Verbum Vitae

Media Education and the New Evangelization. Part Two: Pastoral Postulates and Educational Proposals

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Abstract: This article is a methodological continuation of the content presented in the first part of the author's research ("Media Education and the New Evangelization. Part One: Media Components and Challenges," *Verbum Vitae* 37 [2020] 407–425) and represents an implementation of the concepts outlined there. In that previous text, the author demonstrated that pursuing a new evangelization in the Church demands the media education of evangelizers and their cooperation with the leaders of media education. This present article is aimed at formulating pastoral postulates and educational proposals based on the issues and connections that emerged. The first section outlines the postulates and educational proposals relating to those in charge of ongoing formation and who serve in the Church on the basis of the canonical authorization to teach (*missio canonica*). The second section contains postulates that apply to the formation of lay people and future clergy in preparing for evangelization in the Church. The third section focuses on a group of postulates concerning school religious education in light of the current *Core Curriculum of the Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland* (2018). This paper concludes with four research issues in the area of media education in the Church in the context of the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The methods of the third research stage borrow from the methodological paradigm of pastoral theology, mainly in its methods of analysis and synthesis, and have been applied in the article.

Keywords: Covid-19, media education, evangelization, formation, the internet, social media

At the final stage of the editorial work of the first part of this article,[1] Poland, Europe, and the whole world were affected by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The virus forced governments to lock down almost every area of life around the world. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has also reconfigured scientific reflection in previously undertaken research areas and has presented new contexts for many fields of science. In addition, theological and pastoral reflection on the evangelizing mission of the Church and broadly understood education in the period of the ongoing pandemic has faced

1   Chmielewski, "Media Education," 407–425.

new challenges and research tasks. The time of the pandemic has shown the potential and the role of the media. Media has been used by Catholics not only in conveying the contents, but also in summoning the real community, of the Church in the digital world in the liturgical dimension, in the transmission of faith, and in the service of *caritas*. Concurrently, the coronavirus crisis has exposed all kinds of gaps in the Church's communicative competencies as well as on the level of the digital and media skills of the lay people and clergy responsible for various forms of evangelization. The present time shows how much there is to be done concerning the area of media and the digital competencies of teachers at all educational stages, including the academic level. Online religious education is a special experimental field for the Catholic Church, which also tests the level of the above-mentioned competencies. Even more, the pandemic forces a change of emphasis and of the importance of certain elements that make up pastoral and educational activities.

The new inspiration for the formulation of the pastoral conclusions and educational proposals presented in this article is provided by the new *Directory for Catechesis*,[2] published in June 2020 by the Vatican. Not only does this document confirm previous explorations and conclusions, but it also sets new research directions in the area covered in the present text.[3] Hence, it seems justified at this point to briefly pay attention to the new impulses provided by the *Directory* and to relate them to the issues currently being addressed.

On the day of the promotion of the new catechetical document (June 25, 2020), Archbishop Rino Fisichella emphasized that catechesis is understood and implemented from the perspective of the new evangelization, and that the Church "faces a great challenge today, which focuses on a new culture [...], a digital culture […] of a global value."[4] The statement by the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization confirms the topicality and prominence of the new paradigm of contemporary evangelization and catechesis, i.e. the digital world. In the last decade, one may observe the development of digital tools that are used in the Internet space and that "primarily affect the formation of personal identity and interpersonal relations." This new digital culture carries a change of language and "along with it the behavior," wwhich in turn leads "to a new model of communication and formation that irrevocably concerns – as R. Fisichella notes – also the Church in

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[2]   Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione della Nuova Evangelizzazione, *Direttorio per la Catechesi*. This latest document on catechesis is the fruit of many years of work by experts from around the world who were invited to contribute by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who himself presides over the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. The work of catechesis in the Church was included in the structure of this Vatican dicastery.

[3]   For the broad genesis and structure of the latest *Directory for Catechesis* in the post-conciliar period see: Kiciński, "Rozwój dyrektoriów", 18–26.

[4]   Press Conference to present the *Directory for Catechesis* prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation, 25.06.2020.

the complex world of education." The multidimensionality and expansion of digital culture require the verification of "the adequacy of the current formation proposal, wherever it comes from. However, for the Church, this verification is especially necessary in the light of Her 'competence' towards humanity and its search for the truth."[5] *The Vatican Directory for Catechesis* points to the catechesis that is integrally included in the new evangelization, the cultural reference of which is the media world. At the same time, this document points to a catechesis that is co-created by catechists and the catechised (catechesis 'with children,' 'with young people'), with co-creation also being one of the essential features of digital culture.

In the very text of *the Directory for Catechesis* (English edition: *DC*), one may find as many as 21 points in the document which address the issue of the relationship between catechesis and digital culture, *inter alia* by describing the multifaceted world of digital media. The content devoted to this issue clearly indicates a new cultural, social, anthropological, linguistic, and theological context of the transmission of the faith. The aforementioned document emphasizes that, in the activity of evangelization and catechesis, the Church must be aware of a qualitatively new addressee already present in the ecclesial environment. This is especially true of the *digital native* generation, formed and "formatted" by ubiquitous social media. As the authors of the *Directory* observe, digital tools are not only an instrument in the communication of faith. These tools are involved in the process of the creation of a new digital culture. The Church's task is to understand the nature of this culture in depth so as to be able to fruitfully inculturate the Christian message. Therefore, as the document emphasizes, "it is urgent, therefore, to provide an education on the media, because what is at stake is a form of digital illiteracy" (*DC*, 368). The necessary steps aimed at overcoming media illiteracy are recommended not only with regards to the addressees of evangelization, but above all, to those who perform the work of evangelization by profession on the basis of the canonical mission of the Church.

