachowania młodzieży*, Kraków 2012, s. 16; P. Celiński, *Postmedia. Cyfrowy kod i bazy danych*, Lublin 2013, s. 7–11.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A term *homo videns* comes from Italian social science. It was introduced by Giovanni Sartori in his book *Homo videns. Telewizja i pomyślenie*, Warszawa 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. Iwanicki, *Medializacja treści religijnych w kulturze internetowej i popularnej*, „Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe” 18 (2017) 2, s. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. S. Lubello, *Loscrittofactotum dei natividigitali*, „Lingue e Culture dei Media” 1 (2017), s. 143–146; A. Skudrzyk, *Homo videns – nowe media a język młodego pokolenia*, w: *Profilaktyka logopedyczna w praktyce edukacyjnej*, (red.) K. Węsierska, N. Moćkot. 2, Katowice 2013, s. 43–52.



a significant barrier in the process of evangelization and catechesis, which is a complex and long-term processes<sup>25</sup>.

Summing up, new communication challenges give the Church ministry a difficult task. Contemporary world is not divided between *sacrum* and *profanum* areas. Both realities take part in the process of social communication. As the above-mentioned analyses show, people have a need to be accepted and to belong somewhere. Social communication fulfils many of those needs, strengthens self-esteem, allows to acquire different competencies, but at the same time it deprives people of a multitude of experiences and feelings connected with real interpersonal relationships. Man, despite having many virtual contacts, remains lonely and devoid of a deeper social and anthropological reflection. All these together challenge modern evangelization and catechesis.

## **A PROPOSED MODEL OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS**

In the light of the above-mentioned challenges, there arises a need for a reflection upon the concept of evangelization and catechesis. It seems that a question about the model of evangelization and catechesis is the question about the model of the Church, implicitly the Church which wants to be missionary and dynamic in ministry. Without a doubt this reflection must include a human being who lives in a specific culture and is subject to specific social and communication processes<sup>26</sup>. Presuming, in purely Thomistic categories, that the rejection of the message of the Gospel and the ministry of the Church results from a failure on the part of the preachers, every effort should be made to properly understand the essence of evangelization and catechesis<sup>27</sup>.

The latest document of the Catholic Church on the evangelization ministry is the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis *Evangelii gaudium* (2013). This

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. R. Gualdo, *Letti disfatti. Lettura e scrittura spezzate nei quotidiani digitali*, „Lingue e Culture dei Media” 2 (2018), s. 1–16; M. Tanaś, S. Galanciak, *Dziecko w sieci zagrożenie – ryzykowne zachowania internetowe dzieci i młodzieży jako wyzwanie dla edukacji*, w: *Edukacja – relacja – Zabawa*, red. A. Wrońska, R. Lew-Starowicz, A. Rywczyńska, Warszawa 2019, s. 40–61; M. Jabłońska, K. Bilewicz, *Pokolenie przełomu w WEB 2.0*, „Acta UniversitatisLodziensis. Folia Sociologica” 56 (2016), s. 83–97.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. M. Nardello, *Evangelizzazione*, Assisi 2017, s. 7–10.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Tamże, s. 103.

document reminds that “in catechesis... [there is] the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the center of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal”<sup>28</sup>. Thus, it can be assumed that in the face of current challenges of social communication a model of evangelization and catechesis should be based on kerygma. Pope Francis preaches that kerygma is „ the fire of the Spirit is given in the form of tongues and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ who, by his death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father’s infinite mercy”<sup>29</sup>. The argument speaking for kerygma is a statement that can be found in the same document: „Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines”<sup>30</sup>.

When searching for the vision of contemporary evangelization and catechesis we should start with Christ’s missionary commandment: „Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28,19–20). These words cover the whole program. They command to work with the people in the community of the Church. That is exactly what the catechesis, which wants to deepen the relationship of the believers receiving sacraments with God, assumes. The words of commandment of Christ underline a missionary and dynamic character of the Church. She must evolve. Regardless of the setbacks that come in the way and in order to stay faithful to Christ, the Church must seek for new believers and bring the lost to the community of the Church. New evangelization must proceed this way. The Church must not close herself within small groups, indifferent towards the needs of the world and the lost, also or even primarily in the cyber world<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> EG 164. To broaden the issue: Cf. P. Mąkosza (red.), *Nowa ewangelizacja w nowej katechezie*, Rzeszów 2013.

