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COMMUNICATING FAITH THROUGH CATECHESIS

Christian life consists in confessing faith in the Risen Jesus Christ. He is the source of true faith which gives life to Church. The continuous presence of the Holy Spirit in Church is his support which enables him to communicate faith and to make it grow in human hearts. Yet wherever there is not enough faith, respect for the truth about man is in jeopardy, and the meaning of the human world is misconstrued. In the Year of Faith, we are called, together with the entire Church, „to rediscover the joy of believing and enthusiasm for communicating faith”¹. Although faith is a gift one receives from God, it grows when it is communicated to others. In our times, marked by indifference to God, being „preachers of faith” (LG 11, 17, 25) is by no means a simple task. However, if our objective is to communicate faith to others, we need to persevere in this effort, and soon we shall see God himself help us to surmount the difficulty before us.

TENSION BETWEEN FAITH AND THE LACK OF FAITH

How can we communicate faith to children, to the youth, and to the adults in today’s world, in which the technological civilization prevails and people adhere to the ideas of progress and welfare? How can we do it in a world dominated by materialistic culture which rests on calculation and experiment, and promotes the view that only material things exist? Today, human life is increasingly involved in the world of objects, and human beings fully appreciate only what they can actually accomplish, see and touch. The mentality of self-sufficiency is spreading rapidly,

¹ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei* (PF), 11 X 2011, no. 7.

and a deeply rooted conviction that human beings are self-sufficient makes them demand absolute autonomy and freedom from God's law. They frequently fall prey to the temptation of self-reliance and believe that they do not need anything from God. Indeed, „not needing God” is a growing tendency in the postmodern age: human beings are fascinated with advancements in medicine, economics, cybernetics and tend to become lured by the „culture of appearances”. They want to solve their own problems by themselves and stick to the principle of self-liberation. Their hearts become insensitive, while their minds, distracted by numerous attractive mirages, are incapable of seeing that great faith which consists in life with God and in life in God, provides the most true and authentic mode of human existence, as well as the way for the world to follow.

Another clear mark of our times is the lack of moral and ethical discipline in an individual as well as in social life. As a result of wide-spread criticism of religion, Church is increasingly denied the right to influence earthly affairs. The processes of secularization intensify, and one can clearly observe a telling presence of practical atheism: „The truths of faith or religious rites are not denied but are merely deemed irrelevant to daily life, detached from life, pointless. So it is that people often believe in God in a superficial manner, and live »as though God did not exist« (*etsi Deus non daretur*)”².

To Joseph Ratzinger, the fact that the principles of Christianity are no longer part of the common knowledge is a source of deep anguish; he goes as far as to say that this reality questions our faith³. Prevailing, reductionist currents of thought are extremely strong and postulate that Christianity should be replaced with the so-called secular humanism. Consequently, the idea that there is no room for transcendence in the human experience is spreading rapidly, and religion, including Christian faith, is considered as a meaningless »product« one can easily go without in one's life⁴. The dominating currents of postmodernism and liberalism continue the intellectual effort began with the rise of rationalism and naturalism in the Age of Reason, and contribute to a description of Christianity as a natural religion. Hence Christianity is frequently discredited by being cast as an enemy of science and progress, or as a hindrance to the growth of the human race and a threat to the development of social life. This negative image of Christianity perseveres, stigmatizing it as an oppressive religion which has negatively affected the history of mankind and which puts constraints on human freedom as well as the freedom of

² Benedict XVI, *Year of Faith: The ways that lead to knowledge of God*, General audience of Nov. 14, 2012, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/index_en.htm (accessed on Jan. 1, 2013).

³ See J. Ratzinger, *O sensie bycia chrześcijaninem [On the Sense of Being Christian]*, Kraków 2006, p. 25-26; J. Ratzinger, *Sól ziemi. Chrześcijaństwo i Kościół katolicki na przełomie tysiącleci. Z kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem rozmawia Peter Seewald [Salt of the Earth: Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium – An Interview with Peter Seewald]*, Kraków 1997, p. 15.