This article is aimed at formulating pastoral postulates and educational proposals for both media literacy formation and new evangelization in the aspects presented in the first part of the article. The above desiderata are addressed to the circles responsible for the new evangelization as well as media education and are subsequently treated interdependently as a kind of methodological diptych. This will enable those concerned to jointly plan and programme both educational and evangelizing activities.

The content of this article is presented in three sections, the first of which concerns the ongoing formation of evangelizers within the Church's mission of proclaiming the word of God. The second outlines postulates and educational proposals that concern the basic education of future evangelizers, while the third section endeavours to formulate postulates regarding school religious education. The concluding section constitutes an attempt to identify several research areas related to media edu-

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5   The quotes cited come from Fisichella. "Guida alla lettura," 7–8.

cation in the Church, which, in the context of the prevailing SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, requires further investigation. The methods of the third research stage emerge from the methodological paradigm of pastoral theology, mainly the methods of analysis and synthesis, and were applied in the course of preparation of the article.

1. The Media Education of Evangelizers – An Ongoing Formation

The contemporary teaching of the Catholic Church regarding the media as well as the cultural transformations caused, among other things, by the enormous dynamics of technological changes in the area of social communication and media, explicitly call for media and digital education to be available both for people preparing for various evangelizing ministries (basic formation) as well as for those already actively involved in the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church (ongoing formation). As Monika Przybysz notes, the contemporary Church needs people with knowledge and practical skills in the fields of the Internet and social media in order to build bridges between the Church community and the local environment and to subsequently convey the ecclesial reality in a communicative way.[6] This section is devoted to pastoral postulates and educational proposals for the ongoing formation of evangelizers authorized (*missio canonica*) to teach in the Church.

A. Postulates

Hitherto, no empirical research has been conducted in Poland concerning the media competencies of clergymen. On the other hand, there has been research on the level of the media competency of lay religious education teachers in the Archdiocese of Lublin,[7] on the identity and competencies of catechists in the Pelplin diocese,[8] and on the development of the IT competencies of religious education teachers in the Archdiocese of Warmia,[9] with this latter research also covering general media competencies. The above studies and the conclusions formulated by their authors expand the substantive sources of the formulation of several pastoral postulates relating to the programming of the media education of evangelizers (not only catechists), including priests in ongoing formation. Media literacy formation should be one of the permanent components of the ongoing formation of priests, religious education teachers, and other persons who undertake the mission of proclaiming the word of

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[6]   See: Przybysz, "Kościół w social media," 149.
[7]   Szajda, *Kompetencje medialne nauczycieli religii.*
[8]   Simiński, *Tożsamość i kompetencje katechetów.*
[9]   Bielinowicz, *Rozwój kompetencji informatycznych.*

God under the authority of the Church.[10] Media literacy formation in the Church in Poland should be conducted at three (nationwide, diocesan, and parish) levels.

At the national level, responsibility for media education should be taken by commissions, councils, and teams operating within the Polish Bishops' Conference. It seems that the Committee of Clergy and the Commission of Christian Education in cooperation with the Council for Social Communications and the Team for the New Evangelization would be the competent entities who could develop guidelines in this area. Cooperation with national Catholic media and the editorial offices of the Catholic programmes of Polish Television and Polish Radio should be undertaken. The potential of these circles regarding the media literacy formation of evangelizers has so far been untapped.

The communities undertaking the formation of evangelizers in Poland within the school of the new evangelization are another addressee of the postulates which take into account a concern for media education on a national level. Among many of them, such as the programs of the Polish National School of Evangelizers,[11] those institutionally connected with the Polish Bishops' Conference – the Team for New Evangelization and the St. Andrew School of Evangelization (SESA)[12] – were analyzed. In its formation program (plan of formation), the National School of Evangelizers in Poland offers a workshop entitled "Evangelization in Cyberspace," which consists of four thematic modules: 1) Websites – the space for evangelization; 2) Facebook and the Mobile Parish in the service of evangelization; 3) Effective videos and graphics in the service of evangelization; and 4) Effective mailing.[13] This workshop program clearly indicates the development of technological and communication competencies. Therefore, developing media competencies and introducing workshop participants to media culture can only take place as a directly unplanned outcome of education. It seems reasonable to introduce content concerning the field of contemporary media culture and the media context of the new evangelization into the program of schools of new evangelization, and to teach selected media competencies which are necessary for fruitful evangelization. On the other hand, the program of formation of the St. Andrew School of Evangelization available on its website in fact fails to contain thematic proposals in the field of media education.

Within the diocesan structure, media and digital education should be included, and thus organized and coordinated in the programming of the ongoing formation of priests. Such education constitutes the responsibility of persons delegated by the diocesan bishop to the ongoing formation of priests and the relevant agencies which coordinate the ongoing education of religious education teachers (both conse-

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10   See: Umiński, *Diecezjalne www w Polsce*, 199–242; Kloch, *Kościół w Polsce wobec Web 2.0*, 239–261.
11   See: https://nowaewangelizacja.org/ose/.
12   Cf. https://www.nowaewangelizacja.eu/witamy-na-stronie-sesa-polska.
13   Cf. "Warsztat IV: Internet – kontynent do zdobycia."

crated and lay people). In discussions of media education experts and practitioners, the creation of diocesan media centers are proposed, with these being a kind of a tool for the raising of qualifications in the area of ongoing media literacy formation. At the same time, these centers could serve as a forum for the sharing of pastoral and educational materials, good practices, and ideas.[14] In order for this to be done, already existing media centers, such as the editorial offices of diocesan radio stations, the regional editorial offices of the Catholic press, and the editorial offices of diocesan websites, should be used. As such, the media centers that already exist in dioceses would act as educational centers for the media literacy formation of evangelizers. However, as in the case of nationwide media, it seems that the personal and tool potential of these communities in many dioceses is insufficiently made use of in promoting the formation of evangelizers. At the national, diocesan, as well as parish level, active participation in media projects carried out by universities, non-governmental organizations, foundations, and associations that deal with issues related to media education should be promoted.

