

TERESA ZUBRZYCKA-MACIĄG

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS
TOWARDS A HIGH SCHOOL CATECHIST.
A RESEARCH REPORT

Abstract. Religion teachers play a unique role in educating the young generation. In addition to the tasks assigned to all teachers in general, they are to support students in their spiritual development, condition their ability to understand themselves, build their identity, and give meaning to their lives. Catechists face a difficult task, because young people, although they are very interested in religion and spirituality, also have many doubts, questions, and dilemmas in this sphere. The article aims to present the expectations of high school students towards catechists related to their personality traits, skills, psychosocial competencies, and their approach to pupils. Data obtained in a survey conducted among a group of 70 high school graduates show that young people need a catechist whom they can trust in the most important matter, namely, the meaning of life. Thus, they expect catechists to give a credible testimony of faith, have good substantive preparation, treat them subjectively like partners, and are ready to undertake an open dialogue with them.

Keywords: religion in school; religion teacher; catechist; young people.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, catechesis is a significant ministry of the Word in the Church, whose purpose is to lead individual believers to maturity in the faith. At the same time, taking into account the broad context of social, cultural and political life, it actively participates in the process of comprehensive, integral human development. It not only wishes to pass on the truths of the faith and teach about the foundations of Christianity, but also leads people to per-

Dr. Hab. Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg, Prof. UMCS – Katedra Teorii Wychowania, Instytut Pedagogiki, Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej; address: ul. Głęboka 43, 20-612 Lublin; e-mail: teresa.zubrzycka-maciag@mail.umcs.pl; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8942-0567>.

sonal maturity.¹ Its assumption is “to help young people find their place in the adult world, to understand the meaning of and purpose in life, to undertake decisions and, above all, to find their way to God.”² By supporting the development of human and religious maturity, catechesis aims to enable the catechized person to better and more fully discover the meaning of their existence, the dignity of their person, and the greatness of the causes they serve.

During catechesis, a person not only learns about the content of Christianity, but also learns about and experiences who they are. They acquire knowledge about man’s existence and development and the fulfilment of humanity by striving for greatness according to the measure of Christ, also learning to practice a Christian life, i.e., participation in His life. A person is thus introduced into a new sphere of existence and action.³

In addition, it should be noted that faith is a continuous process that is born, develops and shapes accordingly. The catechist is involved in the process of a person’s development and growth, including maturing and transmitting the content of faith. Practice shows that the quality of catechesis in a particular community of believers largely depends on competence, personality, commitment, and above all, the way of teaching Christian doctrine based on the catechist’s faith testimony.

In Poland’s schools, the teaching of religion, depending on the time and the ecclesial and socio-political situation, underwent various transformations. “The return of religious instruction to schools in 1990 is a very important event in the history of Polish catechesis in the post-war period and the European catechetical tradition.”⁴ Since religion lessons returned to schools, there was an increased possibility that schools would take care of the full, multidimensional development of students’ personalities, also considering the spiritual sphere. Spiritual development, enabling one to achieve full personal maturity, can also effectively protect young people against the threats of the modern world, such as experiencing inner emptiness and undertaking risky behaviours.⁵

¹ Piotr T. Goliszek, “Communicating faith through catechesis,” *Studia Pastoralne* 9 (2013): 69–70.

² Józef Baniak, „Katecheza szkolna w opiniach i ocenach młodzieży i rodziców,” *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 9 (2000): 238.

³ Piotr T. Goliszek, *Katecheza a osoba. Wybrane zagadnienia z metodologii personalistycznej w katechezie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010), 25.

⁴ Piotr T. Goliszek, „Nauczanie religii w polskich przedszkolach i szkołach publicznych,” *Teka Komisji Prawniczej* 13 (2020), 2: 177.

⁵ See Wojciech Osiał, „Misja wychowawcza lekcji religii w szkole,” *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 25 (2012), 2: 269–280.

