



The Biblical Dimension of Religious Instruction in Poland

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Abstract: The article concerns the issue of religious instruction in Polish state schools, especially its inspiration from the Bible as the primary source of the transmission of faith. When religious education classes were introduced in schools, a confessional model of their performance was adopted, thus leading to establishing closer ties with churches and religious associations as well as developing personal faith. The methodology of my research was based on analysing the current anchoring of the teaching of religion in the Polish state law and the guidelines of the Catholic Church. Next, the 2018 *Core Curriculum for the Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland*, related to the reform of the Polish education system and the completely new situation resulting from the liquidation of the junior high school stage of education, was used to show biblical guidelines for religious instruction and a set of methodological tools that guarantee its effectiveness. Confessional religion classes are currently organized in all government-run schools in Poland, and according to recent statistical data they significantly contribute to their better functioning. Consequently, there is a need to appeal for the continuation of religious education in schools and its modification based on multimedia technology, and there is a necessity to overcome the tendency to remove classes of religion from Polish public schools.

Keywords: biblical dimension, religious instruction, core curriculum, state or public school

Contemporary learners have at their disposal excellent means of acquiring information about the surrounding world in the form of modern multimedia. However, they cannot be left to themselves throughout this process since they need guides who will teach them to critically look at the reality found within the realm of spirituality. Therefore, the documents of the Church emphasize the need for all pastoral and catechetical activities to be permeated by the biblical message as Holy Scripture is not only the foundation of theology, but also of catechesis. One of the basic tasks of catechesis is to provide guidance towards a proper understanding of Scripture and to help acquire the permanent habit of reading it. However, the main problem related to catechesis lies in the fact that the Bible was not written directly for children and young people, but it depicts events and employs vocabulary that make it difficult for contemporary students to follow. This is additionally compounded by the constant mental and religious development of the catechized as well as the ever-shifting

elements of their mentality, thinking and understanding of the surrounding world.¹ Thus, a fundamental question arises: are there any methods, principles or ways of approaching the Bible so that it will open up its intricate world to the catechized youth and will become an area of their absorbing interest? In this context, one should ask about the possibility of using contemporary government-run (often called “public”) schools² in this process.

1. The School as a Place for the Teaching of a Particular Religion

The presence of religion education³ classes in the public education system as well as its financing are guaranteed by the Polish constitution in Art. 48, where it is stated that parents have “the right to rear their children in accordance with their own convictions. Such upbringing shall respect the degree of maturity of a child as well as his freedom of conscience and belief and also his convictions.” The teaching of a particular religion is also regulated by the Act on the Education System of 7 September 1991 and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education on the Conditions and Manner of Organizing Religion Classes in Public Preschools and Schools of 14 April 1992. Catechization in Polish schools is conducted by 24 Churches and religious associations, which pursue their goals using the confessional model of teaching religion.⁴

In this educational context, the Bible is the main source of the Christian life and all the teachings of the Church. The fundamental problem concerning the concept of religious instruction in Polish schools is its relationship with catechesis. The discussion of the nineties of the twentieth century resulted in the creation of a coherent and compromise solution, which was included in the *Polish Catechetical Directory* of 2001 as well as the *Core Curriculum for Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland* of 2001. This solution consists in resigning over the recognition of religion classes as catechesis and also as classes of religious studies. An important feature of this model is its confessional nature. Since religious education is intended to achieve the entirety of educational tasks, it cannot focus solely on conveying knowledge; it must also participate in upbringing, which in the religious context, calls for guidance towards a specific community of faith. The confessional character of religion classes allows for implementing the function of religious initiation at least in a rudimentary form or as seeds of faith. It also creates an opportunity to teach prayer and present the liturgy

¹ Cf. Misiewicz, *Adaptacja Biblii w katechezie*, 5.

² Cf. Koźmiński, *Zarządzanie w warunkach niepewności*, 7.

