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RELIGIOUS MUSIC IN A FAMILY AS A MANIFESTATION OF RELIGIOUS FEELINGS OF ITS MEMBERS

“The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of the institution of the family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life. Finally, there are others who are hindered by various situations of injustice in the realization of their fundamental rights”¹. The contemporary Polish family is under the influence of numerous external factors seriously affecting not only its condition, structure and function but, first and foremost, the foundations of marriage and family. In a traditional Polish family a child had always been treated as a gift of the Creator, the acceptance of which required from the parents their will to undertake

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¹ *Familiaris Consortio* 1.

the process of child's upbringing². In a contemporary Polish family a child tends to be treated rather as a fruit of mutual love of a man and a woman, a fulfillment of their aspirations, a continuator of their dreams and expectations. The desire to achieve self-fulfillment as a father and a mother is sometimes so strong that the parents do not seem to be afraid to sacrifice many conceived human lives in order to have their most wanted child through the controversial "in vitro" fertilisation. Accepting a child imposes an obligation on Christian parents to provide it with a proper upbringing and education including a religious upbringing and education³.

While searching for effective ways of religious education of children, both pedagogy of religion and catechesis resort to culture and encourage building a spiritual family culture. It is, therefore, worthwhile to undertake a challenge to search for various forms of reinforcing the spiritual culture of a family, for instance, by means of music education, in particular, teaching the reception of church music strictly related to liturgy. Since sacred music is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and the mystery of Salvation through Our Lord Jesus Christ, it should be first and foremost analyzed through the biblical perspective.

1. The fundamentals of religious music in the Old Testament

There are certain passages in the Holy Bible (both in the Old and the New Testament), which directly or indirectly refer to music and singing, though music and singing *sensu stricto* do not seem to constitute a separate subject of consideration. Singing songs and hymns as such, or playing musical instruments, are only mentioned. Furthermore, musical tradition

² Cf. E. Osewska, *To Educate in a Diversified Europe*, "The Person and the Challenges" 1 (2011) nr 1, p. 71-88; E. Osewska, *The Current Situation of Education and Continuing Professional Development of RE Teachers in Poland in the Context of the Social Challenges*, "The Person and the Challenges" 2 (2012) nr 2, p. 123-131; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Sociological Aspects of Family Religious Education in Poland*, in: *Religious Education / Catechesis in the Family. A European Perspective*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Warszawa 2010, p. 167-177; E. Osewska, *Catechesis in the Polish Family – an Empirical Survey*, in: *Religious Education/Catechesis in the Family: A European Perspective*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Warszawa 2010, p. 179-192; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Anders erziehen in Polen. Der Erziehungs- und Bildungsbegriff im Kontext eines sich ständig verändernden Europas des XXI. Jahrhunderts*, Tarnów 2009; J. Stala, *Familienkatechese in Polen um die Jahrhundertwende. Probleme und Herausforderungen*, Tarnów 2008; J. Stala, *W kierunku integralnej edukacji religijnej w rodzinie. Próba refleksji nad nauczaniem Jana Pawła II w kontekście polskich uwarunkowań*, Tarnów 2010; *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, red. J. Stala, Kraków 2014.

³ Cf. *The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2015; *Religious Education / Catechesis in the Family. A European Perspective*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Warszawa 2010; J. Stala, *In der Familie durch die Liturgie der Hauskirche im Glauben wachsen*, "Theologica" 49 (2014) 2, p. 259-269; J. Stala, *Towards Religious Education in the Family in the 21st Century*, in: *The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2015, p. 309-318.

described in the pages of the Old and the New Testament may not be fully associated with, or compared to, today's understanding of liturgical music, since the concept of musical art in its contemporary meaning is simply non-existent in the Holy Bible⁴.

