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## EDUCATION TO FAITH IN A FAMILY COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

### 1. Introduction

The world is witnessing a rapid development of new forms of mass communications. Undoubtedly, mass media, electronic media, audio-visual communications and multimedia have become widespread phenomena. Hence, the term “*information and communications technology*” (ICT) has achieved the status of a key concept in the modern world<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand, the transition into a new phase of culture provides an opportunity to present one’s experience and opinions on a much broader scale than ever, not only to a narrow circle of people but to a practically unlimited audience of electronic media users. On the other hand, however, such technologies offer everyone a direct virtual access to any information at any place, often without asking for permission and, in fact, without any limits whatsoever. In this way, a person may experience himself or herself as the center of an enormous information and communications network.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. Czekalski, *Fenomen komunikacji interpersonalnej w refleksji naukowej*, in: *Komunikacja wiary w trzecim tysiącleciu*, ed. S. Dziekoński, Olecko 2000, p. 139-142.

The rapid and practically unconstrained development of ICT also affects upbringing and education. The young generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century matures in direct contact with electronic media, treating them as an everyday tool of learning and entertainment, whereas the older generation, still remembering the world without all those electronic gadgets, is often lost in the new reality and tends to reflect on the process of education in the period of ICT domination. Christian parents ask themselves if and to what degree new media affect the education process of the young generation. They wonder how to help a child or a teenager to discover and learn the truth of humanity. They try to consider ways to facilitate the integral development of a young person and provide proper religious upbringing to their offspring in a culture which is predominantly influenced by electronic media. They also ponder on how to convey the truths of faith in a contemporary social and cultural context. However, we should bear in mind the fact that the transmission of Christian tradition is not merely a plain reproduction. Previous generations have transmitted the fundamentals of faith down to our generation by giving them a personal character. The system of faith transfer assumed constant external conditions and collaboration of educational environments, but when the relationship between religion and society changed fundamentally, the institution of education began to postulate different educational targets and the transfer was disturbed to such a degree that the process was referred to, in Europe, as “the crisis of a Christian tradition”.

## **2. The influence of information and communication technology on society**

Electronic media, whose potential of information and social communications transfer seems virtually unlimited, constitute a perfect example of contemporary communication. In addition, the impact of electronic media brought about massive social changes transforming the very foundation of human existence. Technology enters practically all dimensions of a human life, sometimes even detaching it from reality and creating a virtual world. Furthermore, ICT frequently pushes people away from the commonly accepted values, promoting the world of axiological and moral emptiness<sup>2</sup>.

There is a potentially dangerous tendency to treat electronic media as simply information transfer tools, whereas what we really observe is the fundamental transition from one phase of culture to another. The context and the structure of communications process are so different in particular phases that the transition from one phase to another actually triggers a serious crisis of communications. Each new phase of cultural development is inextricably connected with technical advancement, i.e. an increasingly more complex approach to the process of communications. Modern information

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Joos, *Messaggio cristiano e comunicazione oggi*, Negrar 1989, p. 29.

technologies took over basic functions of classical interpersonal communications. From a technical and social point of view, people lost control over the process of communications since it assumed a radically different structure. For instance, the development of the internet initiated totally new interpersonal relationships, in which interpersonal communication does not require meeting another person face to face any more. The development of the process of communication is also a confirmation of social changes, i.e. the transition from a simpler to a more complex type of society, from industrial to a postindustrial society, also referred to as a postmodern society. In this society information has become a major product, where the main criterion for the producers of information offered in mass media is not its importance or educational aspect but just its sales potential. As a result, news coverage, games, films, journals or other products of culture are prepared in such a way that they are easy to sell.

A negative consequence of treating information as a product is the glorification of the freedom of speech. In an information society, practically everything can be shown, disregarding the sphere of intimacy or privacy, as long as the conveyed content or images are politically "correct". If an image or content put the politically imposed way of thinking at risk, then a given piece of information will be withheld or rejected. For this reason, the access to positive information on good and noble activities or to a presentation of righteous heroes is usually more difficult than the access to negative news on violence, aggression and crime. Behind the apparent freedom of content transmission there is a hidden uncompromising subordination of social communications media to particular groups, institutions, political parties or sponsors.