³ The terms “religious education,” “religious instruction” and “religion classes” have been used interchangeably as names for the teaching of a particular religion in schools.

⁴ Cf. Milerski, “Odnowienie umysłu,” 179.

as the goal of religious education. Moreover, classes of religion can lead to moral education based on the *Decalogue*, thus assuming an evangelizing function, especially within new evangelization. It can, therefore, be concluded that confessional religion classes contain elements of all the catechetical functions listed in the directories although they do not fully implement them. For these reasons, religion classes can be considered an important component of the catechetical ministry of the Church even though they alone are not a complete catechesis. In Polish catechetical publications, the terms “catechesis” and “teaching of religion” are used interchangeably, and teachers of religion are referred as catechists.⁵

The task of the school as an educational institution is to create conditions for a comprehensive development of every individual and to indicate that the consequence of his or her maturity is the necessity to take responsibility for their decisions.⁶ Therefore, the following actions should be performed: formulate objectives of education and upbringing, define methods of achieving them, establish adequate units in schools thanks to which it will be possible to implement the objectives, and involve all members of the school community in decision-making processes. A truly educational work requires the assistance, support and commitment of many entities.⁷

In the Polish education system, confessional religion classes have been conducted for three decades, introduced by the consensus of all the political forces of the time. The proponents of such a strategy argue their positions with the guidelines of the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, which defines the criteria that should guide religious education. The document clearly indicates that the primary source from which inspiration should be drawn is the message of Sacred Scripture.⁸ The message should be meditated upon, understood more deeply, celebrated, constantly deepened by theological research, and made manifest in genuine moral values.⁹ For this reason, the Catholic Church, which organizes the confessional religion classes, encourages that the Bible should hold a prominent position in educational activities.¹⁰ At the same time, she calls for modern incentives rather than pedagogical dictates that should be used in presenting biblical content on which students can build their skills and attitudes. Proper argumentation in support of the adopted strategy is necessary. Such an approach may help overcome new challenges that arise at the intersection of religious education and the operation of public schools.

⁵ Cf. Tomasik, “Nauczanie religii,” 179.

⁶ Cf. Nowak, “Współczesna koncepcja wychowania,” 58.

⁷ Benedykt XVI, *Bóg i świat*, 125.

⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 94.

⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 95.

¹⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 94.

Modern-day theological publications have restored the importance of the Bible as the principal source for teaching religion in schools.¹¹ There is no doubt that this postulate “must keep pace with the changes taking place in the Church and worldwide, and take into account the conditions, mainly social and religious ones.”¹² The religion class that seeks its new place in the altered socio-religious reality has received valuable impulses for initiating and developing biblical religious pedagogy in the latest *Directory for Catechesis* issued in 2020.¹³ The document contains information that catechesis uses various sources, but they all come down to the word of God, and through which it is expressed.¹⁴ Religious instruction should recall the salvific truths of Christ, clarifying and applying them to the new challenges of different epochs and situations, becoming a bridge between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.¹⁵ The biblical message that focuses ultimately on the person of Jesus Christ, who reveals God, makes the Gospel fascinating because it is beautiful, good, joyful and hopeful Good News.¹⁶ These truths should be transmitted to the younger generation in every possible way because the contemplation of beauty awakens joy, pleasure, tenderness, a sense of fullness and meaning in the human being, as well as and opens them to transcendence.¹⁷

The documents addressing the issue of teaching religion point to the centre of this inspiration, which is Jesus Christ, as he becomes known from the pages of Scripture. The analysis of the contents of the document entitled *Catechetical Directory of the Catholic Church in Poland* shows that its authors repeatedly referred to the issue of the Bible in teaching religion.¹⁸ During the following years, a new *Core Curriculum for Catechesis and Religious Education Programme*¹⁹ were prepared in 2010. These documents were dictated by changes in the Polish education system. The activities offered to students are designed to strengthen their conviction that the Bible tells the truth about God who is present in their personal histories. As it is assumed, educational activities should take the form of upbringing inspired by Sacred Scripture. The point here is that the personal God, discovered in the biblical texts, should become the foundation of the choices made by the catechized youth.

