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## **JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONLY SOURCE OF HOPE. EDUCATIONAL INSPIRATIONS OF JOHN PAUL II IN EXHORTATION *ECCLESIA IN EUROPE***

Searching for an optimal pattern of children education that could possibly help to discover the right way of living for contemporary human being, who lives in a pluralist society and looks for his identity, requires a deep analysis of the present times and its challenges as well as defining the criteria of its assessment and propositions of dissolving the emerging problems.

One of the last documents published by John Paul II was the after-synod exhortation 'Ecclesia in Europe' *about Jesus Christ, who lives in the Church as a source of hope for Europe*<sup>1</sup>. After the extraordinary Episcopal synod in Europe in 1999 the Pope prepared a document containing the directions for European pastoral respects at the verge of third millennium. He tried to pay attention on the changes which occurred on our continent since the last exhortation about the activities of European Church and claims that those changes are a challenge for the Church able to satisfy the desire for hope that contemporary Europe and World are searching for<sup>2</sup>. He underlines however that some symptoms of renewing the hope are to be noticed insofar the Church restores for the Europeans the living contact with Christ as the source of any hope. The author through three keywords tries to describe the gentle material of rebuilding the hope by the Church in the course of: preaching, celebrating and serving the Gospel of hope. The realization of those three factors should lead to rebuilding the chains between Christ and the Divine Kingdom in every man, in Europe and in our homeland.

### **1. In the search for lost hope**

Taking a deep reflection on the surrounding world it is substantial to take into account the environmental and traditional differences not only in Europe but also in several regions of our country. Although we can claim that today's evangelic service of the Church stays under a huge danger of faith and sense of human dignity but on the other hand it is challenged by the pluralistic modernity that requires from the Church to refresh the sense of identity and responsibility for its mission in the believers. (...) *The Church offers to Europe the precious good that cannot be offered by anyone else; it is the faith in Jesus Christ, the source of hope which never betrays. It is a gift that derives from the spiritual and cultural unity of European nations that can influence its the development and integrity today and tomorrow* (EE18).

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II: Apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europe about Jesus Christ, who lives in the Church as a source of hope for Europe*, Cracow 2003 (later on ab. EE)

<sup>2</sup> Synod of Bishops, *End declaration from 13 Dezember 1991*, L'Osservatore Romano, polish ed. (1992) nr 1.

On the verge of the third millennium more than two thousand years long and in our country more than one thousand years long Christian tradition had been widely discussed. Meanwhile a certain amnesia of the Christian roots of our culture is observed. The proposed project of European constitution can be a perfect example that conceals the Christian heritage and fundamentals of Europe. What is more, such way of perceiving the world without God is being imposed to the public.

John Paul II was never ashamed of his Polish and in the same time Christian roots. He claimed in his anthropology that he was a European, a Pole and a Christian at the same time. He drew the attention of his compatriots to his Christian identity<sup>3</sup>.

It is considered lately that a lot of Poles try even to exclude the Christian heritage of the social life. It is the proper thing to be proud of one's agnosticism or even to except the contribution of the Church to the national development by claiming that the Catholic instructions and theories disturb the world's progress. Maybe that is the reason why the Pope during his pontificate referred to several saints and beatified as the witnesses of belief who derived hope and love from the fundamental values which are lost in the contemporary world.

Would the fact be more threatening for the Christian hope that the contemporary man accepts some religious symbols and salutary events but considers them a sentimental reminiscence of the historic or even metaphysical character. One is not able to join the everyday life with the evangelic message. The Christianity is not treated personally – as a meeting with Christ who is alive and actively redeems the humankind, thanks to whom the Church has an opportunity to gain the firm fundament of hope<sup>4</sup>. In the creeping into life secularization of the Polish reality dominates the conviction that today the personal and social experiencing of faith in Jesus Christ is not possible. People claim that the changing world excludes the personal faith (EE7).

The described process causes that the religious issues are treated as cultural facts which does not influence the attitude towards life. Our German neighbors define such a selective approach to faith with a term *Aberkatholiker (catholic – but...)*, "I believe, but...". Declaring the Catholic faith does not influence the changing of posture and behavior that should derive from the faith and authentic cling to Jesus Christ and be realized in the everyday life.