Religious education teachers are a special group of evangelizers in need of media education. They face the challenges of intensive self-education and institutionalized development in order to increase media competencies. According to Agnieszka Szajda's research, "educational recommendations are not the same for all of the surveyed religious education teachers, because the level of competencies turned out to be varied due to differences in sex, marital status, age, work experience, place of residence, and the type of school."[15] Thus, the author suggests that those responsible for the ongoing formation of religious education teachers in individual dioceses should focus their educational activities on three problem areas. Firstly, emphasis should be placed on the necessity of media education, "which can strengthen the catechetical message, supplement, and enrich it."[16] Secondly, the forms of education employed should be diversified due to the many types of schools, with particular emphasis on the educational specificity of kindergarten and the first two stages of primary school. Thirdly, training in modern information technologies and participation in the world of digital culture should be offered to teachers from the media-savvy generation X.[17] Bearing in mind that the person of an evangelizer, religious education teacher, catechist, or a presbyter who consciously undertakes the process of self-education is a key subject in media literacy formation, one should also stress the role of "subject methodologists in the field of catechesis or school principals

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[14] An example of such an undertaking is includes many useful websites (www.katechezanatana.pl;www.edukacjamedialna.edu.pl; https://www.facebook.com/groups/katechezazpomyslem/). This may be a guide for media education promoters in dioceses who wish to undertake formation activities in the field of media.

[15] Szajda, *Kompetencje medialne nauczycieli religii*, 250–251.

[16] Szajda, *Kompetencje medialne nauczycieli religii*, 251.

[17] Szajda, *Kompetencje medialne nauczycieli religii*, 251.

being a kind of *spiritus movens*, who facilitate the search for methods to raise media competencies."[18]

Defining the guidelines for the use of the Internet, especially of social media, by church institutions and those who conduct various forms of evangelization within the Church is another form of media education in the Church as well as a postulate thereof. Such a document was issued in the Warszawa-Praga diocese in 2018,[19] whereas in October 2019, at the 143rd Plenary Assembly, the Conference of Major Superiors of Male Orders in Poland approved for one year *ad experimentum* a document prepared by members of the Subcommittee on Media, with this subcommittee itself being overseen by the above-mentioned institution.[20]

At the parish level, however, various pastoral activities should be used for the self-education of ministers and catechists. These include various pastoral occasions which allow for the media education of adults, such that those that concern parents whose children are preparing to receive the successive sacraments of Christian initiation, pre-baptismal conferences, retreat days for engaged couples, youth meetings before Confirmation, regular homilies and sermons preached during Holy Mass, and other similar situations.

At this point, one should also refer to Łukasz Simiński's research on the identity and competencies of catechists in the Pelplin diocese.[21] The author explored aspects of the media education of religious education teachers; however, he focused only on methodological skills in the dimension of using information technologies in the catechetical process. While examining the competencies of a religious education teacher's identity, the author failed to deepen his research in terms of media competencies. Joanna Stanis-Rzepka and Jan Szpet chose a similar research path. In two cognitively interesting publications devoted to the IT competencies of religious education teachers, a reductive approach to these competencies could be observed,[22] with this being reflected by a separation from the broader context of developing media competencies. Technological and digital competencies are necessary, but without educating the so-called soft competencies, such as media competencies, teachers and evangelizers may suffer from educational deficits in their understanding of the humanistic dimension of the media. Only an appropriate level of media, digital, and information competencies, compatibly developed, allows one to 'embed' one's identity in contemporary media culture and equips one with the competencies required for a creative dialogue with contemporary addressees of evangelization. The examination of competencies

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18   Szajda, *Kompetencje medialne nauczycieli religii*, 247; see: Drzewiecki – Kot, "Troska Kościoła w Polsce," 52–54.
19   *Dyrektorium dotyczące zasad*.
20   "Zasady obecności i komunikacji"; see: "143. Zebranie Plenarne Konferencji Wyższych Przełożonych Zakonów Męskich"; see: Chmielewski – Durma – Kusiak, "Kodeks social media."
21   Cf. Simiński, *Tożsamość i kompetencje katechetów*, 257–281.
22   See: Stanis-Rzepka, *Nowe technologie*; Szpet – Stanis-Rzepka, *Nauczanie religii w okresie COVID-19*.

in the scope of IT technologies is necessary but is insufficient for the construction of, for example, permanent education programs for religious education teachers.

B. Educational Proposals – Good Practices

The ongoing formation of clergy and lay people engaged in various forms of evangelization in Poland brings examples of good educational practices in the area of media literacy formation. Not only are there models to be reproduced, but these models also constitute a source of inspiration for further research.

Various forms of media education take place as part of the ongoing formation of priests. The Archdiocese of Przemyśl is one such example. In 2015, at the invitation of priests responsible for ongoing formation, a series of 5 editions (spring and autumn editions) of a project of formation of priests in the area of media education was organized in cooperation with the Chair of Contemporary Forms of Faith Transmission, the Catholic University of Lublin.[23] Similarly, occasional forms of training are held as part of *formatio permanens* in the dioceses of Kielce and Siedlce, where the author of this article had the opportunity to conduct such classes.[24]

Conducted since 2007, workshops for spokespersons of church institutions in Poland are another form of inspiring educational practices. The first meeting was held on the initiative of Fr. Jan Szewek, and was addressed to members of various orders and congregations, predominantly male ones. As Fr. J. Szewek emphasizes, over the years most of the religious superiors present benefited from the training. Since 2009, in collaboration with Fr. Józef Kloch, the then press spokesman of the Polish Bishops' Conference, and M. Przybysz, the range of training addresses was expanded to include diocesan priests, members of women's congregations, and representatives responsible for communication in various church institutions. According to the assumptions of the organizers, the program would be conducted by persons who not only know the problem theoretically, but practically implement the issue professionally. Hence, journalists, press spokespersons, and social media and internet specialists were invited. As a rule – as Fr. J. Szewek emphasizes – people working for secular and commercial media as well as for non-church institutions were invited to let the workshop trainers and participants become acquainted with one another, their environments, break the existing stereotypes, and conduct a critical and creative dialogue.[25]

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23 Cf. Szajda, "Edukacja medialna kapłanów."
24 Cf. "Spotkanie Formatio Permanens."
25 Chmielewski, "Wywiad z o. Janem Szewkiem"; see: "XV Warsztaty Kościelnych Specjalistów."