⁴ See J.H.H. Weiler, *Ein christliches Europa*, Salzburg–München 2004.

entire societies. „Jesus is ignored, he is mocked and he is declared a king of the past who is not for today and certainly not for tomorrow. He is relegated to a storeroom of questions and persons one dare not mention publicly in a loud voice”⁵.

In today’s secularized world, human beings are confused and seek how to reach beyond the horizon of things, towards a deeper reality. Despite the limitations the prevailing culture imposes they have an intrinsic need to be perceived as unique, to seek transcendence and to respond to the beauty of creation. They clearly see weak points of skepticism and relativism. The crucial problem of „creating a new man” will not be solved by any liberation movement: No political or social program, no philosophy or system will ultimately succeed in transforming the human nature, in „creating a new man” predisposed to overcoming egoism and subordinating his welfare to the common good or to the good of others. Such a transformation of a human being may only be caused by Divine Intervention. The Second Vatican Council stressed:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. The invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and unless he entrusts himself to his Creator (GS 16).

As can be seen on the basis of the above analysis, in today’s world, faith must respond to the challenge of indifference to vertical dimension. History shows that overemphasizing horizontal dimension has frequently proved destructive, since the resulting reductionist approach to the reality has, in many cases, become a factor triggering totalitarianism. Whereas each generation certainly needs an education in faith, the present moment in history is particular in this respect, since the education in question must be in a way provided anew. Faith is not anybody’s property, it is not something one may possess; rather, it consists in a personal decision which manifests freedom, in the assent of heart and mind, in trust in God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16) and in having entrusted oneself to him. What we need is a systematic, constant and humble effort to reveal Jesus Christ to others, an effort that will contribute to our witness to him, in order that the relationship with Jesus on the part of those to be catechized (which starts by knowing him) may be transformed into their encounter with the Risen Lord (in other words, into their experience of Christ) and result in their profession of faith (or in their apostolic attitude).

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Greeting of the Holy Father*, Meeting with the young people during Pastoral visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in Poland, Cracow, May 27, 2006, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060527_giovani-krakow_en.html (accessed on Jan. 5, 2013).

WHAT FAITH IS TO BE COMMUNICATED?

We need to communicate faith which is true, real, living, and – thus – personal. This faith does not relate in the first instance to the theological statements; rather, it manifests a personal relationship, the highest form of existential contact through which one's life is being formed by the Person to whom one relates. Faith is always faith of a person⁶. It becomes an integral element of life and enters person's ontological structure, simultaneously defining his mode of existence. Faith consists in a turn towards God which is made in the entirety of one's being, and encompasses actions one performs.

Faith is born from a personal encounter with the Risen Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man, the King of the Universe, the *pioneer and perfecter of our faith* (Heb 12:2). Faith is an act of an individual person, but its realm is simultaneously the community of Church. Faith is not merely an intellectual act or the result of mental maturity; it does not come from myth or from an idea; rather, it results from the knowledge and experience of the living and acting Jesus Christ, God-Man. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms: „Faith is the first of all personal adherence of a man to God. [...] it is a free assent to the whole truth God has revealed” (CCC 150). „It involves the assent of intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words” (CCC 176). Thus faith is surrender of human being to God. It consists in the decision to abandon the idea of salvation conceived of as self-sufficiency. Faith is usually accompanied by deep awareness that, in any situation, one is fully available to God, that God can always be Guide along his paths of life and light. The Second Vatican Council explains: „Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have interior help of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and »makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth«” (DV 5). The faith is enriched by the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that it might become a genuine „encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and of life between the believer and Jesus Christ, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6). It entails an act of trusting abandonment to Christ, which enables us to live as he lived (cf. Gal 2:20)”⁷.

One does not believe on his own, one does not believe alone, but in the community of faith, in Church. Faith is a gift of God as well as a profoundly free and human act. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms: „Believing is possible only by grace and the interior help of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentic human act... contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason” (CCC 154).

Faith must not be confused with knowing the Christian doctrine or with confessing it. „Faith is not a mere intellectual assent of the human person to specific

⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas est*, 25 XII 2005, no. 1.

⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, 6 VIII 1993, no. 88.

truths about God; it is an act with which I entrust myself freely to God who is the Father and who loves me; it is adherence to a »You« who gives me hope and trust”⁸. Faith „comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ”, as Saint Paul says (Rom 10:17). Thus faith is a personal event which embraces the entire self. It engages intellectual faculty of human being, as well as the volitive, existential and praxeological ones (cf. CCC 1814, 1815). „Faith does not just mean accepting a certain number of abstract truths about the mysteries of God, of man, of life and death, of future realities. Faith consists in an intimate relationship with Christ, a relationship based on love of him who loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:11), even to the total offering of himself”⁹. Faith as adherence to Christ is revealed as love that prompts us to promote good inscribed by the Creator into the nature of every human being, into the personality of every other human being and into everything that exists in the world.

THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH OR AN EXPERIENCE OF FAITH?

When the faith is communicated as an experience, it grows rapidly and systematically. The experience of faith does not usually encompass any extraordinary emotions or sensations; rather, it consists in one’s involvement in „forming” oneself, in giving form to one’s existence and to one’s environment in the light of the Person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. The attitude in question entails one’s full acceptance of oneself, followed with the acceptance of revealed truths which will from now on determine the entirety of choices and actions in one’s life. The experience of faith reconciles the material world with the spiritual one and the human with the divine.

Neither should the experience of faith be reduced to an encounter with the testimony of another person to his faith (which, nonetheless, is precious and uplifting). Instead, it must be brought out that an experience of faith occurs whenever one confirms to oneself, in the light of faith, one’s being a person in Christ, and the ultimate goal of this confirmation is not the fact of its being experienced, but God himself.

In this perspective, an important issue is how to communicate faith so that the message can be adapted to the situation and capabilities of those to whom it is addressed. The focus, however, is not the best „transmission technology” but facilitating an experience of the mystery of God, who saves us in Jesus Christ.

⁸ Benedict XVI, *The Year of Faith: What is faith?* General audience of Oct. 24, 2012, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121024_en.html (accessed on Jan. 7, 2013).

⁹ Benedict XVI, Homily by the Holy Father. Mass in Piłsudski Square during Pastoral visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II in Poland, Warsaw, May 26, 2006, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20060526_varsaviana_en.html (accessed on Jan. 7, 2013).

Faith of the Apostles, who were the first to be entrusted with the mission to preach Jesus Christ the Savior, was rooted in their experience of faith of their Master. In this sense, faith of the disciples of Jesus was the faith of Jesus himself. It was born from his activity, from his presence, from his Person. He was the first to live through everything his disciples would experience. His readiness to do the will of his Father, his filial attitude, his despair cried out in the dark of the night, and his putting his death and his future in the hands of his Father were responses coming from his purest faith. They were responses of a man who was similar to us. They show the reality of God and faith in which the Father and the Son encounter each other to become one. Through his faith, Jesus, trustingly and obediently, returns to the Father everything he has received from him owing to his faith, thus making us a gift. Our faith derives from his faith¹⁰.

Our faith is always born from the encounter with Jesus Christ. To discover Jesus, to encounter him, means to arrive at the faith. In the case of the Apostles, the climax experience was the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. They recognized him as a living and acting Person, which was the true beginning of their faith and of the Church. Although earlier, when they had abandoned their Master in the hour of his suffering and defeat, their faith died out, it was now awakened anew. They became permanently attached to Jesus the moment they encountered him living beyond death. The resurrection of Jesus was the ultimate revelation of his Person. It also transformed weak faith of the Apostles into their indestructible communion with the Person of Jesus, who lives in the Church. His resurrection became the first and an absolutely indispensable sign of Christian and ecclesial identity¹¹.

It might seem then that the essential truth about Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose from the dead, is known and even universally considered certain. And yet the Paschal experience is practically non-existent among us. What lacks in the communication of faith is an event or experience that will provide the basis for entire life and actions of a human being. Why is that so? The answer is simple: Because once a certainty stops being spoken about, it stops being certain. It gets blurred and is supplanted with what is being spoken about. Thus many people identify themselves as believers, but they tend to conceive of faith as a mere religiosity. They also identify themselves with the institutions and actions of Church, but when asked whether they identify themselves with the death and the resurrection of Christ, seen as the beginning of faith and the beginning of Christianity, they turn helpless¹².