That is why the image of the future seems to be gray or even colorless, full of doubts concerning the man's influence on the world's changes and the hope for world's peace. The events of September the 11<sup>th</sup> in the USA suddenly made people aware of the fragile existence, the lack of its fundamentals independent from the changing external conditions. An unscrupulous man becomes a threat to the society. The lack of safety in one's won home gives rise to uncertainty or even anxiety. In the field of faith we can observe nowadays a significant emptiness which leads to loss of the sense of life.

One of the terrifying fruits of that existential emptiness in the decreasing number of births in the "old" Europe or even de questioning of marriage and family as a term. The sense of perspective and responsibility for the tomorrow's society has disappeared. The civilization of the present arises which will leave little behind – but "we do not care" – as many say.

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<sup>3</sup> See (...) *There is no other way of understanding a man as through the community. It is the most important community - family. There is no other way of understanding the Polish community as through the way of Christ. By rejecting Christ we would have lost the key to understand our nation.* – John Paul II, Homily 2nd of June 1979 r.

<sup>4</sup> See c. Bartnik, Lublin 2000, p.367 – 369.

The real wisdom is characterized by the comprehensive perception of man and world, the synthesis of the spirit and the matter but also the awareness of the vocation to the world's changes<sup>5</sup>. The analyzing of the ecological threats is popular nowadays because we wish to have a human friendly environment. . Rarely do we reconsider the reasons of the demographic or ethical situation of the man. The contemporary man does not want to face the effect of social divisions and contrastive situations. Such a disintegration and fragmentarisation of the human existence leads to the feeling of loneliness and loss in the crowd. Even the process of education submits to that trends. John Paul II suggests the catholic tutors and teachers: (...) The education is degraded when it is limited only to "training". Collecting of methods, abilities and information does not satisfy the human hunger for truth. The appreciation of truth should live up the educational duties by placing them out of "scientism" and "laicism" . It should lead to the acquirement of what is true or false, fair and unfair, moral or immoral, manipulative or educating. The authentic education helps young people to consider the world in a comprehensive manner and find the propositions of values the could be internalized as one's own and integral from the point of view of liberty and truth<sup>6</sup>. The loss of that unity leads in its consequences to the loss of hope's fundamentals.

Leaving the collectivism of the past times we rightly established the individualization as the aim of transformation in our Homeland doing the best to respect the pride and dignity of each individual. The postmodern trends went a lot too far. Individualism dominates in the today's education with a lack of solidarity with other people and societies at the same time<sup>7</sup>, "everyone has one's own truth and values". As far as the Christianity is concerned, solidarity and brotherhood based on God's mystery and not on personal declarations are the main issue. The life of the first Christians were an authentic testimony of solidarity derived from the feeling of unity in Christ. Whereas nowadays we claim the lack of such a feeling even among model Catholics.

The so called "new culture" totally dependant on the changing social situation and concepts which omits the contribution of Christian culture to the human development is opposed to Christ who sets the sense of human life and the perspective of hope for the future and better life. The described tendencies are being influenced by the mass media whose essence consists of issues contradictory to the gospel and to the definition of dignity of the human being<sup>8</sup>. The religious agnosticisms belong also to this culture, which is related with the moral and legal relativism (...). The signs of loosing hope could be recognized in the forms of "death culture" (EE9). The "death culture" is the result of loosing love as a rule for life and loosing the sense of life and respect to it also in the form of unborn life and introducing abortion, euthanasia and dissolution of marriage and family.

Precisely to this dangerous situation John Paul II droves the attention of all of us by claiming "the return to Christ as the source of all hopes" (EE18-22). Stating Christ

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<sup>5</sup> Personalism is the vision not only of the existence but also of the culture, society, art and prakseology – C. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, Homily to teachers May the 4th 1983; see P. Bernardin *Machiavelli as a teacher. Manipulation in schooling. Reform or plan of destruction.*, Warsaw 1998, p. 61-62.

<sup>7</sup> Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, Vatikan 26.03.1967, 44.48.