The introduction of religion into schools created a need for a larger number of catechists, and the Catholic Church began to prepare laypeople for this role. Data from 2014 show that lay catechists accounted for more than half of all religion teachers in Poland, and this is a continuous trend.⁶ According to high school students, regardless of whether their catechist is a clergyman or a secular person, they are responsible for evangelization, catechesis, education and upbringing of young people at school.⁷

Undoubtedly, a religion teacher working as a catechist, like any other teacher, is responsible for the quality of the lessons. However, considering the fact that participation in religion classes may be the only time for inculcating religious values, values which a young person would like to identify with, then the catechist's responsibility increases significantly. Their credibility, openness, substantive knowledge as well as psychosocial competencies and skills will determine the quality of the meeting with young people, conditioning their willingness and will to participate in religion lessons, and as a result, their value system and quality of life. Research indicates that high school students are interested in spiritual development, which includes issues related to theological knowledge, faith and religion. At the same time, they have many bothering questions and doubts in this regard, which are significant barriers to spiritual development, and with which they often remain alone, relying on information found on the Internet.⁸

Therefore, it is worth persuading all catechists to take care to have a good meeting with students during school catechesis, with the awareness that it is an investment in the common good.

1. ASSIGNMENTS, OBLIGATIONS AND DESIRED PROFILE OF A CATECHIST

According to *Encyklopedia PWN*, a catechist is 1) a priest who introduces adepts to the life of faith in a given Christian Church; 2) a religion teacher working in a school or parish.⁹ For the purposes of this article, the second

⁶ Witold Jedynek, „Nauczanie religii w polskich szkołach – sukces czy porażka?” *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 32 (2018): 207–228.

⁷ Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg, „Oczekiwanie młodzieży względem lekcji religii w szkole średniej – raport z badań,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 68 (2021), 11: 71–86.

⁸ Zubrzycka-Maciąg, „Oczekiwanie młodzieży względem lekcji religii.”

⁹ Bogusław Milerski i Tadeusz Gadacz, ed., *Religia. Encyklopedia PWN*, red. t. 5 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002), 397.

definition was adopted, and the terms “catechist” and “religion teacher” will be used interchangeably.

The role of a catechist is special. It is a person called to evangelize, teach and educate in the Christian spirit. A catechist is a lay person or clergy who, on behalf of the Church, conducts Christian initiation, education and upbringing. A catechist lives and preaches the experience of the Gospel being accomplished in the Church. A catechist is an official witness to the faith of the Church.¹⁰

A religion teacher, like all teachers, is also obliged to fulfil the school’s educational tasks. His duty in this regard is to create optimal conditions for students’ comprehensive development, particularly their spiritual development. Spirituality is related with man’s ability to understand himself, to find an answer to the questions: *who am I, where did I come from, where am I going, what relationships and values will help me achieve my life goal?* Therefore, it is about striving to discover one’s identity and following a specific, individual path of development.¹¹ According to the words of John Paul II, education, first of all,

[...] consists in fact in enabling man to become more man, to “be” more and not just to “have” more and consequently, through everything he “has,” everything he “possesses,” to “be” man more fully. For this purpose, man must be able to “be more” not only “with others,” but also “for others.”¹²

A special area of the educational influence of religion lessons is moral education. However, “[...] moral values require, for their possible implementation, a specific sphere of freedom for human decisions and actions (...). The enslaved act does not lead to the realization of any moral value.”¹³ Therefore, in working with young people, methods that shape morality from an internal choice, and not from the necessity of obedience to the norms in

¹⁰ Andrzej Kiciński, „Formacja katechety na wzór Samuela,” in *Miejsca katechezy. Rodzina, parafia, szkoła*, ed. Stanisław Kulpaczyński (Lublin: Polihymnia, 2005), 347.

¹¹ Michał Borda i Roman Solecki, „Duchowa sfera wychowania w życiu młodzieży,” *Studia Redemptorystowskie* 15 (2017): 555–570.

