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## **THE PEDAGOGY OF FAITH IN THE CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Since the dawn of time, human beings have been asking themselves who they are, where they come from and where they are going. This truth is perfectly reflected by the words of the aphorism above the entrance to the temple of Apollo in ancient Delphi – *gnōthi seauton* (gr. γνῶθι σεαυτόν; lat. *nosce te ipsum*). The constant yearning for self discovery is still relevant today, as it seems that the task of the ancient Greeks has not been fully realised to this day. It is worth mentioning that the search for the answer to the above existential dilemmas has caused people of all times and cultures to create their own deities. There were the gods of the Greek myths, described for instance on the pages of the Iliad or the Odyssey. There were also bloodthirsty gods. There were also gods of distant abstraction which can be ignored. However, only one God commenced the history of salvation and entered it personally through revealing and manifesting Himself in His Son. There is only one Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and His name is (Ex 3, 14) *I AM WHO I AM* (heb. אֲנִי אֲנִי – *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*). This redemptive event means that the centre of the Catholic school is always constituted by the Lord of history and the Redeemer of Man

– Jesus Christ: *Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews* (heb. ישוע הנצרת מלך היהודים  
– *Yeshu'a HaNatserat Melech HaYehudim*; lat. *Iesvs Nazarenvs Rex Ivdæorum*;  
gr. Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων – *Iésús ho Nazóraios ho basileus tón Iúdaíon* – J 19, 19-22).

Although a lot has been done in this direction in many areas of human life, man (gr. ἄνθρωπος – *ánthropos*) still remains an impenetrable mystery. At the moment religious and cultural changes (which take place on a global and civilization scale) seem to quench all efforts that serve to develop and form the faith which for centuries has fully corresponded with the Christian anthropology. One of the pillars of the power and the dynamism of the Church is the Catholic school. Although it is the place of proselytization (the guardian of the holy deposit of faith – lat. *depositum fidei*), it should respond to contemporary challenges. The Church, while pondering over its current mission, more and more often points to the Catholic school as the privileged means leading to a complete (integral) formation of Its members. In this important centre of intellectual and moral formation of the young generation, the Church also observes that many doubts and objections are raised from many different directions about this institution, its justification, its value and effectiveness.

In the presented book “The Pedagogy of Faith in the Contemporary Catholic School” an attempt has been made to answer the following questions – why do we need a Catholic school? What is its mission in the contemporary world? Is it at all possible to form faith? Since today it is the faith, and not the economy, that undergoes a global crisis. Therefore, there is a need to take up the topic of faith and, at the same time, to attempt to answer the above questions.

Numerous sources have been referred to while examining this subject. These sources are the statements of the Church, made since the Second Vatican Council and up to Pope Benedict XVI, on the subject of being brought up in the faith in a contemporary Catholic school. Applying a method of critical analysis of the source texts, and using both linguistic philosophy and the philosophy of language as research methods, allows us to reach the essence of the issue of faith and the possibility of forming it. The documents that have been referred to are the conciliar documents, the teaching of the Congregation for Catholic Education and that of Popes

Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Among them a very special position is held by the conciliar Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*, John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, and most of all by *Catholic School* issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1977. This last document contains a fundamental report on the rights and responsibilities of a Catholic school in the modern world. Apart from Polish literature, foreign language works have also been used, including philosophical and theological, biblical and religious educational, pedagogic and educational ones. Referring to the original texts, and also to knowledge from other areas of human cognition, allows us to present the subject thoroughly from a broad perspective and in many aspects.

It should be noted that in the Church documents and in the extensive literature on the subject, only in its basic form (not taking into account numerous variations and possible syntactic combinations), as many as several dozen (almost 40) various terms refer to the same (apparently, it might seem) issue, however, without any more profound analysis and references, for instance educating in faith, growing up in faith, communication of faith, religious education, Christian education, deepening and developing faith, introducing faith, ascending the mind to seeing faith, education for the growth of faith, teaching according to the school of faith, inviting faith, educating in the light of faith, the pedagogy of adapting the rules of the Gospel, the pedagogy of God, and religious pedagogy. In this situation, there is an urgent need to introduce order in this area. This is why the term "pedagogy of faith" has been used in the title of this book on purpose. It results from the semantics (meaning) of the word and from an attempt to organise Church terminology. At the foundation of the Catholic school is the pedagogy of God. Just like in the Old Testament, God leads and brings up the Chosen People. In the same way He leads the community of the Church, and within it the Catholic school. He (the God of the Old and New Testament) is not only the best guide and teacher (gr. παιδαγωγός – *paidagogos*: the one that leads, accompanies), but also the participant in a man's life, the participant that constantly provides for man. The most visible presence of God (pedagogical accompanying) is conveyed by the already mentioned name of God – YAHWEH. In the New Testament, at the basis of this faith is the resurrection of Christ, and the laws of the Bible become the

inspiration to create an educational programme, including both motivation and aim, and the axiology accepted by the Catholic school creates its future nature.