2. The Media Education of Evangelizers – Basic Formation

Contemporary education for new evangelizers, both lay people and candidates for the priesthood, takes into account the context of digital culture. Therefore, media content should be incorporated into study programs and formation plans. The education of seminary students and lay students of theology are two different paths of education. However, in the field of media education, the issues thereof are generally equivalent when taking into account the distinctions arising from the different specificity of the vocation of a priest, lay religious education teacher, catechist, or evangelizer. Hence, the postulates formulated below for the implementation of media education in the basic formation of evangelizers will apply to both students of higher seminaries in Poland and lay people undertaking theological studies.

In media education for seminarians, the teaching of the Church provides three levels, the first being the obligatory formation of seminarians as recipients of media messages. This consists in shaping seminarians' critical sense, especially their competence to distinguish, evaluate, and choose selectively among those media messages that violate truth and morality. The second – pastoral – level aims at improving those educational skills necessary for the formation of the faithful in the field of critical and correct use of the media. Additionally, it would be desirable to expand students' skills of using the media of social communication, and other means of expression and communication that could be used in future activities. At this level, attention should also be focused on the preparation of seminarians to act as guides of media recipients as well as advisers, confessors, and ministers of media people. Finally, the third – specialized – level focuses on those involved in the media field or with predispositions to this field: lecturers, future media employees, and press spokespersons. Education at this level is also intended to help select persons particularly gifted in this field and prepare them for service in Catholic media, press offices, or other media spaces.[26]

A. Postulates

1) Supplementation of the provisions of the agreement on the qualifications required from Catholic religious education teachers and the provisions of the Resolution of the Polish Bishops' Conference of April 3, 2019 on the professional qualifications required of religious education teachers,[27] including classes in the field of media education.

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[26] The problem of media education in theological seminaries is extensively presented in Kloch – Przybysz, "Edukacja medialna w seminariach," 212–225; See: Chmielewski, "Edukacja medialna."

[27] See: "Porozumienie pomiędzy KEP oraz MEN."

2) Upon approval of "Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis pro Polonia" by the Holy See, the introduction of the media education classes provided for in the document.[28]

3) Due to the above, it is necessary to prepare a textbook for "Media education," the content of which would be presented by taking into account the specificity of seminary education and the evangelization ministry of future priests.

4) Analysis of curricula at the Faculties of Theology at selected universities in Poland[29] clearly results in postulating the need of intensifying activities aimed at supplementing theological studies curricula with content related to media education from a pastoral perspective. Hence, the curricula of theological studies as well as of postgraduate theological and catechetical studies should be supplemented with issues related to media literacy formation. The unified master's degree program in theology of the 2020/2021 academic year for lay people at the Catholic University of Lublin shows that there is one facultative lecture in the field of media education entitled: "The Church in the digital age."[30] A similar curriculum for theological seminars at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin includes only classes in information technology (Higher Theological Seminary in Sandomierz, classes) and "Information technologies in didactics and evangelization" (Metropolitan Seminary in Lublin seminar).[31] It is hard to not agree with the authors of the *Directory for Catechesis* that "media education is becoming an urgent task, because we are dealing with a kind of digital illiteracy" (*DC*, 368), with this being the case even after several years of theological studies.

5) Inclusion of issues related to media, media theology, and media education in the curriculum of theological studies for religious education teachers. One of the solutions thereof would be to introduce media education specializations (in a similar way to the teaching specialization) in permanent educational courses within an inter-faculty study program. Simultaneously, this would be an impulse to encourage students to continue their education in fields related to media education, e.g. journalism, with this resulting in the preparation of professional staff to work in Catholic radio and television stations, press agencies, and Christian cultural institutions.

6) The content of lectures on moral, dogmatic, fundamental, and practical theology should take into account issues related to the means of social communication.

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28 Despite the lack of recognition in the "Ratio pro Polonia," work is underway to adapt these guidelines to the specific conditions of seminary formation so that, upon approval, "all institutions involved in this process are ready to act." See works: "Biskupi o planie"; Sonak, *Formacja ludzka*, 176–179.

29 John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Warsaw.

30 See: https://e.kul.pl/qlprogram.html?ra=1&etap=0&kid=28&op=2 [access: 20.10.2020].

31 See: https://e.kul.pl/qlprogram.html?ra=1&etap=0&kid=62&op=2 [access: 20.10.2020].

7) Lectures on general and detailed didactics as well as practical classes in addition to educating students' skills of using digital technologies in catechesis would demonstrate the broader pedagogical and didactic context of the impact of new Web 3.0 media on the subject of the educational process.

8) The creation of forms to further raise media competencies through establishing, for example, postgraduate studies in media education32 or through focusing on taking up further specializations in journalism and social communication.