In the Old Testament there are many fragments referring to the importance of music, which accompanied the Israelites in various everyday situations, such as farming, harvesting or vintage⁵. Music also accompanied war campaigns, battles and victories⁶. It was performed during family celebrations and feasts⁷, both in the moments of joy, e.g. weddings⁸, and in the moments of sorrow and sadness, e.g. funerals⁹. Music was, however, predominantly associated with the temple cult and the worship of God. Singing and instrumental music were thus an integral part of the Old Testament cult. Most probably, the music accompanying the cult activities referred to the musical patterns of the region, though the Israelites tried to keep their original character also in the sphere of music¹⁰.

The presence of music in the Old Testament is also confirmed by frequent references to singing hymns and prayers, *inter alia*, in the Book of Psalms. The great majority of psalms were created by King David¹¹, who was regarded as a person possessing outstanding artistic, musical and poetic skills¹², and, in today's understanding, he could be treated as a kind of a "music therapist". Psalms are, to a significant degree, the prayers of worship of God. The praise of God was fundamental and indispensable for the People of Israel. The alternative "to praise or not to praise God" meant for a religious Israelite: "to live or not to live"¹³, since life was inextricably connected with everyday contact with the Almighty, who should be praised at any time. Hence, for a man of the Old Testament, a blissful and sublime mood of a prayer was strictly associated with music. Israel even accepted the possibility to emphasize the attitude of praise and thanksgiving by means of a specific dance¹⁴.

Music also accompanied the events related to Salvation. On Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb, a voice of Yahweh could be heard amongst thunder and

⁴ Cf. J. Waloszek, *Biblijne podstawy muzyki sakralnej*, vol. 1, "Liturgia Sacra" (1995) No. 1-2, p. 113.

⁵ Cf. Isa 9,2; Judg 9,27; Jer 31,4n.

⁶ Cf. Exod 15,1; Judg 5; 1 Sam 18,6n; Jdt 15,12-16.

⁷ Cf. Job 21,12; Isa 22,13; Jer 31,13; Ps(s) 69.

⁸ Cf. Ps(s) 45; Macc 5, 39.

⁹ Cf. 2 Sam 1,17-27; Chr 35,25.

¹⁰ Cf. R. Rachuta, *Muzyka w Biblii*, Poznań 2011.

¹¹ Cf. T. Brzegowy, *Psalterz Dawida*, Tarnów 1994, p. 17.

¹² Cf. T. M. Dąbek, *Muzyka liturgiczna w Starym i Nowym Przymierzu*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" (1987) No. 3, p. 253.

¹³ Cf. W. Kurzschinkel, *Die theologische Bestimmung der Musik. Neuere Beiträge zur Deutung und Wertung des Musizierens im christlichen Leben*, Trier 1971, p. 80-81.

¹⁴ Cf. Exod 20,4.

lightning and “a very loud trumpet blast”¹⁵. Music was present in another important moment of the history of Israel as well, i.e. during bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem¹⁶. It may be, therefore, assumed that singing and music played a crucial role in everyday life of Israelites, as well as in their temple cult and praising the Lord.

2. Religious music in the New Testament

The Christians continued the musical tradition of Israel by referring to the earlier musical patterns. An interesting illustration of this scene in the Cenacle, when Jesus and the Apostles praised God during the Last Supper not only with a spoken word but also with music. The Evangelists Mark¹⁷ and Matthew¹⁸ give an account that the Last Supper was finished with the singing: “When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives”. The hymn accounted for in this passage was a *Hallel* based on Psalm 114, or Psalms 115 and 118. Since every Holy Mass is an embodiment of the Passion, Death and Resurrection, but also a reference to the Last Supper, i.e. the very last common meal of Jesus and His Apostles, therefore common singing in the Cenacle is a pattern for community singing during the Holy Mass. A plain community singing during the liturgical gatherings was also an essential form of prayer for the first Christians since the very beginning. The Acts of the Apostles also notify us that the imprisoned Paul and Silas worshipped God by singing hymns. St. James gives an account on singing as well: “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise”¹⁹. St. Paul reminds the Christians: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”²⁰. Reading the instructions of St. Paul, an assumption²¹ can be made that singing was not just a marginal form of the spiritual life of the believers but rather its crucial element. On the one hand, singing functioned as a means of praising God but, on the other hand, it served a communal admonition and faith building. Praise to the Lord expressed by means of singing was possible due to the received power of the Holy Spirit, who strengthened faith, love and joy. Singing for the Lord straight from the heart meant the harmony between

¹⁵ Exod 19,16-19.