¹² Jan Paweł II, „W imię przyszłości kultury. Przemówienie w siedzibie UNESCO, Paryż, 2 czerwca 1980,” in Jan Paweł II, *Nauczanie papieskie*, t. 3, part 1, edited by Eugeniusz Weron, Antoni Jarocho, Florian Kniołek (Poznań–Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1985), 731. <https://inters.org/John-Paul-II-UNESCO-Culture>, accessed January 19, 2023.

¹³ Władysław Cichoń, *Wartości. Człowiek. Wychowanie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1996), 55–56.

force in a given cultural circle, have a chance to succeed.¹⁴ The task of the catechist is, therefore, to arrange discussions about problems, inducing students to logical and in-depth argumentation of their position.

Supporting young people in spiritual and moral development is not an easy task, considering the crisis of moral values among young people, as well as the specificity of adolescent development, which makes them particularly demanding recipients of educational services. Therefore, proclaiming moral values must take the form of their subtle presence among these students, while maintaining the principle of subjective and partner treatment and credible testimony given by the educator about the importance of values in life.¹⁵ The point is that, apart from imparting moral norms and rules of conduct, young people should be shown the “system of being personal,” and, thanks to a catechist’s example, they should be motivated to live a moral life.¹⁶

In Poland, Ireland, Croatia and several other countries, a catechist is a synonym of a teacher of the Catholic faith at school, where s/he participates in the mission of preaching the gospel based on a referral to school (canonical mission) following appropriate theological, pedagogical and didactic, psychological and spiritual preparation. In other countries, it is a volunteer fulfilling their mission in the parish, accompanying adults, children or youth in the growth of faith in various communities. Depending on local church traditions, various catechetical centres help to get to know the basics of theology, psychology, and pedagogy, and even contain media education and other proposals to support the preparation of catechists for ecclesial ministry.¹⁷

Due to the functions performed, a catechist must have appropriate traits, skills and competences. A list of desirable traits of catechists often presents two dimensions, the human and Christian. The human dimension includes readiness to sacrifice oneself for others and do good in the name of the love of God and neighbour; justice; honesty and reliability; genuine and universal

¹⁴ Mieczysław Łobocki, *Wychowanie moralne w zarysie* (Kraków: Impuls, 2008); Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg, „Wychowanie moralne we współczesnej szkole,” in *Edukacja – w stronę kluczowych wartości*, ed. Józef Górniewicz (Olsztyn–Białystok: Centrum Badań Społecznych UWM, 2017), 9–20.

¹⁵ Albert Krąpiec, *Odzyskać świat realny* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993); Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg i Piotr T. Goliszek, „The Personal Aspect of the Moral and Axiological Upbringing of Children and Adolescents,” *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny* 39 (2020), 2: 23–37.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Kiciński, „Formacja katechety na wzór Samuela,” 347–348.

kindness – meaning a friendly disposition; sensitivity and empathy, especially towards the injured; a dialogical attitude that enables subjective, respectful treatment of an interlocutor, openness to arguments and readiness to change one's position; tactful, cultured behaviour and a sense of humour.

In the Christian dimension, the required traits and qualities of a catechist are life in friendship with God, which is expressed through an optimistic attitude towards life, peace of mind and a commitment to catechesis; loving the Word of God – meaning respecting biblical texts; showing a proper hierarchy of values by one's words and actions, in accordance with the teaching of the Church; legible testimony of faith; care for the spiritual life of the catechized; humility – meaning respect for all students and readiness to answer all their questions, knowing that s/he does not possess all knowledge, which s/he sometimes has to supplement, and honestly admits to it.¹⁸

The foundation for the pedagogical effects of every catechist's work should be deep respect for students, resulting in subjectively treating them, which means, above all, respect for their personal dignity and strengthening their self-esteem. Every conscious and responsible educator should also display a democratic attitude towards students, which involves such key psychosocial skills as showing acceptance, being authentic and the ability to empathize with students. Acceptance means granting students the right to their identity and individuality, to their own experiences, thoughts and feelings. Acceptance understood in this way is associated with showing children and young people respect, sympathy, trust, appreciation and cordiality.¹⁹ An educator's authenticity refers to truthfulness and consistency between the thoughts s/he preaches and their behaviour, openness to other people and spontaneity. The ability to understand students empathically is expressed in the ability to perceive the world, people and values from the perspective of young people, including an attempt to enter into their experiences and emotions. This attitude makes it possible to understand students' motives instead of judging them.²⁰

Today's catechist must be a person who is open and internally flexible, sensitive to other views and develops the ability to think in many directions.