In the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that „in our time we need a renewed education in faith that includes, of course, knowledge of its truths and of the history of salvation, but that is born above all from a true encounter with God

¹⁰ Cf. J. Guillet, *Jésus dans la foi des premiers disciples*, Paris 2007, p. 6–8.

¹¹ Cf. W. V. Dych, *The Mystery of Faith: A Christian Creed for Today*, Collegeville, Minnesota 1995, p. 45–55.

¹² See B. Forte, *La porta della fede*, Milano 2012.

in Jesus Christ, from loving him, from trusting him, so that the whole of our life becomes involved”¹³. Today, faith must speak in a »renewed« and more incisive way, but all the while keeping its perennial content intact, without concessions or compromises¹⁴. In the Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei* Benedict XVI explains: „Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy” (no 7).

Thus, it is essential that education in faith should stress the dimension of experience conceived of as continuous existential involvement, as the acceptance of truth by entire person, and as volitional adherence to values one has recognized as a result of the intimacy with God in Christ. The experience in question is one of permanent relationship, it is mode of existence which reconciles the inward world of human being with the outward, spiritual life with practical action, and temporal with eternal, the latter established by Christ through his Being. The core of this experience is that, in our everyday lives, we should ceaselessly stand by the truth of Christ and fully testify to it. Yves Congar was right in saying that „the greatest obstacle to faith people encounter today is the lack of relation between their faith in God, or between the prospect of his kingdom, and the daily life and actions of a human being”¹⁵. What we need is testimony of faith, which might confirm and actually point to the presence of God in everyday life, since we are incapable of seeing where faith actually „touches” life. Faith is relegated to private sphere and denied the right to be present public square. Consequently, the life of faith is practically invisible in working environments, in social, political or cultural life. Even though people declare themselves as believers, they are so deeply immersed in the world that they do not confirm in their lives the choice of Christ they once made and so they abandon the only model of life that enables the fulfillment of their human nature¹⁶. In the past, the attitude of faith was considered as obvious and practiced as a way of life. Pope Benedict XVI points that „faith was context in which people acted; the reference and adherence to God were part of daily life for the majority. Rather, it was the person who did not believe who had to justify his or her own incredulity. In our world the situation has changed and, increasingly, it is believers who must be able to account for their faith”¹⁷.

¹³ Benedict XVI, *The Year of Faith: What is faith?*, General audience of Oct. 24, 2012, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121024_en.html (accessed on Jan. 1, 2013).

¹⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, General audience of Oct. 10, 2012, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121010_en.html (accessed on Jan 17, 2013).

¹⁵ Quoted after: A. Perzyński, *Personalizm wiary według Jeana Mouroux*, Warszawa 2011, p. 134.

¹⁶ Cf. M. Dillon, *Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power*, Cambridge 1999, p. 194–220.

¹⁷ Benedict XVI, *Year of Faith: The ways that lead to knowledge of God*, General Audience of 14 Nov. 2012, in: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/index_en.htm (accessed on Jan. 5, 2013).

However, if such an account is to be rendered possible, three indispensable aspects of the reality of faith need to be combined, namely, encounter with the Risen Jesus, followed by the discovery that faith is an experience of the love of God in Christ, and by communicating this faith as grace and joy. Thus faith we communicate must be faith we have discovered, lived through, passed on as witnesses who have encountered the Risen Christ. Only the harmony inherent in the discovery of faith, in the discovery which is combined with an experience of Jesus Christ and with attachment to him, can make one capable of communicating faith to the world. One must remember though that this faith is not private: it is faith of Christ and it has become our experience as a result of the encounter with him. Faith that would not be faith of Jesus or would not come from him would be risky. Therefore the message we pass on must resound to faith of the people of God in history: faith of the Apostles, who received it from Christ himself through the action of the Holy Spirit, faith of Martyrs, faith of Saints, faith of Church Fathers and of the Doctors of Church, faith of missionaries and theologians, faith of the Shepherds, and of all those who believed in the Holy Spirit and let the Holy Spirit guide them.