B. Educational Proposals

Where media education and new evangelization meet, there is a light for change in the higher seminaries of Poland, thanks to the new *ratio studiorum*, which is an integral part of the above-mentioned "Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis pro Polonia." This project provides thirty hours of classes in the field of media education.[33] It is a proposal that organizes the current state of education and includes such media based classes in the structure of its studies. Admittedly, many diocesan and religious seminaries in Poland have held classes in this field; however, their organization resulted from the sensitivity of these institutions' authorities to the signs of the times rather than from legislation. There also arises a question of whether it these undertakings were media education in the strict sense. Research by R. Kasowski shows that media education has been understood in a broad sense in most seminars, with the content thereof primarily covering computer science and journalistic education, while content related to the development of media competencies and the shaping of future leaders of media education has been lacking.[34] Such a broad understanding of media education differs from the definition of media education adopted in the documents of various European and American organizations. This is certainly not a contradiction against the need for education in journalism, PR, and IT. However, this is not media education in the strict sense, as understood as shaping a critical, selective, active, and creative participant in contemporary media and digital communication processes, i.e. in developing media and digital competencies.[35]

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[32] The disturbing phenomenon of the disappearance of proposals for media education studies should be noted. While, for example, in 2018 there were postgraduate studies in 'media education' at the Faculty of Education of the University of Warsaw, in 2020 such a proposal no longer exists.

[33] See: Kuciński, *Internet w Kościele*, 197.

[34] The research author himself defines media education as follows: "Media education covers a very wide range of different content and activities. [...] for the needs of methodological illustration, a division has been adopted that differentiates the functional aspect of media education in the area of learned theory and acquired practical skills. [...] media education was focused on the following issues arising from the teaching of the Church: media theory, IT and Internet education, issues related to the presentation of the image and building of relations with the media environment, and pastoral practice in the media [...]." See: Kasowski, *Edukacja medialna*, 8.

[35] Cf. Gruhn, *Katalog kompetencji medialnych*.

In the 2014/2015 academic year, a two-year specialization in media education was opened at the uniform master's studies program at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin (course A, B, inter-faculty). This was the result of the development of the Department of Contemporary Forms of the Transmission of the Faith, through which the university, as part of the Institute of Pastoral Theology and Catechetics, incarnated into the curriculum the church's recommendations for media studies. This was also a response to the requirement to improve the quality of education of RE teachers in the field of media education. The proposed and implemented media education specialization within the major of theology was complementary to the catechetical and pedagogical preparation of theology students in the years 2014–2016.[36] The above course is still available and open for enrollment at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin.

3. Media Education as Part of School Religious Education

Catechesis understood both as school religious education and parish catechesis is one of the areas in which the Church implements its educational function (*CDCCP*, 82). Following one of the fundamental principles of pastoral fidelity to God and to man, the catechetical ministry is open to the signs of the times, one of which is the new media culture. Statements of Church teaching oblige one to undertake media literacy formation also as part of religious education teaching. Hence, one of the contemporary tasks of catechesis is to join with general media education. The Church understands this primarily as media education whose goals are achieved, among other things, by developing media, information, and digital competencies. In this section, postulates and educational proposals in the field of media education are presented in light of a critical analysis of the *Core Curriculum of the Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland* (*CCC*). The undertaken analysis should also account for the current *Core Curriculum for General Education* (*PR*), the content of which relating to media education could have influenced the editorial staff of *The Core Curriculum of the Catechesis*.

In *The Core Curriculum for General Education* of 1999, media education content was included in an inter-subject path. In an analogous document from 2008, the content in this area was scattered among the curricula of various subjects.[37] In the current *Core Curriculum for General Education*, this subject is included in the preamble of

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[36] Although the evaluation of this cycle of specialization showed the need for such classes, they were no longer resumed in subsequent years. This entire project is widely presented by Andrzej Kiciński ("Edukacja medialna," 127–139).

[37] For an in-depth analysis of this issue see: Drzewiecki, "Edukacja medialna w nowej podstawie."

the core curriculum for general education of first degree industry schools. Nowhere else in the document does this type of content appear, as opposed to its consistent emphasis on the need to develop skills and competencies in the field of information and communication technologies and programming, which are not omitted. However, these subjects are not the same as the content of media education. The new *Core Curriculum* emphasizes the need to develop various competencies, e.g. IT, reading, health, language, social and communication skills, but these competencies do not include media competencies. There are no references to them in the teaching goals of individual subjects and educational stages, whereas there is a modification and extension of computer science education in the new aspects of algorithmic thinking and programming. Therefore, the imbalance in the teaching goals of IT and media education is noticeable. In the new *Core Curriculum*, media content most widely appears in lessons of the Polish language, history, social studies, IT, and art. However, these subjects are not sufficiently correlated with one another. This state of affairs allows one to conclude that the authors of the current *Core Curriculum* are not convinced of the need for media education in schools as a separate subject. Unfortunately, this degree of awareness also dominates outside the ministerial office. In discussions with school principals, teacher training centers, and teachers themselves, there is a lack of understanding of the essence of media education, i.e. education for critical media reception as well as the confusion and identification of critical media reception with content that includes information and communication technologies (ICT), default IT competencies, and digital competencies such as CIL (*computer and information literacy*).

It seems that similar assumptions with regards to media education were adopted by the authors of the 2018 *Core Curriculum of the Catechesis*. The curriculum content of each stage of education, including preschool education, is preceded by the characteristics of the addressees of RE teaching at school. There is simply no content of interest to us regarding media culture, social changes, or the impact of new communication technologies, especially Web 2.0 / 3.0, on the characteristics of the person co-creating catechesis. If there is content that revolves around these issues, it is rather of an additional, quasi-supplementary nature, sometimes like a warning against dangers. In this curriculum's description of preschool children, one may find only a short note: "However, it should be remembered that the child's development, especially in the intellectual and emotional sphere, may be disturbed by addiction to television, smartphones, or computer games" (*CCC*, 19). On the other hand, the characteristics of children attending primary school grades I–IV in their relation to the world of media are summarized in the following statements: "Children frequently and willingly use their mobile phones even for play and to communicate with others. In general, they handle most multimedia devices without any problems" (*CCC*, 29). The authors of the CCC, in listing the characteristics of pupils in grades V–VIII, completely failed to notice the world of media in the lives of younger teenagers (cf. *CCC*, 53–57).