¹⁸ Anna Zellma, „Katecheta,” in *Leksykon pedagogiki religii. Podstawy, koncepcje, perspektywy*, ed. Cyprian Rogowski (Warszawa: Verbinum, 2007), 256.

¹⁹ Mieczysław Łobocki, „Niektóre warunki skutecznego wychowania,” *Problemy Opiekunczo-Wychowawcze* 10 (1995): 7–10.

²⁰ See Mieczysław Łobocki, *ABC wychowania* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1999); Mieczysław Łobocki, *Teoria wychowania w zarysie* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2007).

He is constantly looking for new ways and possibilities to solve catechetical problems.²¹

The catechist needs to take care and improve his workshop, which will be helped by openness and internal flexibility, a curiosity that leads to the search for new opportunities, perceptiveness that allows one to see problems and shortcomings, and the ability to self-critically evaluate. From the point of view of the effectiveness of a catechist's educational impact, it is particularly important to get to know students in terms of their system of values, cultural code, behaviour and communication.

A catechist who undertakes specific actions must know the truth about man. Preparing for educational activities, s/he must have a clear and true vision of man. Catechesis and education can become effective if it is based on a correct concept of man. [...] Witnessing to the truth in the person of the catechist authenticates the content that s/he passes on to their pupils. The competences possessed by a catechist, such as theological, pedagogical, didactic, and methodical, play a very important role in teaching and upbringing. However, every proclamation of the Christian message demands "being present" in the life and activity of a witness – a catechist. The personal power of the truth convincingly introduces the catechized into the paths of faith and encounters with God.²²

Fulfilling all the features of an ideal catechist is an extremely difficult challenge. Perhaps not all criteria will be met. However, the most important thing in the catechetical mission seems to be to fulfil one's duties as best as possible and try to meet the needs and expectations of students who want to learn about religion, reflect on the mysteries of faith and be able to experience them and the love of God. In the context of the above, the aim of the research, whose results are presented in this study, was to show the expectations of young people towards a catechist, their personality traits, psychosocial skills and competences, including their approach to students.

2. OWN RESEARCH RESULTS

The results presented below come from a broader study, aiming to discover the expectations of high school students towards religion classes. The

²¹ Marian Zając, „(R)ewolucja myślenia o katechezie w szkole,” in *Katecheza w szkole współczesnej*, ed. Marian Zając (Lublin: Polihymnia, 2010), 254.

²² Piotr T. Goliszek, „Wychowanie do prawdy w osobowym świadectwie katechety,” in *Katecheza w szkole współczesnej*, 196–197.

first publication prepared based on this research contains information on the needs of young people in terms of the curriculum and substantive competences of catechists, their approach to the content and the working methods used in the lessons.

The survey was conducted in 2021 using a proprietary survey questionnaire, containing mainly open questions, enabling the respondents to give their real, free opinions on matters that, as the research has shown, are very important to them.

The research involved 70 high school graduates (85% from high schools and 15% from technical high schools), who at the time of the research were university students in various fields of study. At the time of the survey, the respondents were between 18 and 22 years old, with the majority of them (59%) aged 20-21. The secondary schools attended by the respondents were located in the following voivodeships: Lubelskie (87%), Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie and Świętokrzyskie (13% in total). Most of the respondents had studied in large or very large cities (43% each), while the rest – small towns (8%) or villages (6%). The respondents attended religion lessons taught by priests (59%), secular catechists (48%), nuns (17%) and monks (2%), some of whom had more than one catechist during their high school education.

Among the respondents, nearly 89% attended religion classes in high school regularly, 6% resigned from it due to the improper way lessons were conducted, and the remaining people did not participate in school catechesis for other reasons.