Nowadays mass media have become not only a product but also a basic tool in the struggle for power and a highly effective way of social control<sup>3</sup>. Essentially, communications media seriously affect the public opinion, the dominant system of beliefs, as well as the way of thinking and interpreting current affairs. Mass media promote particular behaviors and attitudes. They often have the potential to change the political preferences of citizens, to generate the structure of needs and to impose the "political correctness" referring to customs, values and moral norms. They also form a future recipient and a consumer, create an addiction to mass media and detach people from real life<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Babin, *La catechesi nell'era della comunicazione*, Torino 1989, p. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Dziewiecki, *Miłość przemienia. Przewycięzanie trudności w małżeństwie i rodzinie*, Częstochowa 2002, p. 72-73; 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, *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; 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 Con-*

A scarcity of the conveyed contents is another feature characteristic for the so-called information society. Paradoxically, on the one hand, there is a great variety of information and communications media, but on the other hand, the content presented by them is seriously limited. Popular media promote the so-called “skin culture”, i.e. a superficial culture, which tends to avoid themes requiring some reflection and rather strengthens consumerism, subjectivism and relativism.

The influence of new communications media creates a particular type of a person addicted to such modern media as mobile phones, TV, internet etc. For this reason, especially young generation, so prompt to medial messages, becomes more iconic than logical, more affective emotionally than intellectually, and more intuitive than reflective. This means that this generation tends to pay more attention to the form of media coverage than to the presented content<sup>5</sup>.

### 3. More watching than listening

The development of mass media is accompanied by the domination of a new kind of language and form of information coverage. The communication based on a spoken or a written word has been dominating since the Ancient times. However, nowadays we are witnessing a rapid transition from a verbal language to an iconic language, not so much based on a word any more, but rather on a symbol, picture or image<sup>6</sup>. As a result, a young person transforms a verbal mind into an iconic mind, which causes serious anthropological consequences. Verbal imagination is based on the fantasy and creativity of a person, on his or her analytic and synthetic potential, and on the capacity of intellectual analysis of the image of reality. On the other hand, the communication based on graphic symbols means that a young person does not have to undertake any effort to imagine and create images, as they are ready to absorb what is in front of his or her very eyes. Contemporary recipients of information are in a way freed from thinking and critical reflection as they are convinced that they can see true events, not just their substitute. Visual communication reflects the way of life of a contemporary person. A verbal language and an iconic language differ from each other not only in terms of their structure and form of delivery, but also in terms of their internal logic

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text 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, 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.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. Dziewiecki, *Wychowanie w dobie ponowoczesności*, Kielce 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. C. Carnicella, *Comunicazione ed evangelizzazione*, Paoline, Milano 1998, p. 28-33.

and ways of affecting the recipient. A written word is a human-fabricated artifact, whereas an image is something natural, hence something universal in reception. Verbal language requires pre-defined grammatical and stylistic rules, whereas an iconic language rarely refers to pre-defined elements but rather constructs something original that may be converted many times. An important difference between the language of a word and the language of an image refers to the expression of a degree of certainty in relation to a particular content. In this respect, verbal language is able to convey a far more complex content (statements, doubts, reservations, questions, hypotheses, suppositions, arguments), whereas iconic language can only express mainly statements. Verbal language refers to ideas and concepts, and only indirectly to the world of emotions. Iconic language works conversely, as it refers immediately to the world of experience and emotions.

The logic of a verbal language requires a particular sequence of elements or events, whereas the logic of an iconic language is intuitive. In iconic communication, a recipient concentrates on the central elements of a given image and only later perceives its other peripheral constituents.

Words help to get through to another person by means of interrelated logical systems, whereas images attract attention with beauty, color, originality or a unique atmosphere. Words stimulate imagination, whereas images are ready-to-use products and require only a passive reception.