<sup>29</sup> EG 164; Cf. P. Mąkosza, *Ewangelizacyjny wymiar katechezy*, w: *Katecheza w swoich podstawowych wymiarach*, red. J. Czerkawski, Kielce 2013, s. 169–178.

<sup>30</sup> EG 165; Cf. P. Mąkosza, *Dynamika ewangelizacji według adhortacji apostołskiej “Evangelii gaudium” papieża Franciszka*, „*Studia Pastoralne*” 10 (2014) 10, s. 327–340.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. P. Mąkosza, *Przyszłość ewangelizacji i katechezy wobec przemian kulturowych*, w: *Wychowanie i katecheza w służbie Polakom w kraju i na emigracji*, red. P. Mąkosza, Lublin 2018,

The proposed action requires from the whole community of the Church, and primarily from those who actively create evangelization and catechesis, a pastoral conversion<sup>32</sup>. The Church, by her nature, is of missionary character and she should make an effort to evangelize even if it calls for a change of mentality and costs a lot in spiritual and material scope. It is not only about ministry *ad gentes*. The toughest task is to evangelize the already baptized. It is a difficult challenge to convert the baptized and bring them into real contact with God. It is the aim and the task of new evangelization<sup>33</sup>.

Contemporary man is lost between cyberspace and search of a real relationship. Perhaps difficult conditions in which a modern society exists force the Church to organize the ministry, which might be called **preevangelization**. Its objective is to evoke a reflection on your own fate and looking for happiness. Preevangelization is to sensitize people towards spiritual values and help overcome reluctance to religious reality<sup>34</sup>. Only when people open up and start asking existential questions, is it possible to move on to the next stage, which is **evangelization**. The aim of it is to show God who is love and who loves people. As a result, people want to respond to that love and make an effort to convert. Then they proclaim Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, whom they want to follow<sup>35</sup>. If this stage is successful, we can move on to **catechesis**, which introduces people into the fullness of Christian life. Actually, it is only the catechesis that assumes permanent formation in the community of the Church, which leads to a deepening of the faith and strengthening of a personal relationship with God<sup>36</sup>.

Justifying the search of the right model in catechesis and evangelization, it should be noted that recognizing and receiving kerygma might be a way to bring back joy, sense of life and activity to the modern man. The words of Pope Francis who says: „The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow,

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s. 8–19; M. Kałużyńska-Tyburska, *Nowe media w komunikacji Kościoła ze światem*, „Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne” 12 (2017), s. 119–132.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. EG 30.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. L. Lippi, *La teologia dell'evangelizzazione a bolognanelquadrodella teologia post-conciliare*, w: *Unpensieroapertosull'evangelizzazione*, M. Marcheselli (red.), Bologna 2019, s. 42–43.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. S. Dyk, *Nowa ewangelizacja. Konkretne wezwanie*, Gubin 2015, s. 82.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Tamże.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. J.L. Moral, *Cittadini nella Chiesa, Cristiani nel mondo*, Roma 2017, s. 166.

inner emptiness and loneliness”<sup>37</sup>, should be regarded as crucial. These words express what the tradition of the Church called kerygma. Kerygma is not only the fundamental truth of the Gospel about God’s love to mankind revealed in the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but also „an event of power which makes the sad, the rejected, the poor, the enslaved, the sick, the dead, the lepers and the possessed open up to a completely new reality of change – they recover themselves”<sup>38</sup>. The people who are poor, enslaved and lost in modern world are those who are lost in what poses threats to social communication.

The power of kerygma in the presence of media character of religiousness, superficiality of relationships and dominance of a visual message lies in the simplicity of its message. Kerygma is a message. It is not a teaching or a philosophical or theological doctrine that might raise objections. It is an event that is meant to inspire, bring about ecstasy, give food for thought and change life. An advantage of kerygma is that the whole event (message) invites people to participate in God’s love. Leading to love, showing love, pointing at loving God, human kindness – all these might happen to be a bridge between God’s grace and lost contemporary people. Evangelization based on kerygma assumes that people start to build a personal relationship with God through the experience of human goodness and love. It is a role of catechesis to strengthen this relationship. A citizen of modern world longs for what is real and personal. Thus, underlining kerygma in the new evangelization and catechesis ministry might be a prescription for setbacks<sup>39</sup>.