When asked to express their opinion on the most common reasons for young people withdrawing from religion classes, 36% of the respondents revealed that young people withdraw from classes because of a teacher who can effectively discourage students from participating in these classes. When asked what the main condition for the effectiveness of teaching religion in school is, almost all surveyed students (94%) expressed the belief that the success of religion lessons depends on the catechist. Explaining why a catechist has such a significant impact on the quality of lessons, high school graduates pointed to a catechist's role as a teacher: "The most important role is played by a catechist, because s/he has the unlimited ability to create lessons that are accessible and attractive to students, and also respond to their needs and problems." "A catechist's approach determines how students will feel, how actively they will participate in classes, whether they will interest students in the topics, whether they will want to deepen their knowledge,

whether they will want to go to religion classes of their own free will, not by force.”

The respondents also argued that it is the catechist who is responsible for the quality of the dialogue with students: *“It depends on the catechist whether the religion class will be a space where young people can express themselves without being judged. Will they be heard in the spirit of love and receive a substantive answer or a counterargument following the teaching of the Church?”* *“The most important thing is the catechist’s approach to young people, because a young person will not be willing to get involved and participate in classes where the teacher seems dry, boring and unpleasant.”* *“The catechist should like young people, be open to individuality, respect them despite their views, and then s/he will be credible in what s/he says.”* *“The most important thing is that a catechist approach the student as human beings. Young people are now very lost in the world, and their only help is God and deepening their faith.”* *“The catechist must be able to build a safe atmosphere in the classroom so that students are not ashamed and not afraid to be honest.”*

According to the surveyed students, the effectiveness of religion lessons also depends on the attitude of the teacher in whom they would like to see a role model: *“The most important thing is the example that a religion teacher gives with his life. By showing how much s/he loves God, s/he can ‘infect’ others with this love.”* *“A catechist’s character and attitude determine the credibility of the content s/he conveys, affects the attitude of students towards the subject and their attitude towards religious practices.”*

The respondents also emphasized that the quality of religion also depends on the substantive knowledge and preparation of the catechist for classes: *“A teacher’s coherent, well-founded knowledge, their openness to listeners and the ability to conduct interesting classes are decisive.”* *“The main condition for the effectiveness of teaching religion is, above all, a catechist’s good preparation for a given topic, so that s/he can answer uncomfortable questions.”*

A few people (6%) expressed the belief that the effectiveness of religion lessons depends on the attitude of the students themselves: *“A positive learning effect comes from a student’s approach to the subject, their willingness to understand the subject.”* *“Independent study of the Holy Bible, because it is thanks to Him that God opens our eyes.”* *“Positive motivation in students encourages them to deepen their knowledge on their own.”*

According to most of the surveyed youth, it is a catechist, their credibility and commitment, personality and pedagogical preparation, including substantive knowledge as well as methodological and educational competences, that determine the success or failure of religion lessons at school.

Considering a religion teacher's role and responsibility, the respondents were asked what young people expect from a catechist. In response to this question, almost all surveyed students emphasized that the most important thing is the attitude of the catechist towards the students. Based on their experience, they explained what students expect from catechists: respect, understanding, respect for their opinions, dialogue, equal treatment, acceptance, kindness, tolerance, openness, a positive attitude, patience and a smile. *"S/he should be kind, respectful, sympathetic, helpful, giving us a sense of security."* *"They should approach students as conscious people who want to deepen their faith, and be more involved in relationships."* *"May s/he be able to talk to us, talk about our religion in an interesting way, encourage us to participate in Holy Masses, and not order us about."* *"We want them to be understanding, not to exalt themselves, so that young people will not be afraid to ask questions and talk, and s/he should try to answer students' questions."* *"Each of us expects a nice and warm approach, treating a student as an adult who can decide for themselves and be responsible for their actions."* *"First of all, respecting different views. Everyone can perceive the world differently, someone believes in God more, another person is not entirely convinced of God's existence, but everyone deserves respect without exception."* *"A catechist should be a person who loves people, is good and wise, patient and cultured, but also firm and charismatic, an authority for young people, which is so important when teaching religion."*