#### **4. Building a culture of communication in the family**

Language and methods of communication affect people by modifying their experience and self-expression. Nowadays, a cross-generation communication barrier can be a serious obstacle in communicating faith, as well as in the education to faith. As a matter of fact, the representatives of the older generation tend to feel better in verbal communication, whereas people of the younger generation usually prefer a quick exchange of graphic symbols, images or emoticons. The older generation seems to be in favor of meeting people eye to eye in order to have a conversation, to give a piece of information, but also to convey one's feelings. The younger generation prefers sending e-mails, or short messages (SMS), or joining the discussion on social networks without meeting someone directly. In this situation, it seems absolutely necessary to find proper forms of communicating, expressing the truths of faith in a clear, explicit and intelligible way. Similarly, there is a need to search for such forms of conveying faith that would be comprehensible for the image culture generation.

Communicating faith in the family should be based on the foundation of love. If the family members express love to one another by means of words, gestures and everyday activities, children grow up feeling secure and thus discover God's presence and His care for humanity. A child needs to disco-

ver the love of God through the contact with his or her nearest and dearest, i.e. parents, grandparents, siblings, legal guardians. Only on the basis of the experience of love can one can begin the process of education to faith. Gestures of love and kindness shown to the children make them feel loved, accepted and precious. The words of parents are conveyed much better to kids in the atmosphere of love and respect<sup>7</sup>.

While building the community of love in a family, the family members should devote time to being together and eliminating any barriers hindering communication. It is unwise to lead an important conversation while having a television on, or during receiving short messages on the phone and surfing in the internet. The family members need to give themselves some time to meet and lead a proper conversation. In the family, we should cherish and promote the *culture of communication*, based on the integration of two important aspects: creating community and conveying the truth. The truths of faith can be transmitted from one generation to another only in a family based on the community of people who show respect, love and peace to one another.

Proper emotional relations between parents, between parents and children, and among siblings create an emotional mood called the family atmosphere. The more positive the atmosphere resulting from inner-family interpersonal relationships and kind attitudes towards one another, the easier it is to achieve good communication and upbringing. What is symptomatic for an agreeable family atmosphere is the need to spend time together, to talk and to exchange the gestures of love among the family members. In a well functioning family community, parents find it easier to discuss with their offspring and reveal potential and real manipulations adopted by media, especially with reference to the media images promoting various products. The scale and specificity of offers directed at youth by the advertising machinery is massive and, simultaneously, young people are often under an enormous pressure by their peers. They are, in a way, forced to adapt to the promoted external image, or otherwise threaten to lead to exclusion, stigmatization, and degradation to a worse category within a particular group of children or teenagers. Therefore, emphasizing the internal value of a young person and supporting his or her integral development by the entire family community is absolutely necessary in this case. Otherwise, a young person may assume only the external look, clothes and other gadgets as satisfactory elements of

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. 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; *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; *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, ed. J. Stala, Kraków 2014.

self-development, since the power of influence of visual stimuli continually increases<sup>8</sup>.

Some questions, however, arise in this respect. If we accept the fact that the importance of iconic communications is on a constant increase, should we search for a new language, modern forms and methods of education to faith and, in this way, strengthen the faith of the young generation? Can the sensitivity of younger children to image be helpful in searching for ways to reinforce their faith? Does, in this situation, the oral message of family members require some kind of complementary image?

## 5. Visual experience and faith reinforcement

Contemporary parents seem to be fully aware that the young generation found its place in a virtual world, which is more visual than verbal. Simultaneously, they wonder if, and to what extent, the image can become helpful in education to faith, as well as in experiencing and strengthening faith in the new situation of an increased power of visual communication. Undoubtedly, the quantity and intensity of images perceived by a child and a teenager have increased dramatically. The dynamic development of medial images and visual messages, often chaotic and repeated with an enormous frequency in slightly modified versions, assumes a form of a “medial mess”. Some mass media apply the strategy of image and news “saturation”, test the reactions of the recipients, and then gradually accustom them to taking on the desired reactions. This is particularly observable in the strategies of new social behaviors and in their rejection of religious truths and moral norms.