CATECHESIS IN THE SERVICE OF FAITH

Catechesis, which belongs to fundamental tasks of Church, is a privileged form of communication of the doctrine of faith, and for this reason it is considered one of the most important factors of the maturation and growth of faith. Its task is not only communicating the truths of faith and preaching about foundations of Christianity, but also guiding human being towards an encounter with Christ: towards the choice of His path. Thus catechesis is above all an education in faith with „objective to develop and form the faith”¹⁸, so that it could become mature and be lived through in the community, where it will be conceived of as the acceptance of the presence of Christ in the word of God, in the liturgy, and, in particular, in the sacraments (cf. SC; CCC 7)¹⁹.

Faith is an ongoing process, which, once started, grows and assumes a particular shape. It is to this process of development, growth and communication of the content of faith that catechesis contributes. Addressing the theme of catechesis, *General Directory for Catechesis* identifies two separate and yet complementary processes: catechesis as initiation into faith and catechesis as systematic formation in faith²⁰. Catechesis initiating into the faith is „a comprehensive and systematic

¹⁸ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski [Conference of the Episcopate of Poland], *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* [The Catechetical Directory of the Catholic Church in Poland], Kraków 2001, no. 37.

¹⁹ Cf. John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 X 1979, no. 18.

²⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* of 11 August 1997, in: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html (accessed on May 4, 2013).

formation in the faith”²¹. Its aim is „to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith”²². Catechesis conceived of as a continuous education in faith is, in turn, „intended for those Christians who have been initiated in the basic elements”²³ of the Christian message. Among its essential tasks is that to „nourish and deepen their faith throughout their lives”²⁴.

In order that both these processes might develop and complement each other, those to be catechized need to be communicated the living experience of faith that Church possesses, so that they could make this faith „theirs” by professing it. This is accomplished by communicating the content of faith, namely, of the message of God. This message provides the foundation of faith, without which it would be unable to grow, develop and mature. Knowledge and the absorption of basic content of the message is necessary in order that faith may pass from potency to act. Then, the formation in faith must be continued, its goal being the shaping of faith as an attitude: those who are to be catechized need to adopt a conscious stance towards the content of faith. Throughout this process faith is „incorporated” in every layer of life: it is a process of „becoming” which enables the human person „to express fully his humanity, to »find himself« as a person”²⁵, „in proportion to what Christ has given” (Eph 4:7). Formation in faith provides a human being with a new understanding of himself, as well as with a new vision of the surrounding world. Inspired by the message of God human being has come to know and accept, he is called to respond to God with the obedience of faith. Only then faith, response to God’s will, will change the mentality of a human person, transform his way of perceiving the earthly reality, of thinking, feeling, and life in general.

We need to remember that effectiveness of faith formation and education depends not only on didactic and educational efforts employed in the process, but above all on communication of experience of faith. Therefore, while passing on truths of faith, catechists needs to consider all the human factors, as well as process of growth and maturation of faith, in order to combine the experience of a human life with the salvific message. The goal is not merely to stimulate an intellectual response, but, above all, to trigger an existential decision, accompanied by a new vision of true human identity, which will have a bearing on actual choices catechized person will make in his life²⁶.

The experience of faith is not accomplished on empirical or psychological level, neither is it of subjective nature; rather, it takes place on a personal level. Faith is experienced by a person who encounters God, who encounters him in his word and in liturgical celebration; by a person who experiences God’s presence in the

²¹ Ivi, no. 67.

²² Ivi, no. 66.

²³ Ivi, no. 51.

²⁴ Ivi.

²⁵ John Paul II, Letter to Families *Gratissimam sane*, 2 II 1994, no. 9.