The features of a catechist desired by students also turned out to be tolerance, high personal culture, empathy, sensitivity to students' needs and willingness to help them, consistency and the ability to set boundaries. According to the respondents, a catechist must like his job and have high pedagogical and psychological competences: *"I would like a person teaching religion to be as God commands, i.e., respecting his neighbour, and not like someone who exercises authority over young people. They are to be understanding, compassionate, empathetic and at the same time cheerful."* *"I would expect greater understanding from catechists, the ability to put themselves in the situation of a student, showing authenticity and not pretending to be a moral role model by force."* *"S/he should be empathetic, a good person, treat students fairly, make students interested in their statements and*

encourage discussion. They should not indoctrinate students, speak negatively about other religions, about non-Catholics, and should not turn students against such people.” “S/he should approach his profession with passion, be charismatic and open to dialogue with students; “S/he should like young people, because students can sense the teacher’s attitude. They should be our ‘friend,’ a cheerful person who is not afraid to talk about even the most difficult topics.”

The surveyed students also pointed to the desirable features of a catechist that identify them as being Catholic. According to the respondents, a catechist should represent the values s/he conveys, be a role model for students and have reliable theological knowledge. *“S/he should have the qualities of a true Catholic. Give us hope for better times. When things are going wrong and young people see a wise, smiling person, and at the same time helpful and kind, they want to learn and develop their passions, they have hope that things will be better, because they see a similar person who is radiating life.” “They should be a person of deep faith and caring for his faith development, because thanks to this, s/he will be able to pass it on.” “He should have consistent theological, historical and cultural knowledge. Be aware of contemporary social and political realities.” “A catechist should be a person who constantly expands his knowledge so as to be able to prove the correctness of the views of the Catholic Church in discussions.”*

Finally, representing young people, the respondents were asked to direct their expectations, suggestions and requests to catechists regarding religion lessons, so that they could fulfil their role and help young people acquire theological knowledge, develop their spirituality and reach full personal development.

Dear Catechists:

“Transfer reliable theological, religious and ethical knowledge and be open to the needs of the young generation, manifested, among others, in the questions asked about complex, but often fundamental, issues related with the functioning of believers in a society with diverse worldviews.”

*

“Don’t be afraid to talk to young people, but be prepared for it substantively, and make sure your arguments are supported by examples. Show that life is worth living in the Church, show the joy of faith and the love of God, and that it is worth making friends with Jesus. Be credible and live the values you share.”

*

“Show students that there is nothing more beautiful in the world than God who is love. Show young people how to look for Him every day, in every person. Show them that religion is not just a school subject, but the story of our creation, the story of a man who gave his life for us. Allow every student to mature in the faith at their own pace.”

*

“Present the testimonies of public figures who set an example of how not to be ashamed of their faith these days. Stay up to date with what is currently happening in the world: talk about wars, death, enslavement, and difficult topics. Together with your students, pray about important intentions. Be credible and honest. Let your actions bear witness to your faith.”

*

“Let young people discuss religion and faith, show films with themes on ethical values, explain to them that the most important thing about being a Catholic is being a good person.”

*

“Prepare lessons and treat your students seriously as partners in a conversation. Be open to students' views and concerns, and be ready to provide them with all necessary assistance in their pursuit of learning the truths of the faith, understanding the legitimacy of the Church's teaching and strengthening Catholic attitudes.”

*

*“Take care to keep a positive atmosphere in the classroom so that students feel accepted, respected and understood, so that they will not be afraid to tell you about their doubts.
Allow students to express themselves freely. Try to speak with them in a way that students will want to listen to and talk with you.”*

*

“Listen to the students, talk, explain and, above all, try to understand. There are many contradictions within young people, but also a great desire to get to know themselves and the world. Help them to mature by showing understanding, because commands and directive messages discourage them from communicating.”