<sup>8</sup> See M. Więzkowska *Violence in several environment, especially in media.*, *Zeszyty Katechetyczne* 9 (2003), n. 2 (29), p. 63-83; T. Zasepa, *Cyber-communication as a challenge for Church*, in: *Internet and new technologies*, T. Zasepa, R. Chmura, Częstochowa 2003, s. 51-54; A. Lepa, *Media and postures*, Łódź 2002, p.80-91.

with his gospel of love in the centre of an adult Christian personality (the process of centralization) is the proper answer to internal disintegration and destruction of unity in the contemporary societies.

Analogically to three spheres of a person: somatic, psychic and spiritual we can talk about three spheres of culture: material, civilisational and spiritual. The unity of these sphere can be achieved only through the mature religiosity and the faith as a personal bond with God. Such a maturity is possible only by integrating the three sphere of culture and not by pledging allegiance to its substitutes in form of subculture<sup>9</sup>. The culture of death and hatred propagated in several media leads to the new style of living or even to the deep changes of mentality in the modern society. Still forty years ago F. Jozef Tischner claimed that (...) *everywhere we can hear talking about hope: science and technique refer to it as well as politicians and philosophers of hope*<sup>10</sup>. In the times of deep changes we can observe how the attitude towards hope changed in that time, how many people experience the feelings of hopelessness, frustration and senselessness of life.

In the context of the contemporary challenges we notice that they result in loss of hope without which it is impossible to believe or even to live. That is why in the mentioned document we find the statement that the Church has been entrusted with the gospel of hope and the realization of this mission belongs to every state in the Church in order to "implement the true image of the Church"(EE 26-29). Therefore the return to the fundamental mission of Church is crucial in order to show closer the mystery of Christ who gives the sense of the history<sup>11</sup>

The living hope cannot be confirmed by the plain, false and magical religiosity. Unfortunately a lot of young people still search for hope in the religious syncretism, the eastern beliefs and esoteric phenomena. Only the Church the authentically (...) *celebrates the redemption of Christ (EE69)* and with humility and gratitude experiences (...) *the mystery of God's mercy*<sup>12</sup> can oppose such beliefs. Only the real fascination of Christ and Church and precisely the Christ in the Church would be able to arouse interest and admiration in the young people. It requires still from the priests and the whole Church the rebirth of the feeling of mystery and the hope in the evangelic service and way of love (see EE 70-85). *European Church* – states the Pope- *you have the mission of new evangelization! Find the enthusiasm of spreading it* (EE 45).

## 2. Religious education in the service of the Gospel of hope

The mission of the religious education, as it is stated in the documents of the Church,

should lead to the maturity in faith<sup>13</sup>. The Pope submits to that fact by referring to the European Church that more attention should be given to the uprising the youth in faith. Looking into the future – he states – it is substantial to drove our thoughts and hearts to the youth in order to reliably form them in the spirit of Christianity (EE61).

Emilio Alberich, a well known Italian educator claims that the factors of the grown up faith are the *integrity of faith with the way of thinking by organizing the*

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<sup>9</sup> C. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, p. 452-453.

<sup>10</sup> J. Tischner, *The world of human hope*, Cracow 1975, p.310.

<sup>11</sup> See (EE66).

<sup>12</sup> See John Paul II and the Gospel to his compatriots: Rereading the Decalogue, Szczecin 1992, Rediscovering of blessings, Szczecin 2003; New vision of mercy, Szczecin 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Yet in the Exhortation *about the catechization of the modern world* (CT 5), *Catechism of the catholic Church* (p.426) or in the conciliar *decree about the missionary character of the Church* (AG 14 a) there has been described the christocentral dimension of the mission of Gospel (DOK 80).

*personality of the individual while learning to adjust to the schema of interpreting existential situations*<sup>14</sup>. Therefore schooling and religious education should lead to such an integration in which the individuals could find the deeper sense of life and hope. It could not be something dependant from the aspirations or achieving the next steps of social promotion or gaining material goods but should be based on firm and timeless fundaments.