Seemingly, in such a situation, the visual experience can also refer to faith, as a kind of mutual dependence and influence. On the one hand, religions use images, graphic drawings or visual symbols as the means of expression, which is especially true for the folk religion, lavish in visual representations of religious reality. On the other hand, visual arts may also lead to faith. The artistic experience of a person is not only an external expression of faith, but also an internal act of a person that builds up and strengthens as a religious faith. This means it appears and develops as a moment and form of faith in a given situation<sup>9</sup>. In other words, it may be assumed that the proposal for common family visits in art galleries, museums, exhibitions of religious art or simply perceiving the beauty of the surrounding world can become one of the ways of making someone more sensitive to accept faith<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Jędrzejko, *Zawirowany świat ponowoczesności*, Warszawa 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. Królikowski, *Zobaczyć wiarę. Obraz i doświadczenie wiary w Kościele*, in: *Wierzyć i widzieć*, eds. K. Flander, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasio, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J.S. Wojciechowski, M. Wrzeźniak, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Sandomierz 2013, p. 127-138.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014; J. Stala, In der Familie durch die Liturgie der Hauskirche im Glauben wachsen, “Theologica” 49 (2014) 2, p. 259-269; E.

Immersed in the world of visual mass communication, young children and teenagers are literally flooded by a multitude of images, graphic symbols, logos of famous corporations, and yet they are still able to recognize the very logo of their favorite company in the ocean of other symbols. In this context, searching for something exceeding their everyday reality by means of art may become a chance to discover the signs of the Incorporate Triune God<sup>11</sup>. Through the beauty of visual art, a person may not only gradually admire its creator, i.e. an artist, but one can arrive at the recognition of the ontologically First Creator, God. To what degree can Christian art improve sensitivity of young people, raise and strengthen their faith? What can instigate their artistic exultation and experience of faith? What kind of skills does the contemporary person require to read the message of Christian art?

According to contemporary theologians dealing with the theology of beauty, a pure “watching the faith” pertains to the moment, different from the experienced faith, but still constitutively requires faith as its foundation<sup>12</sup>. “Watching the faith” indicates the system of Christian tradition, which comes later than the act of faith as such. It however contains the act, deepens it, expresses it in various ways and continues it. “Watching the faith” means, therefore, the objectification of the content of the act of faith at the level of tradition, thus leading to the revival of the Christian religion. The Christian tradition is not just a repetition or interpretation of the past events from the life of Jesus Christ and His Church but also their representation, commemoration and matching with the life of contemporary Christians. The experience of faith arises not only from listening to the Word but also from watching the deeds of Jesus and His followers. As a result of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the invisible God became not only audible but also visible. The Almighty became closer to a human being, who was called upon not only to hear Him but also to adore His image. It may be, therefore, assumed that an “internal interchangeability” of speech and image takes place in Jesus Christ, which is confirmed by the Christological Titles: *Logos*-Word and *Eikon*-Image. Hence, raising and reinforcing the faith should embrace both the word and the image<sup>13</sup>. This rule is of particular importance in the

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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.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. W. Kawecki, *Teologia piękna. Poszukiwanie locus theologicus w kulturze współczesnej*, Poznań 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. Królikowski, *Nieme słowo. Teologia w sztuce*, Tarnów 2008; J. Królikowski, *Wizualne słowo. Teologia w sztuce*, Tarnów 2009; J. Królikowski, *Zobaczyć wiarę. Obraz i doświadczenie wiary w Kościele*, in: *Wierzyć i widzieć*, eds. K. Flander, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasio, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J.S. Wojciechowski, M. Wrześniak, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Sandomierz 2013, p. 127-138; W. Kawecki, *Czym jest locus theologicus kultury wizualnej?*, in: *Wierzyć i widzieć*, eds. K. Flander, D. Jaszewska, W. Kawecki, B. Klocek di Biasio, E. Mazur, N. Mojżyn, J.S. Wojciechowski, M. Wrześniak, D. Żukowska-

family context since the family community is a hermeneutical community, in which the selection and interpretation of the catechesis content takes place in particular situations<sup>14</sup>. It is not enough just to preach the words of Jesus Christ but it is also necessary to portray Him as the visual Image of God, in hours of worship and adoration. In many situations, it will also avoid creating anthropomorphic images of God the Father, which would make ascertaining a proper image of God difficult.

