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FOUR DECADES OF *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH* AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR CATECHESIS IN POLAND

Abstract. This year, we are celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The document, long-awaited by believers, contained a popularly outlined interpretation of the most important principles of faith, morals, worship and prayer. The purpose of this article is to analyse the significance of this document for the catechetical activities of the Catholic Church in Poland over the past four decades since its publication. The previous *Roman Catechism* served the Church for more than 400 years. A new document of such stature was to lead to a radical revision of the aims of catechesis, the prominence of its most important contents and the improvement of its methodological instrumentation. The article will answer the following questions: “Has there really been a religious revival in the stages of adapting *the Catechism of the Catholic Church* to the realities of the local community of the Church in Poland?” “Has it become the basis for a deeper reflection on the current state of catechesis?” It will also be important to answer the question: “Has there been a real popularisation of this document in Polish ecclesial, cultural and educational spaces?”.

Keywords: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; catechesis; education.

In the trend of social and cultural changes taking place in the world in recent decades, the Catholic Church has experienced several momentous events. They have led to a deeper understanding of the Christian doctrine and created the opportunity for baptized people to deepen their personal faith. The spiritual impulse for the renewal of catechesis was the promulgation of the text of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on October 11, 1992, in Rome, on the fortieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. The original Latin version approved of by John Paul II contained a popularly outlined interpretation of the most important principles of faith, morality and worship, to which members of the Catholic Church were

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obliged to comply.¹ Its catechetical significance was validated by the fact that the document was prepared by the catechetical commission formed to crown this work at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It had access to empirical documentation from research conducted on the working text of the catechism in academic centres around the world. This article is an attempt to balance the importance of this document for the catechetical activity of the teaching Catholic Church in Poland's conditions over the last three decades since its publication.

1. THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH ON THE ROLE OF *THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

The previous *Roman Catechism* of 1566, having a worldwide reach and conciliar provenance, served the Church for over 400 years. On the other hand, the currently binding *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, crowning the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council, has for four decades become one of the basic tools of the Church in the work of evangelization and catechization of the world.² Its promulgation led to a radical revision of the goals of catechesis, re-planning its most important content and improving the methodological instruments for its implementation.³

Three decades after the publication of this strategic document for catechesis, several important questions need to be answered. Did the religious revival predicted in the apostolic constitution *Fidei depositum*⁴ really take place at all stages of adapting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to the realities of local Church communities, especially in Poland? Does it serve only for individual reading, or did it become a basis for in-depth reflection on the current state of catechesis? Has it really been popularized in Poland's ecclesiastical, cultural and educational spaces, or was there just a simple notification about the publication of a new document on the Church's teaching?

In order to confirm or deny these assumptions, it is first necessary to recall the circle of postulated addressees of the document. On December 7,

¹ Cf. Piotr Goliszek, "Katechizm," in *Leksykon katechetyczny*, ed. Jan Kochel, Jerzy Kostorz (Kielce: Jedność, 2022), 352.

² Cf. Andrzej Sujka, ed., *Wprowadzenie do Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego* (Warszawa: Verbinum, 1994), 7.

³ Cf. Wojciech Rzeszowski, *Odnowa katechezy* (Warszawa: Missio-Polonia, 2001), 10.

⁴ Jan Paweł II, "Konstytucja apostolska «Fidei depositum» ogłoszona z okazji publikacji Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego," *L'Osservatore Romano* 14 (1993): 2.