The experience of hope – according to F. Jozef Tischner – there is a special experience of maturity<sup>15</sup>. The fruiting proves the grown up personality by taking part in the changing of world. Two thousands years ago Christ came into the human world of hopelessness bringing his gospel of hope which let the people see the world as a mission left to be completed by each and every man.

The Christian hope derives from the personal contact with Christ who shows timeless values and leads to “axiological nothingness”<sup>16</sup>. Failures and defeats –in the human opinion- gain the value of victory considered from the perspective of Christian hope. As an example can serve the martyrs, witnesses of faith that failed in the human assessment but succeed in the face of God and history.

The biblical theology very strongly bounds the hope with Christ, who through the Holy Spirit is present in the Church in the intimate but authentic way. The unity with Christ constitutes the strength of the eternal hope. Still Christ gave the people his hope to spread the gospel to the whole world and to celebrate the evangel of hope. John Paul II reminds to the Church in the mentioned exhortation something that I suppose should be the inspiration for the Christian education – the mission of celebrating and spreading the words of hope.

### **2.1. Spreading the Evangel of hope**

Referring to the Church the Pope claims that evangelization of the world belongs to its nature. The Church has been called into being in order to preach the full of hope words of God so it is substantial to *enthusiastically undertake that grace and vocation* (EE 45).

The preaching of Gospel to the “old Europe” John Paul II identifies with the “new evangelization” which aim is to lead the baptized but those who loose their faith into reformation and heading to Christ and his Evangel (EE 47).

The most important factor of the new evangelization of hope is the testimony of life. *That is the way everyone recognizes that you are my students* – it is said in the John’s Evangel- *if you love each other* (J 13, 45). This command of Jesus shows the real image of the Church that should display Christ to the world. It will be possible only when the Christians will accept the spirit of “missionary awareness” (EE 49) and their faith will be alive, dynamic, grown and hearty.

The Pope indicates that the mature evangelizator should claim the beneficial address of the faith and at the same time pursue it the aim to achieve sainthood. It is the sainthood that defines the strength of evangelic certificate. The way of life of the whole Church and its each and every member determines the acquisition of salutary values

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<sup>14</sup> G. Milanesi, *Integrazione tra fede e cultura, problem centrale della pastorale catechetica*, in: *Ricerche di psico-sociologia religiosa*, Zurich 1970, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> J. Tischner, *The Word of human hope*, op.cit. p. 295.

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit. p.304.

when the man meets the real witnesses of the faith. Mother Theresa or John Paul II serve as perfect examples of such evangelizers who offered their life to the rest of us.

In the document of the council of European Bishops we can find the note that (...) the today's cultural and religious situation of Europe demands the presence of Catholics mature in their faith and their unity (...) <sup>17</sup>. Not only the teachers but also the parents and educators have the task to show the special importance of closeness to Christ and his fundamentals in the everyday life <sup>18</sup>. Searching for the described maturity of faith we can observe after Emilio Alberich that it launches the feeling of personal dignity and liberty and absorbed into culture lets the great engagement into the world's changes <sup>19</sup>.

A special feature of a mature faith is the "sense of unity in *sensus Ecclesiae*" <sup>20</sup>. It demands from the Christian to experience the Church not only in his mystery but also in his structure in the sense of unity and solidarity with the community. The main aim of the religious education should consist of establishing the *communio* <sup>21</sup>.

John Paul II pays a lot of attention in his "Hope of the world" to interpersonal unity and dialogue with the world as a feature of personal approach towards faith. It is impossible to spread the Gospel without the spirit of solidarity and unity with every man no matter the race, belief or opinion.

The idea of evangelization of the culture is also close to John Paul's II assumptions <sup>22</sup>. No wonder that the third stage of preaching the Gospel noticed by the Pope is the evangelization of the social life and above all of the culture and science (EE 58). The Church is not allowed to influence the autonomy of scientific research because the methods of theological studies are different from the secular ones but it should watch over them so that consequently they would not violate the human dignity and his natural laws.

Such a problem emerges on the field of public schooling where the Church has no monopoly on the truth but should lead to the meeting with Jesus Christ who is the "truth leading to life" and ought to fascinate the youth. Respecting the whole autonomy of the school and dignity of the pupils the school is supposed to show the cultural heritage of Europe which is rooted in the Christianity.