¹¹ Cf. Wolkiewicz, *Główne idee*, 283.

¹² Przybecki, *Duszpasterstwo w Polsce*, 20.

¹³ Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 34.

¹⁴ Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 90.

¹⁵ Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 94.

¹⁶ Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 107.

¹⁷ Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 109.

¹⁸ Cf. Polish Bishops' Conference, *Catechetical Directory*, 32.

¹⁹ Cf. Broda – Marzec, “Skuteczna reforma oświaty,” 26–27.

2. Biblical Elements in *The Core Curriculum for Catechesis*

The planned strategy of educational activities in schools is revealed by the new *Core Curriculum for the Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland*²⁰ published in 2018 as a consequence of the reform of the education system, which led to the termination of the junior high school stage and the return to the eight-class elementary school. The document proposes the division of religious education into the same educational stages as in Polish schools. At the preschool stage, pupils should be introduced to religious life. In elementary schools, guidance should be provided for initiation to the sacraments of penance and reconciliation and the Eucharist in grades I–IV. Subsequently, adherence to Christ through the process of mystagogy should be deepened in grades V–VIII. In turn, building the Christian identity that enables one to bear witness to the Christian life is planned in secondary schools, in grades I–IV. It should be noted that the same expectations are formulated towards those in special situations related to various disabilities.²¹ The document also introduces terminology that draws on both the tradition of teaching religion and the language of the latest state educational documents. Combining these two traditions resulted in the emergence of the following categories: catechetical goals, tasks of religious instruction, teaching content, student achievements and skills.²² They all have included significant biblical inspirations for religion classes in schools.

In the discussed document, there appeared instructions to draw on Scripture in such a way as to show God revealing his love for people in the person of Jesus. It is primarily manifested through the creation of the beautiful world and the redemption of man. Special emphasis has been placed on discovering the message of the Bible “as the word of God addressed to people,”²³ word that is still fascinating and full of hope for the future.

At the educational stage of elementary school in grades I–IV, it was planned to present the Bible not only as a book of faith for Christians, but also as a source of morality, which is revealed primarily in the *Decalogue* and the teachings of Jesus. It was assumed that the correct interpretation of the Bible could give students a chance to understand and accept the categories of good and evil. Particularly valuable inspirations are brought by the biblical examples of moral attitudes displayed in the *Core Curriculum for Catechesis* and the model prayer of Christians of all times – *the Our Father*.²⁴

In grades V–VIII of the elementary school, we can speak about planning a proper biblical religion class, emerging from the assumptions of modern biblical didactics. This stage is designed to introduce students to the history of salvation, familiarize

²⁰ Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 14.

²¹ Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 11.

²² Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 13.

²³ Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 212.

²⁴ Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 33–40.

them with the basic knowledge of Holy Scripture, its literary genres, the language of its message and the principles of interpreting the Old and New Testaments. Here, there are indications of how students can build a hierarchy of values in their relationships with God and can solve their existential problems on the basis of Divine Revelation. Moreover, further assistance, as planned, can help students perceive biblical texts on their own. The rank of a strategic task was assigned to the measure aimed at shaping moral awareness and an attitude of responsibility for one's choices based on the indications stemming from God's Revelation, especially the Decalogue and the Beatitudes, and the ones resulting from highlighting biblical personal models.²⁵

In the grades I–IV of secondary school, at the stage of building the Christian identity of students, the area of deepening the knowledge of the Bible includes proposals for justifying its inspired character, building the ability to comprehend and analyse the biblical texts, and use them to justify one's faith. The *Curriculum* sees an important task in revealing the Word of God as the source of answers to existential questions, daily renewing the biblical message, identifying God's acts for the benefit of man in the biblical texts, especially through the first and most exalted place of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Yet another important task is to help students interiorize the most valuable biblical texts. This stage of school education is the most appropriate time for students to conduct their own study of the Bible.²⁶