Apart from the theological aspect, it is worthwhile to refer to the anthropological aspect as well. In the initial years of life, a child possesses a great deal of developmental and educational plasticity, quickly reacts to visual elements and behaviors of adults, which he or she repeats promptly, practically without any effort whatsoever. In addition, a small child still cannot read, though he or she can observe carefully. A little kid eagerly observes pictures, drawings, paintings; hence books for children usually contain interesting illustrations. Visual signs constitute an important carrier, or medium, of information for children, hence an image with a religious content in their surrounding attracts their interest and encourages them to ask questions. In addition, seeing a religious picture at home or in a church building, children can often focus their attention on it, experience the feeling of amazement, surprise or admiration. The exceptionality of young image recipients, especially kindergarten kids and early primary school children, gives the parents the opportunity to gradually introduce this age group of children into a relation with God. As a matter of fact, perception in this situation is of crucial importance<sup>15</sup>.

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Gardzińska, Sandomierz 2013, p. 31-45; W. Kawecki, *Teologia piękna. Poszukiwanie locus theologicus w kulturze współczesnej*, Poznań 2013; W. Kawecki, *Teologia wobec kultury wizualnej*, in: *Miejsca teologiczne w kulturze wizualnej*, Kraków – Warszawa 2013, p. 15-29; *Kultura wizualna – teologia wizualna*, eds. W. Kawecki, J.S. Wojciechowski, D. Żukowska-Gardzińska, Warszawa 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. E. Alberich, *Katecheza dzisiaj. Podręcznik katechetyki fundamentalnej*, Warszawa 2003, p. 241.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. E. Osewska, *Die Aktivierung des Schülers im Religionsunterricht an der Grundschule – dargestellt am Beispiel der Schulbuchreihe "Das Geschenk Jesu"*, "Bogoslovni vestnik" 71 (2011) No. 1, p. 123-133; E. Osewska, *Die katholischen Schulen im Kontext der sozialen, kulturellen und religiösen Situation in Europa*, "Theologica" 46 (2011) 2, p. 335-348; E. Osewska, *Grundsatzprogramm für die Katechese der Kirche in Polen vom 8. März 2010: Kontext und Ursachen (Temeljni program katechese katoliške Cerkve na Poljskem z dne 8. marca 2010: kontekst in razlog)*, "Bogoslovni vestnik" 74 (2014) No. 3, p. 495-504; E. Osewska, *Religious Education from the Perspective of Central and Eastern Europe*, in: *Toward Mutual Ground. Pluralism, Religious Education and Diversity in Irish Schools*, eds. G. Byrne, P. Kieran, Dublin 2013, p. 133-143; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Optymalny podręcznik do nauki religii w szkole podstawowej*, "Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne" XXVIII/2 (2010), p. 21-28; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Wielostronna i wieloczynnościowa aktywizacja dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym w nauczaniu religii*, "Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne" XXIX/1 (2010), p. 97-108; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Doświadczenia dziecka związane z przyrodą wyrażone w modlitwie*, "Roczniki Pastoralno-Katechetyczne" (2011), p. 265-278; E. Osewska, J. Stala, *Podstawa*

A violent expansion of mass media means that the television or the internet often become the primary source of information, even for a little child. In the situation of a daily routine and rush, parents tend to treat the television or the internet as a kind of baby-sitter; the child usually calms down watching colorful pictures. Resorting to mass media in such an early stage is a particularly important aspect since, in fact, such communication largely depends upon consumerism and its main feature is a specific unification that facilitates the absorption of propaganda. In fact, visual mass culture consciously simplifies many contents in order to achieve certain objectives. A manifestation of this phenomenon can be observed in a systematic reinforcement of iconic culture, which leads to traditional narrations yielding space to images and visual communication. Such endeavors are to guarantee massive consumption without any deeper reflection. Children as consumers are prompt to subconscious imitation of the admired characters and are not immune to the influence of persuasion. At the same time, children perceive quite early on that if they possess products with a particular trademark, they become more attractive for others and their social status increases. Hence the companies pay special attention to achieve a particular connection with the trademark. In an advertisement for kids, matching a product with a trademark is even more important than attracting attention<sup>16</sup>. Some parents, seeing such a persuasiveness of advertisement, try to limit the contact of their children with the television and the internet only to consciously and carefully selected programs. Simultaneously, they try to counteract the situation, in which the child's self-esteem depends upon the possession of particular products with particular logos. Also for this reason, such parents prefer wearing uniforms at school, which does not introduce any barriers of possession.