¹⁶ 2 Sam 6,5.

¹⁷ Cf. Mark 14,26.

¹⁸ Cf. Matt 26,30.

¹⁹ Jas 5,13.

²⁰ Eph 5,18-20.

²¹ Cf. O. Sohngen, *Theologie der Musik*, Kassel 1967, p. 13-21.

en the external activity and the internal attitude. Hence, the position of the body had to remain in harmony with the character of the singing. Singing and joyful exclamations accompany important biblical events, for instance in the moment when the Holy Spirit filled Elisabeth with bliss and she uttered an exclamation of joy while blessing Mary²². Mary too, filled with the Spirit, sang the *Magnificat*. Zechariah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, pronounced the hymn *Benedictus*, whereas an elderly man called Simon “moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple court”²³ and, seeing little Jesus, he sang a *canticle* of gratefulness.

In general, it may be argued that in the New Testament one may find ample instances of texts referring to music and singing. In the passages of the New Testament there are many doxologies, hymns, eulogies, canticles and festive praises, which is also confirmed by contemporary biblical exegetes. They seem to agree unanimously that in many passages of the New Testaments, traces of singing, or at least musical liturgical recitations, of the first Christian communities can be seen²⁴. A biblical concept of music is, therefore, based on a conviction that it should be an outward expression of religious feelings and deep internal emotions.

3. Religious music in a family: The contemporary context and challenges

A Christian family possesses its own heritage and is thus a place for the enculturation of the young generation but, on the other hand, it is not isolated from a broader culture, which models its spiritual, moral and social image. The contact with this “external” culture definitely offers some chances and opportunities but it also poses some threats. The 21st century is dominated by the so-called mass culture and its relative approach to the hitherto commonly accepted rites, traditions and values of a decent Christian life²⁵. Such a state of affairs raises serious worries among parents. For instance, popular music channels, like MTV, apart from promoting new music trends, also encourage children and youth to wear particular clothes, behave and act in a particular way. Young people treat music as an important element of their everyday life, hence the performers promoted by mass media quickly become idols manipulating the thinking and attitudes of the young generation. In order to prepare the young generation for life challenges of the 21st century, the families should undertake an effort to build their spiritual culture. The lack of such a culture in a family environment practically exclu-

²² Cf. Luke 1,42.

²³ Luke 2,27.

²⁴ Cf. H. Langkammer, *Hymny Chrystologiczne Nowego Testamentu*, Katowice 1976, p. 7.

²⁵ Cf. E. Osewska, *Uwarunkowania wychowania religijnego w rodzinie*, in: *W kręgu rodziny. Refleksje praktyków*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Poznań 2002, p. 13-21.

des proper religious upbringing. The spiritual culture consists not only of a word, sensitivity to symbolic meanings, family rites and customs, commonly accepted hierarchy of values, but also everyday musical culture²⁶.

Words, symbols and rites are experienced by family members practically on a daily basis. Similarly, music is internalized in this way. If at home a child is exposed mostly to low-quality popular music promoted by radio and television stations or in the internet, he or she will find it extremely difficult to achieve a subtle sensitivity to the masterpieces of classical and liturgical music in the future. In addition, it should be also pointed out here that the primary role of sacred music, as well as of liturgy, is not just to evoke deeply inspired emotions but also to praise the Lord and to trigger sanctification of the community of believers. Therefore, what is expected from religious music, both vocal and instrumental, is its sanctity. Sacred music is not an addition to liturgy but it is its integral part. In other words, it is a method of addressing God²⁷. For this reason, sacred music should be inextricably connected with the liturgical activities by expressing the prayer of the entire community and fostering its unity²⁸.