The completion of the process of embedding the Bible in the strategy of teaching religion in schools requires three crucial stages. The first one involves using a diverse methodological repertoire. The creators of educational packages for teaching religion, which are being developed, propose methods that can be used in class groups. These school methods can be divided into three main groups: methods highlighting the biblical text, methods designed for proclaiming the kerygma as well as methods intended to discover the kerygma, i.e. to pursue the biblical message on one's own.²⁷

Among the methods intended for exposing the biblical text, one can distinguish impressionistic ones, which boil down to involving students in an appropriately exposed biblical text, and expressional ones, which consist in creating situations in which students recreate facts related to a biblical text.²⁸ The impressionistic methods, useful in teaching religion in schools, include a solemn reading of Scripture, reading a biblical passage with division of roles, paraphrasing a biblical text and presenting a biblical story. These methods aim at proclaiming the message of Scripture.²⁹ In turn, expressional methods include: simple staging, improvised staging, stage performance, pantomime, drama, press article, character presentation, tribunal, changing

25 Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 57–64.

26 Polish Bishops' Conference, *The Core Curriculum*, 99–104.

27 Cf. Stypułkowska, *Biblijna formacja katechetów*, 347.

28 Cf. Okoń, *Wprowadzenie do dydaktyki ogólnej*, 268–270.

29 Cf. Marek, "Metody pracy z tekstem biblijnym," 271–275.

a biblical metaphor, writing an e-mail text and drawing. These methods are used to express emotions or thoughts related to the biblical text that is being discussed.³⁰

The second group of methods, associated with the assimilation of knowledge, also known as expository methods, appears in school practice most frequently. With regard to biblical methods, these are methods of proclaiming the kerygma, essentially intended for the catechist as the one who proclaims it. These methods include: biblical commentary (introductory, in-depth, summarizing, liturgical), biblical talk (introductory, informative, consolidative, controlling, exploring), biblical lecture (linear, concentric, spiral). The methods of kerygma proclamation in religious education are used to present the kerygma of a biblical text directly or to help students understand it. Gerard Kusz argues that teaching about the Bible during a religion class, the teacher can use any method, provided that it leads to correlating God's message with the student's experience.³¹

The practice of teaching religion also involves methods of discovering the kerygma.³² These are methods of inquiring knowledge individually, related to problem-based learning, and allowing for transforming one's passive knowledge into knowledge that can be actively used. They are conducive to learning new information and its application in everyday life.³³ The methods can be divided into the following groups: biblical text analysis (narrative text analysis, dialogue analysis, analysis of letters and speeches, analysis of parables and psalms), methods of a briefly formulated kerygma (alternative titles, short confessions of faith), methods of working with various texts (reading different translations of the Bible, biblical comparisons, working with a parallel biblical text, catechetical study of characters, selected issues, texts taken from one biblical book), questions and repetition (peer editing, observation, biblical interview), prayer and existential methods (rewriting short texts, memorizing the Bible, the Västerås Method (also called the Swedish method), biblical meditation, biblical journal, repeating the verses and words that moved the participants).³⁴ Many of the methods discovering the kerygma belong to the activating methods, the characteristic elements of which are the creative organization of work by the teacher and working in small groups.³⁵ The religion teacher creates an atmosphere of active work with the text, during which students can conduct various biblical searches.³⁶

The second stage consists in a new strategy of presenting the achievements of biblical teachings to students through modern multimedia being at the disposal of

³⁰ Barciński – Wójcik, *Metody aktywizujące w katechezie*, 96.

³¹ Cf. Kochel, *Katecheza w służbie słowa Bożego*, 100.

³² Korgul, *Dydaktyka dla katechetów*, 9.