## NEW IDEAS

The proposed concept for new evangelization and catechesis cannot be limited to general assumptions. It calls for concrete guidelines and ideas. Listing the most essential ones we can speak about first of all, the right order of pastoral practice which assumes catechesis preceded by evangelization; secondly, the need to give hope based on a positive message, and thirdly, the right attitude of preachers and religion teachers.

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<sup>37</sup> EG 1.

<sup>38</sup> P. Spyra, *Kerygmat Jezusa – Dobra Nowina o człowieku i dla człowieka*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej”, 13(2014) 1, s. 222. s. 221–240.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. D. Rey, *Parafio obudź się. Wyzwania nowej ewangelizacji*, Gubin 2014, s. 134–137.

## The right order

In order to achieve catechetical goals, one must set the right order and structure of actions. As archbishop G. Ryś said „catechesis which is not preceded by evangelization is a waste of power and means”<sup>40</sup>. The whole catechesis process, then, should be preceded by evangelization. The modern religious education model practiced at home is of little effectiveness. There is a need for preevangelization<sup>41</sup>. In the context of modern communication challenges, especially in terms of understanding a human being and the reality they live in, we can assume that preevangelization should evoke a need for reflection on their lives, search of the sense of life, questions about happiness. Evangelization could point at the causes of the lack of joy and happiness. It should aim at guiding people out of sinful life through God’s love. The final stage of evangelization should be the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior. In other words, it should aim at leading to a personal relationship with Christ. As a consequence, catechesis should take up an effort to deepen and strengthen this relationship. It takes place when people get to know the truth of the faith, step into sacramental life, learn moral values and grow in prayer. It all leads to a moment when man discovers their place in the community of the Church and takes up ministry there<sup>42</sup>.

The same scheme of proceedings should be kept in case of new evangelization. It mainly refers to people who have already been baptized and even lived in the community of the Church, but due to various circumstances they ended up on the margins of religious life. Fr. Marek Dziewiecki speaks about a lot of effort that needs to be put in this matter. It is justified in the face of „new man” living in „a new type of society” and „new culture”. New evangelization is the ability to conduct a dialogue with people, where the element of human testimony goes first before doctrine. New evangelization is about a dialogue with God which is based on the law of love. There should be a lot of patience and responsibility in acting

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<sup>40</sup> KAI, *An interview with archbishop G. Ryś*, in: <https://www.deon.pl/religia/duchosc-i-wiara/zycie-i-wiara/art,4208,katecheza-ktorej-nie-poprzedza-ewangelizacja-jest-marnowaniem-sil-i-srodkow.html> (access: 20.07.2019).

<sup>41</sup> Italian literature uses a term „primo annunzio”, which can be translated as the first teaching or the first preaching. Cf. Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Incontriamo Gesù*, Milano 2014, s. 63–83.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. E. Antonelli, *Una Chiesa in ascolto in uscita. Per una nuova evangelizzazione*, Milano 2018, s. 47–58.

with a view to achieving this goal and restoring the right place of people in the community<sup>43</sup>.

The biggest hurdle is to keep the right order and resist the temptation of too hasty jump into catechesis. This process requires robust preparation. The main challenge seems to be the ability to build a relationship with another man. Modern man, immersed in digital and virtual contacts, has real difficulties in undertaking authentic relationships with others. Thus, the time of preevangelization and evangelization should be mainly used to shape the capability of building relationships. Catechesis is meant to establish and strengthen the relationship with God, who can be experienced in a sensory and visual manner. Such a relationship demands from man a solid foundation in the shape of the ability to build personal relationships<sup>44</sup>.

This way of thinking can be supported by the argumentation of the earliest Christian communities. Even persecutions did not hamper their development. Clement of Alexandria (150–215) in his *Paedagogus* raises the issue of the differentiation between evangelization and catechesis pointing, this way, at the significance of it. By referring to the first Epistle to the Corinthians (3, 1–3), he explains that Paul's „milk” means preaching as kerygma (the use of the Greek word *kerygma*), whereas the well-established faith is a „solid food” like foundation, like a fruit of catechesis (the use of the Greek word *katechesis*). Thus, if catechesis is to come to fruition, it needs to follow kerygma preaching. To use an analogy, we may say that if life is to grow and develop in man, it must be first begotten<sup>45</sup>. Keeping the right order guarantees a gradual development in personal and religious dimension. Man can be led to the development of faith through the conjunction of building the ability to communicate in a real and personal manner and going through preevangelization, evangelization and catechesis. These latter three (and especially new evangelization) become a „way of communication” of the Church with the modern world<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. M. Dziewiecki, Nowa ewangelizacja – nowa komunikacja, w: [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZM/nowakomunikacja\\_new.html](https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/Z/ZM/nowakomunikacja_new.html) (dostęp: 20.07.2019).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. J. H. Prado Flores, *Nowi Ewangelizatorzy dla nowej Ewangelizacji*, Poznań 2013, s. 33–38.