*

“Put yourself in the shoes of your students sometimes. If students do not have the strength to analyze biblical texts in depth, give them an easier lesson. Teach with passion and show that you are willing to talk to students about any topic that bothers them.”

*

“Do not judge students, do not say who is better and who is worse regarding their faith. Keep this to yourself. Treat every student equally. Get to know their way of thinking, how they feel about God and what they think about the Church today; ask if they agree with it or if they disagree and why. Give them the feeling that they have a free choice and show them the benefits of living with God.”

*

“Try to live what you teach so that it will be easier for students to understand. Try to involve the whole class in the lesson, organizing team games, thanks to which students will be able to understand the importance of certain values.”

*

“Think of interesting ways to catechise. Use various forms of work during the lesson, e.g., talks or meetings with interesting people who have found the meaning of life and are close to God. Organize pilgrimages and charity collections and involve students in them so that they can experience the thrill of helping others; take students to church and sing religious songs with students and show interesting movies.”

*

“Encourage students to join youth organizations where young people seek common paths guided by the Word of God.”

Young people's expectations towards catechists are consistent with the requirements of their role. More is required from a catechist than from a teacher of another subject, because catechising young people touches their spiritual sphere, often unexplored, delicate yet necessary for full personal development. Young people are undoubtedly demanding recipients who are particularly distrustful, evaluative, verifying and critical. Adolescence is a

special period for building their human identity, making choices and undertaking decisions that will be central in forming a young person's value system, principles and basic life goals. This, in turn, will be the basis for creating a self-concept and making commitments to oneself and the world.²³ Therefore, catechizing young people is the unique art of accompanying a young person on their way to the fullness of a personal life while respecting their dignity, individuality and freedom.

The conducted research shows that young people have specific requirements towards catechists, from whom they expect help in developing their spirituality. A catechist must be someone they can believe and trust, who will be for them not only a teacher of religion, but also a witness of the faith and a Christian educator. Therefore, they expect a catechist to have reliable substantive knowledge in the field of religion and methodological competences allowing them to pass it on in an interesting and understandable way. They need to be open and ready to conduct discussions, answer questions that bother them, and be a deeply religious person whose attitude and behaviour will testify to the existence of God, His teachings and loving men. They also hope that the catechist will implement the moral values present in the Church's teaching and be able to feel valuable and independent at the same time. Thus, students will be able to build their identity with a catechist's help through the critical acquisition of theological knowledge and real deepening of their faith.

In order for Christian formation to be effective, and thus to serve a person's self-development, it must be associated with "a comprehensive educational impact that respects and promotes the freedom of the pupil."²⁴ In order for this condition to be met, every catechist must have psychosocial competences enabling them to build two-way relationships with students, giving the basis for an open exchange of thoughts with them in an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance. The measure of a student's subjectivity is the extent to which they feel accepted and appreciated. It is the extent to which a student is endowed with attention, interest and kindness, and has the feeling that his or her person, opinion, initiative and independence count.²⁵

The way catechists carry out their tasks and duties will be reflected in students' attitudes towards religion, values, the world, other people and even

²³ See Erik H. Erikson, *Tożsamość a cykl życia* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2004).

²⁴ Piotr Tomasiak, „Nauczanie religii w szkole jako podstawa formacji chrześcijańskiej,” *Studia Gdańskie* 23 (2008): 179–190.

²⁵ Teresa Zubrzycka-Maciąg, „Uczeń jako podmiot/przedmiot oddziaływań pedagogicznych we współczesnej szkole,” *Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka* (2018), 3: 159–164.