"You are the hope of the Church, you are my hope" – that was the statement of the Pope directed several times to the world's youth <sup>23</sup>. It is not surprising that considering his opinions the Pope paid a lot of attention to the education of the youth in the trust of Christ who is the hope. He almost obliged the priests to renew the youth ministry thanks to which the young people will be able to show the Christian way of life in the search for authentic truth and authorities in every area of the life feeling the Christian source of hope (EE 62).

In the process of preaching the hope special attention should be paid to the means of mass communication which popularize the ideas and models of life which are not always Christian and sometimes claim a right to be the teachers for life. John Paul II

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<sup>17</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Wniebowstąpienie Jezusa*, in: Studies on theology of St. Lukas, F. Gryglewicz, Poznań 1973, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> Synod of Bishops, *Propositio* 8,1.

<sup>19</sup> E. Alberich, *Catechesis today*, Warsaw 2003, p. 143-145.

<sup>20</sup> Op.cit. p. 145.

<sup>21</sup> Op.cit. p. 234-242.

<sup>22</sup> See Jan Paweł II, *Faith versus culture. Documents, speeches, homilies*, Rome 1986.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, The Epistle to the world's youth on the occasion of International Youth Lear, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1985. no.T: see D. Alimenti, A. Michelini, You are my hope. The words of John Paul II to the youth, Warsaw 1987.

respecting the autonomy of the mass media describes their possibilities to serve the preaching of Gospel but also prevents its abuse of human rights and dignity (EE 63).

The Church is required to support the practice of spreading the Gospel of hope in the way adopted to the contemporary society and should have an educational and prophetic function which enables the people a close communication with God<sup>24</sup>. That is the reason why the development of theology of communication is so important nowadays<sup>25</sup>. Only the one who lives according to the rules of the Gospel can spread it among the people. Therefore the evangelization demands frequent reading and reconsidering of the Bible. The privileged place of discovering the mystery of the Gospel is the liturgy where the youth can face the biblical texts as “servants and students” which desire to learn how to live from their Master<sup>26</sup>. One can acquire a taste of the holy text in the small groups and communities as well as in the family where the Bible can become a source of family reflection<sup>27</sup>. Thanks to the inculturation the world can rediscover the sense of existence and the rule of life<sup>28</sup>.

### 2.2. Celebrating the evangel of hope

John Paul II notices the liturgical and ecclesiastical dimension of hope in the term “celebrating”. The Christian approach towards hope has not only the intellectual but also the emotional character. The hope follows from experiencing the deepness of meeting with Christ who redeems the souls. Considering the contemporary secularization of Europe the Church is supposed to awake an authentic faith and hope by showing the real “image of the Church which lives according to the spirit of holiness and conversion.

The modern world should be faced with the image of the Church as a praying community. The Catechism of the Catholic Church claims: the Church delivers and celebrates the mystery of Christ in his liturgy in order to let the believers experience it and spread it in the world (CCC 1068). Experiencing the salutary mystery means the meeting with the Resurrected Christ or even establishing a firm union with him (see CT 20). The meeting ought to be so deep that it results in *metanoia*, in the transformation in the Holy Spirit (CCC 1091). Then the communion of all the baptized accomplishes in one Body of Christ (see CCC 1109).

In the Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europe* we find the incentive for a special celebrating of paschal mystery which is fulfilled in the sacraments. According to The Catechism of the Catholic Church they are “God’s masterpieces” (CCC 1116). The sacraments have two meanings : “for and through the Church” (CCC 1118). They are the signs of the salutary actions of Christ through the Holy spirit which leads to the sanctifying of the whole community and its every member. They are also the sacraments which construct the Church by displaying the mystery of Love and its merciful character.

It requires from the catechesis to prepare the young people the deepen the experience of liturgy through the Paschal Mystery. In the modern society the experience

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<sup>24</sup> P. Donarski, *Communicating faith in the times of mass media*, *Zeszyty Katechetyczne* 9 (2003), part 1, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Op.cit., p.30, see K. Łuszczek, *Trend of research In the media-pedagogy*, *Zeszyty Katechetyczne* 9 (2003), part 1, s. 16 -24.