Family members, beyond any doubt, require some kind of preparation for a fully aware, active, complete and fruitful participation in liturgy, including their musical preparation. Plain knowledge and skills gathered by children during their religious education at school are definitely insufficient in this respect. What is necessary in this case is developing this specific sensitivity to the beauty of music, especially sacred music and religious singing, in a family remaining in a permanent contact with God: "As preparation for the worship celebrated in church, and as its prolongation in the home, the Christian family makes use of private prayer, which presents a great variety of forms. While this variety testifies to the extraordinary richness with which the Spirit vivifies Christian prayer, it serves also to meet the various needs and life situations of those who turn to the Lord in prayer"²⁹. Common family evening prayer, litanies, worship and various forms of Marian cult may be accompanied with religious singing. Some questions can be, therefore, given in this respect: Can religious singing be an important element of a family prayer? What is the religious musical culture of a contemporary Polish family? Are religious hymns and songs sung during everyday functioning of a family? Are religious hymns and songs performed in accordance

²⁶ Cf. Education and Creativity, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014; E. Osewska, Education and Internet Challenges, in: Education and Creativity, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014, p. 43-56; E. Osewska, The Basic Assumptions of Child Upbringing in the Family. Modern Implications, in: The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2015, p. 249-261.

²⁷ Sacrosanctum Concilium 112-121; Prawodawstwo muzyki liturgicznej, ed. A. Filaber, Warszawa 1997, p. 38-40.

²⁸ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 12.

²⁹ *Familiaris Consortio* 61.

with the liturgical period? Are children and youth being prepared to participate in liturgy with reference to their musical engagement? What criteria do bridegrooms and fiancés tend to adopt in their selection of music and singing for the liturgy of the sacrament of matrimony?

If we assume that the primary function of liturgical music is to facilitate a liturgical community in their deeper experience of the truths of faith, in building their unity and in emphasizing the importance of the whole liturgy as a moment of encounter with the Lord, therefore during the Eucharist on the occasion of the rite of marriage there is a place for vocal and instrumental music which still preserve the requirements of the liturgical music. A Christian family is a community of people, in which the initiation of the young generation into the life of a Christian takes place through the mediation of parents, grandparents, guardians or other relatives³⁰. In a little community of the nearest and dearest, children experience their first religious feelings, which often leave a decisive trace throughout their entire life³¹. For this reason, first musical experiences are also of crucial importance with their specific character. Christmas carols or hymns for a Passion Week meditation sung in a family circle remain for a long time in the memories of children and teenagers. In their later life, such memories will certainly bring back the atmosphere of familiar closeness, respect and kindness. Possible poor musical talents of the parents should never become a justification for resigning from common singing during prayers and family reunions, since in such cases a recorded professional musical background, or instrumental and vocal religious music, performed by professional music bands can be played from CD, mp3 and other media.

Undoubtedly, when children and youth experience music, this exerts a favorable impact on family relations, stimulates imagination, enriches vocabulary repertoire and facilitates thinking processes. A thoughtful contact of a child with music, even through singing in a family circle, positively affects future musical interests and activities, not to mention intellectual, emotional and personal development. Hence, increasing musical sensitivity and creating a positive motivation for music, developing musical talents, musicality and musical culture seriously affects the formation of personal and religious maturity³². For this reason, in a family circle, various forms of improving musical sensitivity of children and teenagers are advisable, e.g. listening to songs, singing, taping rhythm, learning how to play instruments or creating lyrics to commonly-known melodies. Applying religious hymns and songs in the prayer of younger children may occur extremely helpful, since small kids tend to enjoy multiple repetition of the content being acquired. In this way,

³⁰ Cf. *General Directory for Catechesis* 255.