The stage of adolescence, including students in post-primary school, in the media aspect was characterized in the context of searching for personal patterns:

> They spend a lot of time in the world of the Internet, TV series, and computer games. Magazines promote their idols whose life and behavior are often completely contrary to the teaching of the Church. The media, which to a large extent shapes the tastes and attitudes of young people, plays a significant role in the process of educating the younger generation. Even more, there is depreciation of the role of the Church (*CCC*, 98).

The characteristics of pupils at particular educational stages have not been investigated in the media aspect. Media technologies are treated as innocent tools towards which pupils display utilitarian interest. The texts demonstrate a lack of use of modern knowledge in various areas concerning the impact of new media technologies, the Internet and Web 3.0, on pupils themselves, and on the educational family environment. In terms of content, the introductions to individual educational stages are no different from those contained in the previous *Core Curriculum* issued in 2010. Eight years of development of digital technologies, social and cultural changes, and personality transformations under the influence thereof in not just a decade, but a whole era. This state of affairs results in an unreliable image of the pupil to whom catechesis is addressed. Introductions to individual educational stages are not deepened in the dimension of media culture, and as a consequence focus on the detailing of the core curriculum in the form of formulating catechetical goals, content, detailed requirements, pupils' attitudes, recommended conditions and methods of teaching, the correlation of RE teaching with school education, and the cooperation of educational environments.

As part of school religious education, various contents of media education should be correlated with other subjects. As the provisions of the *CCC* show, such opportunities are rather uncommon. The preschool period does not contain any *expressis verbis* indications. Only indirectly can the provision concerning the correlation of religious education with preschool education in the area of cognitive development be applied to media education, where support is advised in "distinguishing elements of the world of fiction from reality" and in "reading images, naming symbols and signs" (*CCC*, 24). Both activities are undoubtedly necessary in conducting biblical catechesis with the use of animated biblical films.[38]

At the first stage of school education, the *CCC* only points to the correlation, both in grades I–III and in grade IV, with art education – fine arts as well IT education – and computer sciences, respectively. As part of "preparation for the use of media" (*CCC*, 47), the definition of "the use of media messages" was further speci-

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[38] For the media formation of religious education teachers in preschool and early childhood education in this area, the following work is valuable: Dec, *Biblijna katecheza wizualna*.

fied (*CCC*, 47). On the other hand, computer science is described as a "proper use of electronic tools and media – and – compliance with law and safety on the Internet" (*CCC*, 48). There is room for the operationalization of these recommendations for the authors of curricula and authors of textbooks for school catechesis. At this stage of education, the *Core Curriculum* assumes media forms, forms of cooperation delivered by means of media and communication technologies, between religious education teachers and parents "to fit into their natural environment of life and activities" (*CCC*, 48). Therefore, it would be advisable to use this online route to educate parents in the scope of media literacy.

In grades V–VIII of primary school, in the comparison of content, specific requirements, and pupils' attitudes, there is only one indication within moral formation relating to the media which: "recognizes and indicates the mechanisms of manipulation in personal relations and in the media" (*CCC*, 72). This is planned in the content area relating to the seventh, eighth, and tenth commandments of the Decalogue. The catechist, on the other hand, joins the process of education, supplementing obtained knowledge in other subjects with axiological and religious aspects. Among the designated content areas, there are those that can implicitly serve the media formation. In the area of Polish language education in grades V–VI, one may point here to learning the skill of how to create a statement in the form of a dialogue, a story, or a report e.g. a movie, performance, or event, in the form of a note or a film script based on fragments of a book or original ideas. On the other hand, in grades VII–VIII, as part of the process of the reception of cultural texts, some content can refer to the media competence related to the language of media – an image, a photograph is recommended (no film, no online audiovisual messages). There are also topics related to one's knowledge of journalistic genres and to the ethical issues connected with linguistic manipulation (*CCC*, 81–83). The latter aspect should be extended to media manipulation, which uses the language of image and sound. Clear content which indicates media literacy formation correlates with the subject of social studies in grades VII–VIII, which includes a thematic module devoted to mass media. The proposed content can be used for the education of, among other things, certain media competencies such as use of information, the language of media, and ethics and values in communication and media (*CCC*, 87–88).

Only in secondary school, during the implementation of catechesis, moral formation, and issues related to the 8th commandment of the Decalogue, is it proposed to convey content on the responsible use of the means of social communication. The pupil should demonstrate knowledge and skills in order to be able to "show the role of the media and the principles of using it; to define the role of morality in the reception of media messages; and to evaluate the content of information in the media in the context of the 8th commandment" (*CCC*, 114–115). On the other hand, in correlation with other school subjects, there are in fact only three references to the media. During Polish language classes, the pupil acquires the ability to

analyze theatrical and film works while in art classes pupils become acquainted with knowledge concerning the protection of intellectual property. Even more, during the education for safety class, pupils acquire the competence to react in the event of cyberbullying and they are educated in behavioral addictions, including addiction to the computer, the Internet, and gambling (cf. *CCC*, 126, 128, 135).