³³ Cf. Czerski, "Współczesne metody interpretacji," 27.

³⁴ Cf. Łabendowicz, *Metodyka katechezy*, 5.

³⁵ Cf. Kusz, *Biblia w katechezie*, 61.

³⁶ Cf. Stypułkowska, *Biblijna formacja katechetów*, 353.

educational institutions.³⁷ Religious websites have been launched for the needs of the educational packages, which contain excellent films, professional reports, photographs of the biblical places, archaeological resources, biblical trivia, and multimedia presentations, showing the richness of Scripture in audio-visual forms. As the computerization of Polish schools is advanced, religion teachers can log on to the designated portals in real time to discover diverse resources of the biblical world not only in a theoretical form but also in an attractive multimedia one.³⁸

The third stage is the correlation of religion classes with school programmes. It should consider the biblical contents from the resources of other subjects that are relevant to the goals of religious education. Consequently, the 2018 *Core Curriculum for Catechesis* includes a synthesis of the analogous document of the school education law. It adopts formulations useful for those authors of educational programmes, who, from the standpoint of other school subjects, would like to propose to integrate the content of the Bible in religious education classes so that students could understand its message better and accept it personally. It should also be remembered that the correlation of religious education with the whole school education sometimes means taking up complementary or polemical activity on the subject of the Bible as well as its message and significance for contemporary culture and the present times. Regardless of the teachers' preferences, religious instruction overlaps with other subjects in the following issues: the beginning of the world and the meaning of history, the foundation of ethical values, the function of religion in culture, human destiny as well as man's relationship with the natural environment. The application of the correlation between teaching religion and school education is necessary both for strict catechetical reasons (combining the Christian faith with life experiences), didactic reasons (easier assimilation of the same content, its various aspects being discussed during other lessons) and educational reasons (showing students the unity of the truth about man and the surrounding world).³⁹

It seems that the usefulness of the message based on the Bible, message that can support school education, and broadly speaking, the Polish state, has been described in an interesting way by Paweł Mąkosa, who claims that the educational potential of religion classes is enormous, and their use depends on numerous factors, such as "transferring well-founded teachings about ethical and moral values, as well as arguments for their practice, assistance in their understanding, recognizing them as important and internalizing them through their inclusion in the structure of one's personality, creating motivation for their application, and implementing them in one's life on a daily basis."⁴⁰ Neglecting the reliable biblical formation in secondary schools

37 Kielian, *Przyszłość nauczania religii*, 101.

38 Cf. Zajęc, *Ewaluacja w nauczaniu religii*, 227.

39 Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, 14.

40 Mąkosa, "Szkolna lekcja religii," 355.

– according to the organizers of religion classes – may thwart the implementation of any religious education, which is to prepare youth for the reception of the biblical readings during the liturgy and their adaptation to everyday moral choices.

3. One Issue and Several Variants of Discussion

During the period when religion classes was held outside the structures of public schools in Poland, it was predominantly believed that the family was the primary place for human development and a privileged place for the transmission of the Gospel and faith.⁴¹ Nowadays, in the new educational reality, there have been increasingly numerous voices that teaching religion in schools is needless because the aim of modern education should rather be the acquisition of practical knowledge and life skills. In order to accomplish this goal, students are supposed to learn to think and act differently from what their own traditions say and what the word of God reveals them to do.⁴² The new “values” of education should include: good civic attitudes, exercising one’s rights, the autonomy of the individual, tolerance, celebrating diversity and multiculturalism and the right to express one’s opinions. By recognizing the school as one of the most important environments of socialization, some intend to make it a privileged place for transmitting the new “values,” and thus allowing no room for any norms interpreted on the foundations of Scripture.⁴³