<sup>45</sup> P. Spyra, *Kerygmat Jezusa – Dobra Nowina o człowieku i dla człowieka*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej”, 13(2014) 1, s. 222. s. 221–240.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Nardello, *Evangelizzazione*, s. 139–143.

### **A positive message**

One of the most characteristic features of the Church preaching after Vatican Council II is the pursuit of the positive message. This one of the most fundamental assumptions of John XXIII, who convened the Council, is also needed in the modern model of catechesis and evangelization. God's message, based on the law of love, is to lead to a comprehensive anthropological development. People, aware of their existence, should see the world and God in the positive light: as a good, not a threat<sup>47</sup>. Deep cognition and being close to God are the ultimate goals of catechesis – they prompt people to think positive. Showing God in the light of love may teach man to perceive various life situations in a positive way, more as a challenge than a difficulty. At the stage of evangelization, then, it is vital to have the kerygma truth of God, who is Love, in the center. At the stage of catechesis, in turn, it is essential to carry on this way and focus on the attitude of faith and trust, rather than difficulties in faith. God's commandments and the whole process of moral formation should be shown as an incentive and Good News, not as a restriction. When teaching prayer, a living relationship and spontaneity should be sought for, rather than a concern for external appearance. When preparing for sacraments, the richness of the grace and the reality of „being gifted” should be underlined. Formalized attitude where a sacrament becomes only a „reward” for good and thorough preparation should be avoided. Man created in the image and likeness of God should see the Donor of life and merciful Father<sup>48</sup>.

It seems particularly essential to build a proper and positive picture of the Church which should be understood and experienced as a community, not only as an institution. New evangelization and catechesis should be a ministry that brings life to the Church, promotes good, shows the beauty of being God's child and not just focuses on the defence against the threats of the world, such as: atheism, desecularisation, economic enslavement and other<sup>49</sup>.

In 2003 John Paul II in „Ecclesia in Europa” warned against a vision of the Church and preaching which recalls „the dimming of hope”<sup>50</sup>. In 2019 pope

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Moral, *Cittadini nella Chiesa*, s. 186–198.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. P. Goliszek, *Personalistyczny wymiar katechezy*, Lublin 2017, s. 205–227.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Przemówienie – Prowadzić dzieło Nowej Ewangelizacji* (23.03.2001), w: „L'Osservatore Romano” 22 (2001) 5, s. 30–31.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. EiE 7–11.

Francis urges people „not to let themselves be robbed of hope”<sup>51</sup>. A positive message which leads to building the attitude of hope and shows the closeness of God is absolutely critical in the face of modern challenges of social communication. The modern world of media „is fascinated” with fake news. It is full of tragic messages, negative comments and examples<sup>52</sup>. God and the Church are often spoken about in a very negative, often irrational, way. People who are present in this cyberspace, or even create it themselves, need a specific antidote. It is right there that new evangelization and catechesis, based on a positive message and leading to the strengthening of hope, may show people the beauty of faith and relationship with God<sup>53</sup>.

### **The attitude of preachers and religion teachers**

A fundamental drive to take up the ministry of a preacher and religion teacher is to fulfil a missionary commandment of Christ. Using a modern theological language of Pope Francis, we may state that a personal intimate relationship with Jesus is a must<sup>54</sup>. Therefore, the first stage of successful evangelization and catechesis should be the evangelization of the ministers. Each minister should go through the stage of evangelization and catechesis in order to be well-prepared for the ministry and testimony. What it means is that each preacher and religion teacher should receive kerygma, pass through evangelization, believe in Christ and keep taking up a continuous conversion<sup>55</sup>. A personal experience of Christ’s closeness must be constantly renewed. Only then will a preacher or a religion teacher be able to serve as a credible witness<sup>56</sup>.