To summarize, the above notations may be applied to four media competencies: ethics and values in communication and media, the use of information, security as well as law in communication and media. Thus, this covers only half of the media competencies commonly accepted in source literature and in educational practice.[39]

The above analyses show that the educational proposal in the scope of media literacy formation fails to even attempt to engage in a substantive dialogue with the contemporary teaching of the Church on the media. Therefore, the characteristics of pupils at all stages of education, including preschool education, should be supplemented and extended with issues resulting from the media immersion of contemporary children and youth.[40] At this point, the research conducted by Adam Bielinowicz concerning the development of the IT competencies of RE teachers should also be noted. The study itself is important and methodologically correct with one exception. When examining the IT competencies of religious education teachers, the author doesn't consider these competencies in the broader context of media education, which is a mistake. When he explores the content of the *Core Curriculum of the Catechesis* (of 2010 and 2018), he equates media competencies with IT competencies.[41] This is an error of reductionism in the humanistic concept of media literacy formation, as noted above.

In the preschool and the elementary period, in cooperation with parents, catechists should pay attention to the necessity of restricting time and access to media because too intense exposure to media messages and the use of devices such as tablets or smartphones have a negative impact on their multi-faceted development. Parents' media literacy is absolutely essential at this stage of a child's development, as they are the ones with the greatest influence on and responsibility for introducing their child to the space of skillful media use. Research clearly indicates the correlation between parents' media competencies and children's effective media education in the family environment.[42] This is an important aspect of the cooperation between the school, the Church, and the family environment. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare a program to support parents of preschool and early school children in teaching media education to children. Such a program should, above all, emphasize the value of direct communication in raising a child, promote a culture of using conscious, critical,

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[39] Cf. Gruhn, *Katalog kompetencji medialnych*.

[40] The source literature in this area is multidisciplinary, extensive, as well as abounding in new published research. Therefore it is impossible to point to specific bibliographic items here.

[41] Cf. Bielinowicz, *Rozwój kompetencji informatycznych*, 127–138, 254–266, 270.

[42] See: Grochowalska, "Spotkanie dziecka z kulturą audiowizualną."

and active participation in the world of the media, and indicate the role of parental media control.

Aspects concerning the influence of modern media on sensory, emotional, and intellectual maturation, and on value systems, moral norms, and ultimately on building identity should be supplemented in particular while describing the development stage of pupils attending grades V–VIII. It is necessary to show the problems inherent in creating a virtual identity and the loneliness of teenagers online as well as to indicate that young people build their world views also in the scope of a system of moral and religious values and norms based on of the opinions of their peers, idols, and micro-influencers that are found in the information bubble of social media.[43]

One should also pay attention to the conceptual assumptions of catechesis in the context of modern achievements in pedagogy, didactics, neurodidactics, cultural shifts due to the influence of media, and of the recommendation of the latest *Directory for Catechesis* that the process of catechesis is not a one-way activity. Religious education tat school, as well as catechesis in the parish, should be a process of co-creating an event of a didactic, educational, and formative nature at the religious level. Contemporary pupils are to varying degree active creators in the media sphere in which they present themselves and they cannot be treated otherwise as subjects of the didactic process. Bearing in mind the above postulates, the last most important one is formulated in this paragraph, namely the urgent need to modify the programming of activities by the Committee for Catholic Education of the Polish Bishops' Conference and the National Catechetical Center, and especially to start work on a new *new* "*Core Curriculum of the Catechesis.*" This is due to the fact that, in light of the circumstances such as the publication of the *Directory for Catechesis*, the coronavirus crisis, the crisis of the image and authority of the clergy, the internal crisis of the Catholic Church in Poland, and online religious education, the present *Core Curriculum* fails to withstand attempts to confront the new social, ecclesial, and educational reality. The theoretical aspect of the role and presence of media education in school religious education has sufficiently been elaborated upon,[44] and now awaits a program and didactic incarnation.

Conclusions

The text of this article was edited during the SARS-CoV-19 pandemic, which has already been around for almost a year. Its effects are global and multidimensional. The coronavirus crisis also affects the sphere of religious life and the functioning of

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43   Chmielewski, "Nowe media."
44   See: Drzewiecki, *Edukacja medialna*.

the Catholic Church and other Christian confessions in the areas of evangelization, education, and liturgy. Hence, it seems justified to draw attention in this conclusion section to the fact that the pandemic has resulted in the emergence of new phenomena and challenges, with the "old" challenges assuming a different configuration that demands new responses from societies, states, and religious communities, including the Catholic Church. This also applies to media education and evangelization, where scientific reflection is also necessary. However, such reflection cannot be undertaken now for two reasons. Firstly, the source material in question is extensive and multifaceted, and thus requires separate interdisciplinary research. Secondly, research methods other than those currently used should be applied, e.g. quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of media messages. There are at least several 'Covid-related' phenomena concerning the Church that evolved between evangelization and media education.

The first is the issue of infodemic. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused an eruption of information about this virus. The term "infodemic" comes from the English words *info*(rmation) ("information") and (epi)*demic* ("epidemic") and is defined in the documents of the World Health Organization (WHO).[45] According to experts, the rapid spread of both the biological and information virus, whose effects are now not fully known, was caused by globalization and the digital revolution, with this generating much information noise, with one of its manifestations being a huge amount of fake news about the pandemic.[46] According to Andrzej Zybertowicz, a poisoned infosphere, mediacracy, memecracy, and controlled messages trigger situations where, on the cognitive level, people are unable to process such large amounts of information and fail to have a clear view of reality.[47] Hence the almost insurmountable difficulty in distinguishing truth from falsehood, or in identifying true and false sources of information. The infodemic has also affected the community of the Catholic Church in the form of "infodemic" interpretations of various conspiracy theories concerning the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic repeated by the members thereof, sometimes including even the clergy.