After a short description of the subject matter, it is worth indicating the areas of discussion in such a broad semantic domain. This book is supposed to be a cognitive adventure designed in four basic interpretive acts. In order to present the main references of the pedagogy in faith in the catholic school in a clear way, excessive atomization (fragmentation) and excessive attention to detail has been avoided deliberately, which is visible in the construction of the table of contents. Hence, from the beginning, this publication attempts to reveal the main reasons and the historical and cultural context (the historic moment) of the transformation (passage) of the traditional church school (fr. *l'école chrétienne*) into a secular public school (fr. *l'école laïque*). It seems particularly interesting here to ask questions such as: How is the process of secularization understood? What is at the basis of this process? Is the word 'secularization' marked with contemporary meaning? (understood as atheism and the fight against the Church and religion in general), or perhaps in the history of education it has got a slightly different reference, and at the same time, different meaning (etymological connotations: gr. *λαϊκός*, lat. *laicus* – secular, folk, raising the status of what is secular)? This clarity of language and discussion seems to be simply essential, as we “often use the same words and use the same signs, but we completely fail to understand each other”.

After the description of the emergence of the Catholic school from the history of education, in the second part the attention is focused on the sources of the pedagogy of faith in reference to both the Bible, Tradition and Christian culture including the contemporary pedagogical thought. In chapter three we pass from the sources of the pedagogy of faith to its aims and tasks. Here an important position is occupied by the integral formation of a human being, his genuine relationship with God and opening up to the Church community. Special attention is also devoted to the issue of the inculturation of faith. The last interpretative part, chapter IV, is a direct indication of various communities of faith in a Catholic school, including the community of the universal and the local Church, and most of all – the community of the family. It is worth noting that some topics constantly recur in the analysis, for

example the issue of faith and its formation, religious instruction and the synthesis of faith and life. As there are formation spaces which are a part of many semantic relationships, and there are many environments where they are realised (denotations and connotations), these problems should occupy a due place in all the areas of the pedagogy of faith.

These deliberations should ultimately lead the reader to a situation where theological thought encounters specific life situations (anthropological existentialism). It is mostly about indicating the possibility of incorporating into the life of a contemporary Catholic school the so called rule of faithfulness to the eternal God and man losing his way (fr. *fidelité à Dieu et fidélité à l'homme*).

The wealth of knowledge contained in an abundance of documents the Church defines the Catholic school as the place of the integral formation of a human being through a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. The elementary tasks of the Catholic school include forming mental faculties, developing the ability to form proper judgments, and giving an introduction to cultural and religious heritage. Hence, the Catholic school is characterised by a double dimension – the horizontal and the vertical one, the secular and the religious one (educating, bringing up, evangelization and Christian initiation). What should set the Catholic school apart from others is, most of all, its reference to the Christian conception of the world and of man.

As far as the history of Europe in Christian times goes, teaching and education have always been present in the Church, as initially schools were connected with the Church institutions – with parishes, religious orders or cathedrals. Over the course of time, universities, which were founded and promoted by the Church, were also created. Therefore it can be said that this teaching originated in the Church, and its patron was the Church. It was not only a typical Church teaching, connected with theological issues, or to put it more simply, Church issues, but was also education understood as a service offered by the Church to society, to particular people – children, young people and adults. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for various reasons which are not always easy to define, Church education was taken over by the state, which was often guided by philosophical inspirations which were far from Christian thought. The

secularization of the educational system, marked mainly by Enlightenment philosophy, cannot be understood as ordinary atheism in education or as a fight with the Church and religion in general, because in the history of education it adopted etymological connotations (raising the status of what is secular). With time, in some parts of Europe this process became more definite and ideological (the French Revolution), and it was expressed by reducing various areas of life of universalist Christian civilization (lat. *respublica christiana*) to the secular (horizontal) dimension, and by gradual elimination of the Church and religion in general from the life of the society. Contemporary church schools, existing side by side with state (public) schools, and sometimes threatened by atheistic education which not only omits Christian education but often fights it, present a new (in fact traditional!) direction of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mainly, this is the direction of connecting the school with the Church not only as a supportive institution, an institution that provides patronage, or an institution which is the patron of education, but also with the Church which educates a new generation through the people as witnesses of faith. Just like in the Enlightenment it was possible to observe the process of appropriating the “church school” (fr. *l'école chrétienne*) by the secular school (fr. *l'école laïque*), today the state secular school, with greater and greater success, co-exists in pluralistic education with the school run by the Church (Catholic school). The latter one makes its alumni aware of the cultural bond with Europe, which was formed on the foundation of the heritage of antiquity and Christian tradition.