<sup>26</sup> S. Hareźga, *Bible In the Church*, Cracow 1998, p.63.

<sup>27</sup> Op.cit. p.62; see J. Charytański, *In the circle of the catechesis*, Cracow 1992, p.44-46.

<sup>28</sup> Op.cit, p.42-43.

of the Resurrected Christ is hindered through the loss of the mystery of God's mercy which should be awakened by the religious education in the everyday life (EE 70).

Placing the Christ in the centre of the Catechesis is especially stressed in the charismatic conception of the catechesis but also in the modern trends of catechesis faithful to God and Human Being. It demands from the sacramental catechesis a deep concentration on the Resurrected Christ. (EE 71). The special meaning is attributed to the Saint Congregation in the Eucharist through the sacraments and celebrating the Sunday.

The reform of the liturgy begun by the Vaticanum II claims in the new pluralistic reality to emphasize that the sacraments ground and build the faith. Receiving the sacraments is not enough but one should be grateful to God through the sacraments for the gift of redemption.

When the Christian achieves the religious initiation in full he should prove it by fathoming the mystery of Christ's endless love and generosity. That is the reason of postulating the search for the authentic sense of the liturgy. Its aim is to create postures that would prove the spirituality and willingness to get engaged in the celebrating of the salutary mysteries.

Placing Christ in the centre of the crucial elements of the sacramental catechesis should be deepened with one additional element. John Paul II describes it in that way: It is important to face with heart and with the mind the presence of His [Christ's] Sacrament, the mystery of the Church as a community of sinners but at the same time people honored with God's love and constituting the God's family (CT 29)<sup>29</sup>. The community of the sinners and people who are lost in religious thought can show the path to Christ to those who still search for him and need help in experiencing the sacraments of Christ and the renewing of religious hope. The Church is the community of faith that develops the authentic celebration of hope which shows the people the sense of redemption through the eternal coexistence with God. According to the prophets (...) the people on the desert will be accompanied by the new one, messianic and more perfect<sup>30</sup>. The new society is the Church of Christ who celebrates the staking of hope on the Lord.

As many as two paragraphs in his exhortation devotes John Paul II to celebrating the Sunday (EE 81-82). He pays attention to the Lord's Day as a paradigm of preaching to the world the gospel of hope. The one who claims that Sunday is the first day which begins the time of building life with the Resurrected fills the souls with hope that every day will be the day of Lord and his life will be a celebration of the Lord's presence in the grey reality. The Pope makes a plea to recreate the celebration of that day in the spirit of deep care of the people. Sunday which is deprived of the time for the holy mass, the time spent together or the act of mercy – claims the Pope – (...) *results in narrowing down the human horizons and prevents him from seeing "heaven"* (EE 82).

### **2.3. Serving the Evangel of hope**

The third educational task of the modern Church is serving the Evangel of hope through the service to other people. In the Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* we can find the statement that if the Church is to serve the hope (...) it must *follow the path of love* (EE 83). Preaching the love rules through celebration of the liturgy is not enough. The most important is proving the love of Christ by one's own life and behavior. During the

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<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi trendae* (1979).

<sup>30</sup> See J. Charytański: *Education In the consciousness of baptism*, in: *Nowe życie w Chrystusie. Materiały V kursu homiletyczno-katechetycznego*, S. A. Porębski, Warsaw 1973, p. 96-97.



pilgrimage to Poland on the occasion of consecration of the Basilica of God's Mercy in Łagiewniki John Paul II stated: (...) this confession [ Jesus, I trust in you] which displays the trust in God's love is especially required in the modern times because the man feels lost in the surrounding acts of evil. The praying for the God's mercy needs to flow from the bottom of our hearts full of suffer, anxiety and doubts.

Talking about the "path of love" we have to take into account two dimensions of serving the man in need. Love as a rule for everyday life is not a disposable heroic act but should be a method to create the "civilization of mercy"<sup>31</sup> in the world desiring for hope Every act of mercy has an evangelic facet. John Paul II stresses the meaning of "new evangelization" not only limited to its prophetic service. The statement from encyclical adagium "Redemptor hominis" : "man is the path of the Church" (RH 14) shows the importance of the man for the modern Church<sup>32</sup>.