For it is only by knowing and experiencing God that both a preacher and a religion teacher can lead others to God. Therefore, ministers must pray and work

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<sup>51</sup> CV 15.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. M. Dębski, *Negative consequences of abusing digital media by children*, in: <https://portal.librus.pl/rodzina/artykuly/negatywne-konsekwencje-naduzywania-przez-dzieci-mediow-cyfrowych> (dostęp: 20.07.2019).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Moral, *Cittadini nella Chiesa*, s. 186; Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Incontriamo Gesù*, s. 26–29.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. EG 119–120; Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, *Incontriamo Gesù*, s. 111–114.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. EG 120–121; 165; 264.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. J. H. Prado Flores, *Jak ewangelizować ochrzczonych*, Poznań 2016, s. 155–156; A. Parisi, *Cresere nella fedelta allo stile di vita del vangelo*, w: *La catechesis educa alla gioia evangelica*, red. G. Alcamo, Milano 2014, s. 139–159.



on themselves. They must be described as full of life joy. As Pope Francis emphasizes: a preacher „must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral”<sup>57</sup>. If they reveal any sign of anxiety or of being lost, it questions their tie with Jesus. The very attitude of joy and happiness might be enticing enough to attract people to the Good News. Then evangelization and catechesis occur not only through words, but also through „the witness of a Christian life”<sup>58</sup>.

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What is also important in the attitude of preachers and religion teachers, especially in the face of the listed social communication challenges, is their active and dynamic presence amongst people. It encompasses both real-life relationships and virtual ones. Modern social networking platforms or any other ways of digital thought exchange might become „the venues” with those who live in and surf this digital world. The virtual reality will never become a place to conduct evangelization or catechesis as they require a personal relationship. However, it might be a space where a dialogue will start. The beauty and richness of a personal relationship might be a fruit of that. A reasonable approach of preachers and religion teachers might guide out of „digital slavery”<sup>59</sup> into the discovery of the beauty of faith<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> EG 10.

<sup>58</sup> KKK, 2044. Cf. EG, 259: „A life transfigured by God’s presence”.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. M. Feliksiak, *Korzystanie z Internetu*, Fundacja Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej CBOS, Warszawa 2018, s. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. P. Ochotny, *Filozofia dialogu inspiracją dla komunikacji pastoralnej*, „Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne” 12 (2017), s. 91–108.

It seems that a deep formation of preachers and religion teachers is a practical response to all those challenges. They should get familiar with „the purpose of kerygma, its contents, form, essence, main elements and the order of preaching them. Otherwise, evangelization is at risk of being distorted through accentuating secondary contents, skipping vital ones or disturbing the right order which is strictly related to the history of salvation”<sup>61</sup>.

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## CONCLUSION

This article, which is an outcome of research, shows the complexity and breadth of new evangelization and catechesis in the face of modern social communication challenges. This elaboration gives only an outline of the problem and is limited to the most crucial issues. Nevertheless, it requires a synthetic summary.

A media character of religiousness, superficiality of relationships and a primary role of visual communication along with other co-related factors contribute to the context of modern social communication. It is a reality which sets a difficult goal for preaching and catechetical ministry. It is extremely hard to reach a person who is often closed in cyberspace, a person who is lonely, unfamiliar with the Good News. It requires a lot of diligence. In the face of such challenges there are certain ideas and solutions. In the first place, the ministry should be put in the right order. Catechesis must be preceded by evangelization and evangelization must be preceded by preevangelization. The whole ministry of the Church should

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<sup>61</sup> P. Mąkosa, *Kompetencje ewangelizatorów fundamentem nowej ewangelizacji*, w: *Nowa ewangelizacja w nowej katechezie*, red. tenże, Rzeszów 2013, s. 198; J. A. Pagola, *Percorsi di Evangelizzazione*, Bologna 2018, s. 5–8.

have a positive message and lead to hope. One of the most crucial elements of evangelization and catechesis processes is the ministry of preachers and religion teachers. They should be required to represent authentic faith, dynamic engagement and evangelical sensitivity.

Summing up, we can also submit a postulate for theological thought which would take up research on social and media communication in a broader and deeper manner. It is a media and communication reality that becomes a hegemon in programming the values of modern man. The media provide us with the language of modern communication and expression in the world of culture. A media character of thinking and communicating has also an impact on many forms of behaviour connected with faith.

At the end, we can refer to the principle of fidelity to God and man. It is a rule that prevails in the whole ministry of the Church. Following this principle, then, every effort should be made not to lose kerygma that expresses God, who is Love, in the course of seeking for new forms and methods. It is also vital to constantly look for effective ways of better understanding this Love and bringing It to modern man.

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