Contemporary parents have to face a difficult challenge to show their children such images that would bring about positive associations, matching love, security, joy and community with the religious reality. Those images, at the same time, should consolidate a proper theological message, devoid of excessive decoration, and keeping away from getting lost in details. For instance, an empirical study on the religious upbringing of children in Poland prove the existence of visual elements referring to the religious reality at homes, e.g. religious pictures, statues or crosses.

Presenting and teaching children about certain phenomena require the application of visual elements, since particular realities can be replaced by means of their visual representations. In traditional didactics, the process of discovering reality was associated with its sensual observation. Hence, the rule of observation was connected with the multisensory integration, reinforcing the child's contact with religion through visual experience, taste,

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*programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce z 8 marca 2010 roku – kontekst i przyszły,* "Katecheta" (2011) No. 1, p. 56-61.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. P. Kossowski, *Dziecko i reklama telewizyjna*, Warszawa 1999.

smell and touch. The multisensory contact of a child with reality helps his or her mind to imagine a given reality better. A sign becomes a sort of a bridge between the real world and the world of thoughts, facilitating a better familiarity with the reality<sup>17</sup>.

A visual sign requires enrichment with observation and interpretation<sup>18</sup>. The parents may organize children's perception, observation and interpretation starting from a simple visual perception followed by an observation and expressing one's own opinion. As a child develops, he or she will advance from the stage of perception, through integrated operations to the operation of recognizing symbols and signs<sup>19</sup>.

Properly selected visual elements help the parents lead their children towards the spiritual reality, as long as the theological appropriateness of the presented images is preserved. Hence, all images interfering with the truths of faith, presenting apocryphal or theologically unclear motifs should be avoided. It is also better to refrain from showing images representing God the Father, as excessively realistic images of God may activate inappropriate and fairy-tale associations. A better solution in this respect is presenting Jesus Christ as the Son of God who, in fact, is a visible image of God.

In the process of religious initiation of children or teenagers, and their gradual rapprochement to the mystery of the Triune God, parents should however keep in mind that they can only bring their offspring closer to the mystery, but they should avoid revealing it explicitly. It is actually up to a young person, as a free being, to decide whether to accept the mystery and maintain the relationship with God.

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Education to faith, strengthening and deepening faith in the family circle, takes place in particular social, cultural and educational conditions. Nowadays, a rapid development of electronic media may be perceived both as an opportunity and a danger for family religious education to faith and in faith. An iconic language promoted by media brings about anthropological consequences and thus encourages media research, pedagogy and catechesis to commence widespread studies on the subject. An understanding of the relationship between faith and the visual experience can be helpful to sustain

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. W. Okoń, *Wprowadzenie do dydaktyki ogólnej*, Warszawa 1996, p. 176; J. Bagrowicz, *Edukacja religijna współczesnej młodzieży. Źródła i cele*, Toruń 2000; S. Chrobak, *Koncepcja wychowania personalistycznego w nauczaniu Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła*, Warszawa 1999; *W kręgu zadań i treści katechezy*, ed. J. Charytański, Kraków 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. W. Okoń, *Wprowadzenie do dydaktyki ogólnej*, Warszawa 1996, p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. R. Chałupniak, *Arcydziela malarstwa w katechezie*, Opole 2013, p. 158-159; M. Saller, *Symbole i ich dydaktyka*, in: *W służbie człowiekowi*, ed. Z. Marek, Kraków 1991, p. 147-157; G. Rossiter, *Decoding the iconography of contemporary lifestyle: Uncovering and evaluating the spirituality in consumerist Culture, Part 1: Context, approach and relevant literature*, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014, p. 161-183.

the daily reality of faith development within the family. Faith does not only use a sign, symbol or image but it is also developed in relation to an artistic content and form. A particular picture, mosaic, sculpture or visual sign can facilitate the experience of beauty and become a bridge to experiencing faith.

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