²⁶ Cf. *Catechetica porta fidei*, ed. A. Kiciński, P. T. Goliszek, Lublin 2012.

life of Church and manifests his choice by practicing religious and moral values. Human being adheres then to God through Christ and perceives his existence in this perspective. By adhering to God with his entire self, which encompasses the mind, intellect, volition, actions, and creativity, a human person is transformed and demonstrates a higher mode of personal being, a new mode of existence: the human being exists now as a person in the Divine Persons. In this way, a mysterious fusion of Divine and human actions is accomplished on the personal plane. Thus catechesis communicates the experience of faith by integrating human life, its particular events and situations, with the message of the Revelation²⁷. By addressing the innermost essence of human existence, it contributes to reflection on human experience in the light of the key experience of faith, namely, those of Israel, Christ, and Church.

Experience of faith is not merely the „rainbow” that bridges existential faith with the doctrinal one. It consists in a new „genesis” of a person: in the fulfillment of the human person in his or her essence and existence (*formatio personalitatis*) as a particular point in the history of salvation²⁸. Experience of faith is to enable a person to „touch” God, and then to live in him through faith, which stimulates assimilation to him. In some sense, experience of faith is the „mechanics” of encountering my own self in God. It provides the understanding of the self, an understanding of life, and „the ability to interpret human life [the earthly reality as well as the eternal one], according to the depth of the thinking of Christ”²⁹.

Because of its aim to „animate human life with a message of faith, to strengthen faith and to enable its justification in the world”³⁰, catechesis must not disregard the experience of faith. We need catechesis that will relate to life and participate in lives of those to be catechized³¹, so that it will transform their personal histories into Christic histories (cf. PF 6). Emilio Alberich, a Spanish catechist, explains that the traditional conception of catechesis as religious instruction or teaching the Christian doctrine is insufficient today and incapable of responding to the gravest challenges Christians must face in our times. What we need is „a new paradigm” of catechesis. We need „pastoral conversion”. Alberich says „we must pass from »inherited« Christianity to »proposed« Christianity, that is, from the religious heritage, passed on almost automatically, to personal faith. Or, in other words, from »the apostolate of conscript« to the apostolate of »generating« (making new

²⁷ Cf. A. Kiciński, *Le giornate mondiali della gioventù – i giovani e il beato Giovanni Paolo II*. „The Person and the Challenges: The journal of theology, education, canon law and social studies inspired by Pope John Paul II” 2,1 (2012), p. 121–134.

²⁸ Cf. A. Scola, *Doświadczenie człowieka. U źródeł nauczania Jana Pawła II* [*The Experience of Man: The Sources of the Teaching of John Paul II*], Lublin 2010, p. 54–68.

²⁹ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne...*, no. 24.

³⁰ *Ivi*, no. 41.

³¹ Cf. M. Majewski, *Tożsamość katechezy integralnej* [*The Identity of Integral Catechesis*], Kraków 1995, p. 117.

believers)³². Also Joachim Wanke, the Bishop of Erfurt, interestingly addresses the topic of bringing new Christians into Church: „Something is lacking in our Catholic Church in Germany. It is not money though. It is not even the faithful. It is the belief in the possibility of bearing new Christians”³³.

Nowadays catechesis must develop personal faith which will be a source of transformation for those to be catechized and which will awake the joy of being Christian in them. Thus the process of transformation of the catechized and of their immersion in the paschal mystery of death and resurrection must become the primary focus of catechesis. Its main task remains passing on the saving message and communicating the experience of faith, according to the principle which says that one must live in one's life what one wants to preach, before one starts to preach what others must live in their lives. The aim is that what is preached should become the object of experience³⁴. In the place of the traditional paradigm of „communicating the doctrine”, personalistic catechesis introduces „preaching and listening to the word of God”, as well as a combination of true and convincing experience with the content of God's message, accomplished in the depth of the human person. Faith may then become a permanent component part of human existence and express one's continuously updated attitude to God, fellow human beings and the world.

To sum up, it needs to be stressed that catechesis is not only about preaching what must be done; rather, it is about doing what is being preached. Instead of proposing how to live, one should rather live what one proposes. Such is the „mystagogy” of the Christian life³⁵.