1992, in the Royal Hall of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican, John Paul II presented the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to representatives of the faithful around the world:

Five bishops representing five continents, a married couple, two representatives of the youth and two children received it from his hands. In this way, the truth was expressed that the new *Catechism* is intended for everyone, for people of all ages, nationalities and cultures who make up the People of God.⁵

The *Catechism*, which is a summary of the main truths of the faith, aims to present “[...] an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church’s Tradition” (CCC 11). The presentation of such a synthesis, which appeared as an organic whole, was to break the tendency to show the phenomenon of the Catholic faith in catechesis only in selected fragments, which are only a reflection of modern man’s individual existential experiences.⁶

The new *Catechism* was presented not as a scientific and theological work, but in a traditional catechetical form. Unlike the *Roman Catechism* four hundred years ago, it does not contain radical polemics, anathemas, or predilections for any theological or philosophical theory. At the same time, thanks to a modern editorial concept, it hopes to be received by both an experienced theologian⁷ and a person who has had no education.⁸

It was no easy task to prepare such an extensive presentation of Catholic doctrine in one compact work. Huge differences between world cultures made it impossible to develop a common catechetical work for the whole world. Concerning the *Roman Catechism*, which, due to the confusion of the Reformation, was addressed “to parish priests” and the official catechists at that time, the new *Catechism* was placed at the disposal of the bishops and their catechetical co-workers. This was because empirical research showed that it could not be a work reserved for a small group of theological specialists,⁹ which would also contradict the conciliar teaching points to the com-

⁵ Maciej Napieralski, *O nowym katechizmie* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994), 5.

⁶ Christoph Schönborn, *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego. Myśli przewodnie i główne tematy*, in *Wprowadzenie do Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego*, 34.

⁷ Cf. Czesław Bartnik, “Wartości chrześcijaństwa,” in *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego. Wprowadzenie*, ed. Marian Rusecki, Edward Pudelko (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1995), 278.

⁸ Cf. Jerzy Kostorz, “Wprowadzenie,” w *Katechizm dla średnio zaawansowanych*, ed. Jerzy Kostorz, Zdzisław Pytka, Piotr Bechta (Opole: Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Świętego Krzyża, 2021), 8.

⁹ Cf. Goliszek, „Katechizm,” 352.

mon responsibility of believers for the Church and the matter of catechesis. The discussed document did not cross out or replace the previous catechisms, but improved and significantly corrected them due to the new challenges faced by catechesis.¹⁰

2. THE NEW *CATECHISM* AS A REFERENCE POINT IN CATECHETICAL TEACHING

People responsible for the development of catechization in Poland initiated activities aimed at popularizing and expanding the *Catechism's* circle of direct recipients.¹¹ Its message was awaited, because many new moral and social dilemmas appeared at the end of the twentieth century that demanded an urgent explanation.¹² In addition to transmitting faith teachings, the *Catechism* also presented principles related to the Christian life, the Church's daily functioning, its liturgy, ministering the sacraments, and prayer strategy. However, the *Catechism's* reception encountered unexpected obstacles in Poland. One of them was the language of the message. Although it was not too theological, it was different from the language believers used in everyday contacts and what they read in magazines or heard in mass media.¹³ The next obstacle was the lack of a tradition of using such assistance, because the totalitarian state's censorship had effectively limited the possibility of such publications.¹⁴

¹⁰ Cf. Andrzej Kiciński, *Rola katechizmów w rozwoju nauczania katechetycznego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Scriptum, 2020), 133.

¹¹ Cf. Roman Murawski, "Katechizm a katechizacja w Polsce," *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 87 (1995), 1 (515): 23–32.

¹² "A catechism should faithfully and systematically present the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers and the Church's saints, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the People of God. It should take into account the doctrinal statements which down the centuries the Holy Spirit has intimated to his Church. It should also help illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past." John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum*. III. Arrangement of the Material. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_1992_1011_fidei-depositum.html accessed January 24, 2023.

¹³ Cf. Janusz Królikowski, *Mały przewodnik po Katechizmie Kościoła Katolickiego* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1996), 29–30.