There are also numerous groups of scientists who adhere to the stance that the modern school should prefer individual rights rather than institutional authority, global ethics than universal values, individual choices than defining objective needs, life skills than objective knowledge, choice and tolerance rather than answers, certainties and dogmas, a broad concept of spirituality instead of religion. On the other hand, the philosopher David Carr claims that introducing issues concerning religion into the school environment is an indoctrinating approach because there are no valid objective tests or scientific evidence for religious claims. In his opinion, in the “cold hard glare of rational scientific scrutiny,” the daily ritual of Christian worship in schools “may also have amounted to little more than a crude conditioning or indoctrination into views which are highly questionable, if not actually meaningless.”⁴⁴

The objections regarding the Bible as the basis for teaching religion in schools are also reported by students who participate in confessional religion classes because of their parents’ decision or their own choices made when they reach the age

⁴¹ Cf. Kobyłecka, *Nauczyciel wobec współczesnych zadań edukacyjnych*, 12.

⁴² Cf. Mąkosa, “Znaki czasu dla katechezy w Polsce,” 460.

⁴³ Cf. Peeters, *Globalizacja zachodniej rewolucji kulturowej*, 208.

⁴⁴ Carr, “Rival Conceptions of Spiritual Education,” 171.

of maturity. There are many doubts concerning the assurances that Holy Scripture contains the word of God addressed to people of all times and that each generation is obliged to consider it in the context of their religious attitudes and cultures.⁴⁵ One of the reasons for this contestation is the literary style of Scripture and the non-biblical mentality of contemporary people, which causes dissonance between the Bible and their lives.⁴⁶ They are concerned by the fact that few things which require to be accepted with the obedience of faith coincide with the current human knowledge and worldview, and the passions that Scripture contains do not correspond to the modern disposition of a young person.⁴⁷ But the new school education system is focused on discovering the truth and resents the lack of any alternative. Students wish to look for their own solutions more than bow to the set rules of the Bible.

Contemporary religious education struggles with questions about the way of communicating the salvific mystery of God to modern man. Traditional methods of transmitting the message of salvation, confronted with little interest in the mystery, exclude the achievement of the goals intended.⁴⁸ I have presented the methodological instruments used in religion classes in schools. However, an effective assessment of the methods requires a certain time perspective, but even now we can see the tendencies in this regard especially that ambitious art, journalism, culture, valuable documents give way to sensational events, presented selectively according to the concept of selling media products.⁴⁹ The reality is presented in a simplified, sketchy way, accompanied by a trivial standardising commentary characterized by internal variability. The importance of a religious education textbook, a catechism or the Bible as an opinion-making medium of information has definitely diminished.⁵⁰

Completely different views have also been expressed in the ongoing discussion about the biblical dimensions of religion classes.⁵¹ Among many such opinions, it is worth mentioning the one of the Dutch educationalist Martinus Jan Langeveld who just before the beginning of the Second Vatican Council noticed that it had historically been proven that the rejection of God and religion led to a situation in which it was not necessary to save the concept of God but to defend the dignity of man.⁵² For Christians who accept Jesus as the indicator of good and evil know that they are called to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48, NRSV); to think “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable” (Phil 4:8); to be committed

⁴⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 94.

⁴⁶ Cf. Goban-Klas, “Pokolenie SMS-u,” 105.

⁴⁷ Cf. Kistorz – Pytka – Bechta, *Katechizm dla średnio zaawansowanych*, 61–62.

⁴⁸ Cf. Marek, “O korzystaniu z Pisma Świętego,” 47–48.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kloch, *Kościół w Polsce wobec WEB 2*, 22.

⁵⁰ Kloch, *Kościół w Polsce wobec WEB 2*, 395.

⁵¹ Cf. Mąkosa, *Edukacja religijna polskich emigrantów*, 25.