CONCLUSION

The Year of Faith offers us encouragement to make the communication of faith revitalized calling, to make it sound like an echo and to give it the form of admonition, of sincere speech that will inspire faithfulness to God, who is real, who lives, who is personal, and who is recognized as our Creator, our truth and our happiness. Let us not forget the teaching of Benedict XVI:

We must bring to the men and women of our time: not an abstract God, a hypothesis, but a real God, a God who exists, who has entered history and is present in history; the God of Jesus Christ as an answer to the fundamental question of the meaning of life and of how we should live. Consequently, speaking of God demands familiarity

³² E. Alberich, Articolo per il 50° di „Katecheta” *Alla ricerca di un nuovo „paradigma catechetico”*. *Riflessioni sulla situazione della catechesi in Europa*, in: *Między tradycją a współczesnością. I Krajowy Kongres Katechetyczny [Between Tradition and Modernity. The 1st National Catechetical Congress]*, ed. A. Błoniak, J. Szpet, Poznań 2008, p. 385, 386.

³³ Quoted after: Die Deutschen Bischöfe, „Zeit zur Aussaat”.

³⁴ Cf. E. Alberich, Articolo per il 50° di „Katecheta” *Alla ricerca...*, p. 387.

³⁵ Cf. *ivi*, p. 390.

with Jesus and his Gospel, it implies that we have real, personal knowledge of God and strong passion for his plan of salvation without succumbing to the temptation of success, but following God's own method which is that of humility – God makes himself one of us [...]. We must not fear the humility of taking little steps, but trust in the leaven that penetrates the dough and slowly causes it to rise (cf. Mt 13:33). In talking about God, in the work of evangelization, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must recover simplicity, we must return to the essence of a proclamation: the Good News of God who is real and effective, God who is concerned about us, God-Love who makes himself close to us in Jesus Christ, until the Cross, and who in the Resurrection gives us hope and opens us to life that has no end, eternal life, true life. [...] Therefore, talking about God means making room for the One who enables us to know him, who reveals his face of love to us; it means emptying ourselves of our own ego, offering it to Christ, in the awareness that it is not we who can win over others for God, but that we must expect God to send them, we must entreat God for them. Talking about God therefore stems from listening, from our knowledge of God which is brought about through familiarity with him, through the life of prayer and in accordance with the Commandments³⁶.

In the ultimate sense, faith must be confirmed, given proper reflection and newly proposed, so that it could result in the communion with Jesus Christ and so that a human being might become a living sign of his presence.

COMMUNICATING FAITH THROUGH CATECHESIS

Summary

Whereas each generation certainly needs an education in faith, the present moment in history is particular in this respect, since the education in question must be in a way provided anew. When faith is communicated as an experience, it grows rapidly and systematically. Thus, it is essential that education in faith should stress the dimension of experience conceived of as continuous existential involvement, as the acceptance of truth by an entire person, and as volitional adherence to values one has recognized as a result of the intimacy with God in Christ. Therefore, while passing on truths of faith, catechists needs to consider all human factors, as well as the process of growth and maturation of faith, in order to combine the experience of human life with the salvific message.

PRZEKAZ WIARY W KATECHEZIE

Streszczenie

Każde pokolenie potrzebuje wychowania w wierze, ale w obecnej epoce wymaga tego wychowania jakby od nowa. Wiara rozwija się dynamicznie i systematycznie wówczas, kiedy jest przekazywana jako doświadczenie. W wychowaniu wiary, winno być więc

³⁶ Benedict XVI, *Year of Faith. How to speak about God?*, General audience of Nov. 28, 2012, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121128_en.html (accessed on Feb. 28, 2013).

dowartościowane doświadczenie jako stałe zaangażowanie egzystencjalne, całoosobowe przyjęcie prawdy, skierowanie woli ku poznany wartościom, jakie wynikają z zażyłości człowieka i Boga w Chrystusie. Dlatego katecheza przekazując prawdy wiary, uwzględniając wszystkie czynniki ludzkie oraz dynamizm rozwoju i dojrzewania wiary łączy doświadczenie ludzkie z orędziem zbawczym.

Keywords: catechesis, communicating, experience, faith, person

Słowa kluczowe: doświadczenie, katecheza, osoba, przekaz, wiara