³¹ Cf. *General Directory for Catechesis* 226.

³² Cf. M. Przychocińska, *Wychowanie muzyczne – idee, treści, kierunki rozwoju*, Warszawa 1989, p. 48-51.

children will eagerly praise the Lord through singing, which may be sometimes similar to the Old Testament repetitive blissful exclamations: “Hallelujah!”, or “Amen!” Most importantly, a child should learn that he or she can worship God and thank Him for everything also through a prayer accompanied with singing and joyful exclamations. Such a prayer should become a medium facilitating a child’s everyday contact with the Almighty.

It seems worthwhile in the case of the families with older children and teenagers to encourage the family members to participate regularly in such music-based church services as: Vespers, Lenten Lamentations, Little Office of Our Lady, May Devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, June Devotions to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus or the Rosary. If internalized at young age, the ability to use songbooks and a participation in a common family singing of litanies, Little Office or Vespers have a chance to be continued in adult life. Such an attitude remains in accordance with the parents’ right to bring up and educate their children in their own religious and cultural tradition, with the application of various means and tools³³. The evidence of grandparents and parents undertaking religious singing on a daily basis, as well as during special family occasions and religious celebrations, remains in a child’s memory for a long time. In this way, a plain natural introduction to faith is taking place, which does not require from parents any specific in-depth religious knowledge or expertise, but only participation in an ordinary religious initiation.

This form of religious upbringing traditionally has its confirmation in many preserved religious hymns, which enriched Polish culture with the musical pieces reflecting the spiritual life of the Poles. Their content and melodic connection with Gregorian singing in the initial phase of development is characteristic and seems to confirm the hypothesis that this music originated from liturgical singing. For this reason, many Polish religious songs and hymns appeared in relation to the Mystery of Christmas, Great Lent and Easter. Two church services played a special role in the development of Polish culture of church singing, i.e. *The Little Office of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, popularized in 18th century, and *Bitter Lamentations*, whose lyrics were first published in 1707. Additionally, a lot of hymns and songs pertaining to the Marian cult developed as part of May and October devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary³⁴. Also a popular *Songbook for Church Worship* by Rev. Jan Siedlecki, having as many as forty editions so far, is of crucial importance in this respect. The songbook contains various hymns and church songs, including ordinary and variable parts of the Holy Mass,

³³ Cf. *Familiaris Consortio* 40.

³⁴ Cf. J. Gładysz, *Matka Boża Tuchowska w pieśni*, in: *Cantate Domino Canticum Novum*, ed. S. Garnczarski, Tarnów 2004, p. 49-50; Z. Sadko, *Recepcja soborowej odnowy liturgicznej Diecezji Tarnowskiej za pasterzowania księdza arcybiskupa Jerzego Ablewicza (1962-1990)*, Tarnów 1997, p. 113.

as well as Latin singing transferred from the medieval scales to the currently applied keys. This songbook still can be found in many home libraries³⁵.

Religious music accompanied a man or a woman in his or her relation to God, giving it a sublime character. The Old Testament contains many passages presenting the cult accompanied by instrumental music (performed on flutes, trumpets, drums, harps or a zither). First Christians continued the musical tradition of Israel and introduced hymns and psalms into their liturgy. Common singing has been performed in Christian communities since the very beginning. If we assume that the biblical concept of music is based on a conviction that it is an expression of religious feelings, then a contemporary Christian family should not avoid both listening and performing religious music. Religious songs, hymns, psalms or vespers should definitely become an important part of religious education in a family.

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³⁵ Cf. S. Garnczarski, *Polska pieśń adwentowa w drukach od XVII do XX wieku*. Część I: *Opracowanie zebranych źródeł*. Część II: *Przekazy źródłowe badanych pieśni*, Tarnów 2014.

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