Second dimension of the "path of love" is the showing of the supernatural character of the service to other man. The care for every man is not only the human strive for a better life but also an imitation of the service of the Master from Nazareth to his students. The scene from the Last Supper should make us aware that the Christ serving to his students and to the poor encourages the people to imitate his acts. We can see the eschatological dimension of the acts of love: I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me (Mt 25, 40).

The acts of mercy and care towards other people are the deeds of solidarity with every man. Such solidarity crosses the social barriers and leads to social community in Christ. The experience of this unity has its roots in God: Thanks to the gift of Holy Spirit we experience God's love is given to the believers what enables us to spread his love. Hence the love was given by God it becomes a commandment to people (EE 84). The Church had been founded in order to prove the love of God and the unity of all of us made by his love in the authentic communion (see EE 85). Therefore it requires a lot of changes on the level of local Church, parishes or even apostolic communities so that they have the common character by searching for the motives and sense of hope.

John Paul II emphasizes in his Exhortation the task of the modern Church of "bringing back hope to the poor". Becoming impoverished not only of some individuals but of the whole social groups faces the European community with a real challenge of the love of Christ<sup>33</sup>. The Church must not be indifferent to poverty. The love of the Church may restore the hope among the poor, unemployed, ill or disabled. All of them are the challenge for the modern Church and for the Christian education that should prepare the young people to build responsibility for other people.

During the whole pontificate John Paul II accentuates the danger that derives from degradation of marriage and family what results in destructing human life. In the mentioned Exhortation the Pope enumerates directly the tendencies to legalize relations which are not marriages. They are influenced by the changing cultural, social, economical and even political conditions. They lead to distortion of the idea of family and can be even called "a second sexual revolution"<sup>34</sup>. It is not assault on the firmness of

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<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Be the witnesses of mercy*, Homily on Błonia in Cracow 18 VIII 2002, L'Osservatore Romano, pol. ed., 23 (2002), 9, 20-22.

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, I trust the whole Word with the God's mercy, L'Osservatore Romano (polish edition) 23 (2002), p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Yet Paul VI stressed the obligation of the richer nations to care about the poor ones as an act of humanitarianism but also of fairness; *Populorum progressio*, n 17.

<sup>34</sup> K. Romanowska, *Second sexual revolution*, Newsweek 23.11.2003, p.36

family and marriage but on the very idea of “community of life and love” (KDK 48). That is why the Church is obliged by its Master to (...) *spread with new energy what Evangel says about marriage and family* (EE 90), especially about the dignity of “home Church” and taking part in the of common Church and in the social life.

For that reason the priority of religious education of the young people should be put on strengthening the importance of marriage and family as a part of God’s salutary plan and promotion of theology and familiar spirituality. One can not disparage the problems of endangered unborn life or erosion of families but recall the Pope’s suggestions to educate the youth through showing them the path of love in everyday situations.

The violation of the family’s sainthood causes a great concern in the “old Europe”. After the Synod of Bishops the Pope claims that the decrease of birth and the aging of the European society is a result of loosing hope and a sign of the “death culture” that crosses the modern society (EE 95)<sup>35</sup>. Therefore the catechesis should be opposed to the hidden tendencies to euthanasia, abortion and research on human embryos but first of all it should make an ethical effort to protect the human life (EE 96). It is a great challenge – according to John Paul II – because the future of the world depends mostly on defense and promotion of fundamental values and cultural heritage.

Referring to Apocalypse John Paul II uses the term “God’s novelty”, “contemplating of the God’s novelty” or “the Evangel of hope for new Europe” in order to accentuate that the old feeling of senselessness, loss or sin must be overcome by the “new heaven and new earth” (see Ap 21,3). Modern times demand from the whole Church, so that also from the parents and educators to promote “universal values” which are the roots of European culture. It should be done by showing a fascinating way to renew the image of Europe and rediscover the fundamental values in order to preach the transcendence of human dignity, liberty and democracy (EE 10)<sup>36</sup>.