The intra-ecclesial media apology of faith, understood as a new competence indispensable for intra-ecclesial discussion in the media space, constitutes the second phenomenon. The uncritical acceptance of messages concerning pandemic conspiracy theories, and even their propagation, leads to various types of pastoral abuses, liturgical errors, to dubious or even theologically wrong statements. It is sufficient to cite here, e.g., a media dispute in the Church in Poland concerning the reception of

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[45] The World Health Organization (*Managing Epidemics*, 26) defines an infodemic as "the rapid dissemination of information of various kinds, including gossip, rumors, and unreliable information immediately and internationally thanks to the popularity of mobile phones, social media, the Internet, and other communication technologies."

[46] Cf. Cinelli *et al.*, "The COVID-19 Social Media Infodemic", 2.

[47] Cf. Andrzej Zybertowicz, a voice in the panel discussion entitled: "Świat po pandemii koronawirusa."

Holy Communion in the hand.[48] Another example of church media action involved the use of holy water from church fonts during the pandemic. From the beginning of the coronavirus crisis (March 2020), two different "Covid" narratives concerning church hierarchs were juxtaposed in the media.[49] Moreover, some say that it is impossible to catch the virus in a sacred space, and therefore there is no need to use a mouth and nose mask.[50] Such a lack of knowledge of the nature of mediated communication has led to a situation in which those responsible for evangelization succumb to media pressure. This results in inconsistent opinions on topics that have long been defined in the teaching of the Church. This new media competence is also indispensable when engaging in an active and creative dialogue with the contemporary recipients of evangelization, those educated and formatted by social media algorithms. Therefore, it is necessary to operationalize the above competence in the media and in the theological dimension.

The digitization and virtualization of the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are the third phenomenon. The multitude and variety of forms of Gospel proclamation such as audiovisual homilies, sermons, conferences, and retreats can be observed, which should in general be assessed positively. There has been no record of such numbers of preachers as well as viewers and listeners so far. Initial reflection on this phenomenon makes us think about two opposing effects. Firstly, there is a danger of obscuring the word of God in a flood of megabit information. Because of the tsunami of information, the evangelizer will not reach his listeners. If the word of the Gospel reaches a listener as one of the streams of the great river of media narrative, it may not be made out for various reasons. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that mediated communication is not an obstacle; on the contrary, it is actually a channel of communication of the grace connected with the presence of the Holy Spirit, and thus of the Risen Christ. The extraordinary situation of the pandemic has somewhat adjourned the existing rules for the transmission of the Holy Mass in order to enable, due to the lockdown, the faithful to access the sacred, liturgical, and community sphere, all while remaining in the space of their own homes. There arises a real danger that some Catholics will choose to remain at the level of watching the Mass instead of celebrating it, that is, participating in it personally. One may also pose the question of how prolonged physical absenteeism affects the quality of religious practices and community ties. There is a real danger of the virtualization and privatization of liturgical and

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[48]   Cf. Commission for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of the Polish Bishops' Conference, "Komunikat Komisji ds. Kultu Bożego i Dyscypliny Sakramentów KEP."

[49]   Cf. Statements by Archbishop Andrzej Dzięga ("Słowo pasterskie księdza Arcybiskupa") and Archbishop Grzegorz Ryś ("List arcybiskupa metropolity łódzkiego").

[50]   Cf. e.g. a case of Fr. Daniel Galus and the Archdiocese of Częstochowa, "Odpowiedź ks. Daniela Galusa."

sacramental life and of the weakening of the acts of transmitting the Christian faith.[51] Subjecting these phenomena to scientific exploration can help, among other things, in answerering the question of how to structure the education of evangelizers' visual competencies for the digital transmission of the word of God and for liturgical celebrations in terms of content, methodology, and what shape the liturgical formation of the faithful should take in the context of the liturgy mediatization seen today.[52]

Remote religious education during the pandemic is the fourth issue. Both the Commission for Catholic Education of the Polish Bishops' Conference and the majority of departments responsible for catechesis in individual dioceses in Poland, as well as publishing houses that focus on religious education textbooks, reacted quickly and efficiently, providing many sources and ready-made materials and curricula for remote catechesis.[53] The technical side and available digital materials for online catechesis have been sufficient; however, the implementation of remote religious education is an open research issue. It is justified to test the participants of online teaching process: catechists, parents, children, and youth. Among the number of research problems, it is necessary to indicate such ones as the level of catechists' preparation in the field of information and communication technologies as well as their scope of media and digital competencies, the participation of the family environment in the digital process of RE teaching, the opportunities and threats of e-catechesis for the transmission of faith and evangelization, and the educational, mystagogical, and didactic dimensions thereof.[54]

Both parts of this article prove the thesis arguing for the deep relationship between media education and evangelization. The first part deals with some theoretical dimensions, while the second one shows their practical implementation. To conclude the considerations so far, it should be emphasized that thanks to media literacy formation, all participants of the evangelization process acquire a critical non-contradiction of their faith, which supports the process of faith maturation in the community of the Church. The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic strengthens the need for media education in the Church and at the same time spurs further research and the formulation of new pastoral and educational postulates. An evangelizer who has the competencies to understand the language of the media message, to choose sources of information selectively, to critically evaluate the media image of the world, and to creatively and actively participate in the media sphere is an evangelizer who is ready to go to the periphery of the Church and be actively present in the pre-evangelization areas that are broadened more and more by the multidimensional global crisis.

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51 Cf. Adamski – Jupowicz-Ginalska – Leonowicz-Bukała, "Polish Nationwide Catholic Opinion-Forming", 2–5.
52 See: Draguła, *Eucharystia zmediatyzowana*; Welsh – Dailey, "Mass ad Digitalem."
53 Cf. Mendyk – Pierzchała, "Zdalne nauczanie religii"; In some dioceses, however, those responsible for catechesis have failed to notice that there is remote religious education at school.
54 See: Fołtyn, "Zdalne nauczanie religii", 113; see: Pyżalski, *Edukacja w czasach pandemii.*

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