themselves. A young person's properly supported spiritual development can, therefore, contribute to a conscious and full experience of their humanity. However, if it is neglected or abandoned by people appointed to this task, young people will be condemned to a lonely search for meaning in life. Therefore, the quality of work and the involvement of catechists determine whether the time devoted to religion lessons at school will be used in a valuable way both individually and socially, or whether it will simply be wasted time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baniak, Józef. „Katecheza szkolna w opiniach i ocenach młodzieży i rodziców.” *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 9 (2000): 237–259.
- Borda, Michał i Roman Solecki. „Duchowa sfera wychowania w życiu młodzieży.” *Studia Redemptorystowskie* 15 (2017): 555–570.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Tożsamość a cykl życia*. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2004.
- Goliszek, Piotr T. *Katecheza a osoba. Wybrane zagadnienia z metodologii personalistycznej w katechezie*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010.
- Goliszek, Piotr T. „Wychowanie do prawdy w osobowym świadectwie katechety.” In *Katecheza w szkole współczesnej*, ed. Marian Zajac, 183–201. Lublin: Polihymnia, 2010.
- Goliszek, Piotr T. „Communicating Faith Through Catechesis.” *Studia Pastoralne* 9 (2013): 69–70.
- Goliszek, Piotr T. „Nauczanie religii w polskich przedszkolach i szkołach publicznych.” *Teka Komisji Prawniczej* 13 (2020), 2: 177–195.
- Jan Paweł II. „W imię przyszłości kultury. Przemówienie w siedzibie UNESCO, Paryż, 2 czerwca 1980”. W Jan Paweł II. *Nauczanie papieskie*, t. 3, part 1, edited by Eugeniusz Weron, Antoni Jaroch, Florian Kniotek, 731. Poznań–Warszawa: Pallottinum, 1985.
- Jedynak, Witold. „Nauczanie religii w polskich szkołach – sukces czy porażka?” *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 32 (2018): 207–228.
- Kiciński, Andrzej. „Formacja katechety na wzór Samuela.” In *Miejsca katechezy. Rodzina, parafia, szkoła*, ed. Stanisław Kulpaczyński, 347–363. Lublin: Polihymnia, 2005.
- Krapiec, Albert. *Odzyskać świat realny*. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1993.
- Łobocki, Mieczysław. *ABC wychowania*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 1999.
- Łobocki, Mieczysław. „Niektóre warunki skutecznego wychowania.” *Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze* 10 (1995): 7–10.
- Łobocki, Mieczysław. *Teoria wychowania w zarysie*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2007.
- Łobocki, Mieczysław. *Wychowanie moralne w zarysie*. Kraków: Impuls, 2008.
- Milerski, Bogusław i Tadeusz Gadacz, ed. *Religia. Encyklopedia PWN*, t. 5. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002.
- Osiał, Wojciech. „Misja wychowawcza lekcji religii w szkole.” *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 25 (2012), 2: 269–280.

- Tomasik, Piotr. „Nauczanie religii w szkole jako podstawa formacji chrześcijańskiej”. *Studia Gdańskie* 23 (2008): 179–190.
- Zajac, Marian. „(R)ewolucja myślenia o katechezie w szkole.” In *Katecheza w szkole współczesnej*, ed. Marian Zajac, 254. Lublin: Polihymnia, 2010.
- Zajac, Marian. „Wprowadzenie.” In *XXV lat nauczania religii w polskiej szkole. Między nadzieją a rzeczywistością*, ed. Marian Zajac, 9–10. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Natan, 2015.
- Zellma, Anna. „Katecheta.” In *Leksykon pedagogiki religii. Podstawy, koncepcje, perspektywy*, ed. Cyprian Rogowski, 255–258. Warszawa: Verbinum, 2007.
- Zubrzycka-Maciąg, Teresa. „Wychowanie moralne we współczesnej szkole.” In *Edukacja – w stronę kluczowych wartości*, ed. Józef Górniewicz, 9–20. Olsztyn–Białystok: Centrum Badań Społecznych UWM, 2017.
- Zubrzycka-Maciąg, Teresa. „Uczeń jako podmiot/przedmiot oddziaływań pedagogicznych we współczesnej szkole.” *Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka* (2018), 3: 159–164.
- Zubrzycka-Maciąg, Teresa i Piotr T. Goliszek. „The Personal Aspect of the Moral and Axiological Upbringing of Children and Adolescents.” *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny* 39 (2020), 2: 23–37.