In today's world, which is becoming more and more secular, and in which the precipitating forces of secularization (consumption, practical materialism and hedonism) are more and more noticeable, man should lean more towards God and let God be God. That is why the pedagogy of faith attempts to penetrate both the mystery of man, and the mystery of God and His love. This is a mystery which embraces the whole history of salvation. Inviting Jesus is still valid today, especially now, when 21<sup>st</sup> century man is exposed to the great trial of faith, and the promoters of the new trends seem to bash on the drum of neopaganism with all their strength.

So, ancient Delphi has return with the basic and fundamental question about man – who he is, where he comes from and where he is going. Only when one knows

the answer to the question who he is, one can know what should be done and where he should go. It seems appropriate in this place to ask about so-called European standards. When we can hear that, in the name of freedom and tolerance, life without God has become the standard of modern European life, and in the name of pluralist public opinion, opinion polls and surveys should decide about life, the Catholic school chooses Christian anthropology and the axiology that comes from it, and freedom, remembering at the same time that freedom is not the same as latitude. Thus the pedagogy of faith is a formation activity that makes a human being (both the one that is formed and the one that forms, the disciple and the master) sensitive to the constant faithfulness and thanksgiving to God. We should note the justified message of the pedagogy of faith in the Catholic school, in the name of which there is no Catholic physics or biology, Catholic maths or chemistry, but there is the Catholic system of values and morality, Catholic social teaching and the Catholic hierarchy of values.

It is an important task of the pedagogy of faith in the Catholic school to eradicate excessive pride of a human being. Parents and teachers that co-operate with them are responsible for this task most of all. In turn, the constant presence of God in man's life in the world is the foundation on which the pedagogy of faith can be built. The argument recurs that in the pedagogy of faith presented here God, who reveals Himself to man through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, is the teacher. Thus it is not possible to talk about the pedagogy of faith in any school, let alone a Catholic one, without observing the rule of Christocentrism. Placing Christ in the centre causes that both a human being and individual communities of faith are inextricably linked with Him. In order to achieve that, one of the most crucial tasks of the Catholic school is shaping its image as the community where people – students, parents, teachers – meet with the only God in the Holy Trinity. It is expressed by boosting the growth of the awareness of the society of the responsibility for the school, and also by moving from the school perceived as an institution to school perceived as a community.

The key to the school understood in this way is the thesis that the teacher is a genuine and joyful witness. In the pedagogy of faith we should return to the real

identity of the Catholic school in its triple dimension: (1) education (respect for the methodology of a particular subject; presenting the relationships in the context of faith and reason – fides et ratio; Christian teaching about the origins and the nature of the world and the man; educational added value), (2) bringing up (good manners; promoting the integral man: personal, social, civic and patriotic, cultural, pro-family and religious formation; showing the ecclesiological dimension of a community; indicating the indirect, superior and ultimate aims; teaching how to live in the contemporary pluralism of outlook and culture) and (3) evangelization (spiritual and sacramental life: Christocentrism, evangelical morality, Christian personalism and humanism).

The principles of the pedagogy of faith described above must be perceived from the angle of the constant relation of man (the creation) to God (the Creator). The pedagogy of faith provides parents and teachers, who are worried about constructing teaching and educational programmes, with an unusual material of historical experiences of a traditional church school, of biblical and pedagogical foundations and of practical guidelines how to realize it in the community with God and man. At the same time it enables us to get to know the aims, their legitimacy, and what is most important, the methods of realizing the set aims through the proper formation of interpersonal relations.

On the basis of the values mentioned above and of the carried out analyses, a certain Decalogue of the Pedagogy of Faith in the contemporary Catholic school may be presented.

1. The first and foremost vertical source, way and aim is God.
2. The first and foremost horizontal source, way and aim is man.
3. Man understood as a person is the subject and object of activity.
4. Education connects the earthly life with the supernatural world.
5. Education integrates all spheres of human life.
6. Education indicates the same moral rights towards the student and the teacher.
7. Education is based on grace, human reason and objective axiology.
8. Education originates in the community – it is accomplished in the community and for the community.

9. Education cares for the integration of faith and life, and of faith and culture.

10. Education correlates with teaching and does not disregard formal education.

Thus, the Catholic school and, together with it, the pedagogy of faith that it undertakes derives from God Yahweh, it is present in His Son Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate aim in eternity, and it heads for Him in the Holy Spirit.