⁵² Langeveld, *Das Kind und der Glaube*, 55.

for the course of life like their Master and his Apostles, who filled their days with good “that they had no leisure even to eat” (Mark 6:31). Therefore, Christians begin, finish, and fill each day with moral principles, interpreted from the Bible and made as their own by their sovereign decisions.⁵³

In the opinion of Pope Benedict XVI, the goal of Christian education, but also the purpose of integral education in general, is the well-being of the pupil. In the religious sphere, the abovementioned pupils’ well-being is related to the value of hope because believers expect hope that is not related to any temporal goods but is rather directed towards eternal happiness.⁵⁴ This is why, in the opinion of Benedict XVI, the school should be a place of the transmission of technical and theoretical concepts and the testimony of service by word and example. In schools one should be guided by the logic of the gift of self, in which time, knowledge and skills are means serving both the common good and the good of another person.⁵⁵ The task of students and staff of schools, especially those inspired by Christian values, is to bear witness to God amongst their loved ones – to the close God who also shows himself in the search for the truth.⁵⁶ Therefore, it is reasonable to place the biblical category in the field of school theory and practice of education towards values, including the religious ones, which can be derived by interpreting the new *Core Curriculum for Catechesis*.⁵⁷

Ultimately, implementing a confessional religion class based on the Bible means introducing it in all the areas of school functioning, especially in the area of upbringing and teaching. This specific ministry consists in guaranteeing a better encounter with the Bible in traditional forms of school teaching so that it can bring the maximum spiritual element to this system.⁵⁸ Using the Scripture message in teaching secular subjects may confirm the validity of difficult ethical decisions, purify the understanding of the issue of suffering, misfortune, and physical evil, to which no secular school subject is indifferent.⁵⁹

The modern school, caught up in the magic of grades and gaining professional promotions, does not acknowledge its call to accomplish such tasks. And yet their implementation is important both for individuals and for social groups. These existential problems justify religion classes and, within their framework, closer contacts with the Bible. Pope Francis warns against the pernicious consequences of unreflective life in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, addressed to young people from

⁵³ Cf. Kistorz – Pytko – Bechta, *Katechizm dla średnio zaawansowanych*, 155.

⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 30–31.

⁵⁵ Benedykt XVI, “Ewangelia daru i bezinteresowności,” 27–28. The Pope’s address to the Ecclesial Movement for Cultural Commitment, the Federation of Christian Organizations for International Volunteer Service and the Christian Workers Movement, 19 May 2012.

⁵⁶ Benedykt XVI, “Świadkowie Boga, który jest blisko,” 33. The meeting with students of Rome’s universities and Atheneum, homily delivered on 1 December 2012.

⁵⁷ Cf. Chałas – Maj – Mariański, *Wychowanie ku wartościom religijnym*, 312.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bissoli, “Katecheza i Biblia,” 28.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bukowski, “Biblia w literaturze,” 206–211.

all over the world, where he invokes the Gospel text and firmly appeals for saving the faith of young people and protect them from spiritual loneliness.⁶⁰ Since the Bible should play an important role in this process of saving man, the institutions responsible for education have made plans to saturate the school space with its message.

Summary

In the face of regularly emerging voices calling for the removal of confessional religion classes from Polish state schools, this article is an attempt to strongly oppose such tendencies. Communicating the tenets of the Bible in religious education classes is one of the fundamental spiritual challenges of our times. The methods, proposed in the new *Core Curriculum for Catechesis*, introducing learners into the world of the Bible in schools allow them to be active, which can then be directed and transformed into various forms of religious doings. A skilfully assimilated biblical message for the needs of religion instruction can protect it from the danger of absorbing merely variable opinions and can guarantee what is certain and unchangeable in the pursuit of Christian maturity.

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⁶⁰ “We can, in fact, spend our youth being distracted, skimming the surface of life, half-asleep, incapable of cultivating meaningful relationships or experiencing the deeper things in life. In this way, we can store up a paltry and unsubstantial future. Or we can spend our youth aspiring to beautiful and great things, and thus store up a future full of life and interior richness,” Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 19.

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