Considering the unifying tendencies in Europe John Paul II addresses the whole European community to derive new energy from the Evangel and come closer to “ones own personality”. The process of education should employ that appeal in the educating the young people. It requires the search for more effective models of education based on the message of culture and civilization of love and God’s mercy.

### **3. Inculturation as a process of education for life in hope**

The term “inculturation” had been popularized after the Synod of Bishops in 1977 and is understood as absorbing the culture in the process of evangelization. It stresses the character of mutual penetration. Such meaning does not derive from the terms “adaptation” or “accommodation”<sup>37</sup>. Evangelization of culture is not connected with destruction of established structures or discussion with the cultural heritage but “curing” its mistakes and caring about its good and beauty. *Catechesis [religious education] should be integrated in the culture of several nations in order to enlighten it and influence it at the same time*<sup>38</sup>. John Paul II strongly underlines *the integration of evangelization in the culture itself and in its form* (CT 53). Whereas the language and not

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<sup>35</sup> See *Propositio* 8,1. no. 32. It is interesting why the Pope uses the term “death culture” while the word *culture* means a positive action of a man for the good of the society and for the task of changing the world he uses the term “civilization of love”.

<sup>36</sup> *Propositio* no. 28.

<sup>37</sup> *Op.cit.* p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> *Discussion, Life and Thought* 28 (1978), nr 2, p. 81.

only its semantic level constitutes a selection of information and truth but also an approach toward the given truth and towards the addressee. It makes the public listen and forces them to reflect on the given information in order to accept or deny it. The language of religious transmission should keep up with the modern times and should build a "bridge" between the eternal truth and the modern mentality. Poetry, image and dramatic nature which we can find in the Bible encourages not to close the way of thinking by using the hermetic language only understandable for theologians. Faith does not emerge from theology but from the authentic meeting with faith of other people<sup>39</sup>.

The second half of the 20.th century brought a revolution in the means of communication but also in the human mentality. We can observe changing in the way of perceiving reality: from more logospheric to the iconospheric. The programmers generate virtual environments or even virtual population that inhabits virtual world<sup>40</sup>. The Evangel of Christ does not function in the virtual; world, it is authentic. The fact imposes new evangelic duties on Church so that it engages the mass media in evangelic practice<sup>41</sup>. That is also a service toward authentic hope.

The analysis of the modification of communication processes through electronic media makes us pay attention on the diversity of forms in communicating the faith and hope in the Church such as posture, gestures, silence but also music. This non-verbal forms of communication in faith require from the educational process the understanding of this gestures and contents. A special meaning in that communication have the symbols that illustrate the contents which cannot be verbalized.

In the 90' of 20.th century F.Wladyslaw Kubik tried to express the meaning of the symbol which was crucial for the process of Christian initiation and religious education. Apart from their literal meaning symbols are carriers of religious experience. Their create everlasting occurrences for the good of the religious community and help to understand the surrounding reality<sup>42</sup>. For the believers understanding of the symbols is a sign of discovering the hidden truths of faith and at the same time the hidden mysteries of God, what strengthens their need for hope<sup>43</sup>.

### Conclusion

Summing up our reflections we can observe that creating one model of education is hard to realize. Even the proposition of *Dyrektorium* to establish the pattern of modern educational catechesis on the basis of catechumen does not exhaust a subject that all dimensions of catechetical service: education, schooling and initiation should have evangelic character. The most important is to remember that the whole process is obliged to take into account the resurrection of hope based on Jesus Christ, its only source.

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<sup>39</sup> M. Leist, *There is no faith without experience. Remarks on children education*, Warsaw 1986, p.10.

<sup>40</sup> W. Cwalina, *They are alive! Creation of virtual reality*, in: *Internet and new technologies...* op.cit, 94-95.

<sup>41</sup> T. Zastępa, *Public media versus social bounds*, In: *Internet and New Technologies...*, p. 92.

<sup>42</sup> W. Kubik, *The outline of catechetical didactic*, Cracow 1990, p. 141.

<sup>43</sup> Op.cit., p. 142.