¹⁴ "Dla ustalenia poziomu religijności i rozumienia wiary wybrano najbardziej zasadnicze elementy nauki Kościoła, które powinny być znane każdemu katolikowi, niezależnie od uwarunkowań środowiskowych i poziomu wykształcenia. Jako najważniejszy komponent wiedzy uznano znajomość Osoby Jezusa Chrystusa" ["In order to determine the level of religiosity and

In order to popularize the *Catechism*, several editions were published in an attempt to adapt the contents to the perceptive abilities of the ordinary recipient. This was a result – as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger correctly described in 2003 – of the *Catechism* that “seemed too extensive – especially for simple use in catechesis.”¹⁵ We will chronologically describe the three most important initiatives in Poland in this area. The first was a publication prepared in the Tarnów scholarly community entitled *W duchu i prawdzie*¹⁶ [In spirit and truth]. It was addressed to all people who wanted to make the subject of their reflection the main truths of the *Catechism*. The next was an initiative in Radom – a book entitled *Wyznawać wiarę dzisiaj. Katecheza dorosłych na podstawie „Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego”*¹⁷ [Confessing the faith today. An adult catechesis based on the “Catechism of the Catholic Church”].

Its primary goal was to revive catechesis addressed to adults. The third proposal is of special importance – a *Catechism for Adults*,¹⁸ prepared at the request of the Polish Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education. All the mentioned adaptations of the *Catechism* aimed to present a new view of the Christian life, strengthening people’s faith and stimulating the will to imitate Christ, who in light of the new *Catechism* is always the Way, the Truth and the Life as well as a source of joy and Christian hope.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, developed in the form of a comprehensive lecture, proportionally divided into parts, chapters and articles, also received several analyzes, comparisons and combinations in Poland.¹⁹

understanding of the faith, the most fundamental elements of the Church’s teachings were selected, which should be familiar to every Catholic, regardless of environmental conditions and level of education. Knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ was identified as the most important component of knowledge”. See Edward Jarmoch, „Religijność indywidualna Polaków,” in *Kościół i religijność Polaków 1945-1999*, ed. Witold Zdaniewicz, Tomasz Zembruski (Warszawa: Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego SAC, 2000), 394.

¹⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, “Katechizm w świecie postchrześcijańskim. W rozmowie z Giannim Cardinale (30 Giorni 2003),” in *Joseph Ratzinger. Opera Omnia*, ed. Krzysztof Gózdź, Marzena Górecka, XIII (3) (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018), 1242.

¹⁶ Czesław Noworolnik i Marian Zajęc, ed., *W duchu i prawdzie. Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego w refleksji i w życiu* (Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos, 1997).

¹⁷ Stanisław Łabendowicz, *Wyznawać wiarę dzisiaj. Katecheza dorosłych na podstawie Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego* (Sandomierz: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1999).

¹⁸ Charytański, Jan i Andrzej Szałowski, ed., *Katechizm dla dorosłych. Polska adaptacja Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego opracowana na zlecenie Komisji Episkopatu polski ds. Wychowania katolickiego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1999).

¹⁹ Irena Bajerowa, “Od Trydentu do Vaticanum Secundum. Porównanie języka dwóch katechizmów,” in *Język katechezy*, ed. Renata Przybylska, Wiesław Przyczyna (Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos, 2008), 136–151.

The nature and volume of this monumental study have stimulated subsequent projects aimed at popularizing it.²⁰ One of them, the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*,²¹ was edited under the direction of the then-prefect of the Congregation for the Teaching of the Faith, Cardinal Józef Ratzinger. It was presented 13 years after the original *Catechism's* publication. The *Compendium* contains more synthetic wording of the *Catechism's* serious contents, but is characterized by strict dependence on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the dialogue format and the use of artistic images in catechesis (*Compendium*, 5). Its important feature is a return to the traditional, sanctified by a catechesis tradition applying the diary model of questions and answers. The *Compendium* has 598 such sets and includes content that has been included in the *Catechism* in almost 3000 points. Explaining the strategy of its preparation, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger justified that it “reproduce[s] an imaginary dialogue between master and disciple, through a series of incisive questions that invite the reader to go deeper in discovering ever new aspects of his faith” (*Compendium*, 4).

In retrospect, it can be confirmed that the *Compendium* was a successful attempt to simplify the typical message while maintaining the main ideas of the *Catechism's* teaching. This work presented the whole Christian message simply and interestingly, showing the issues of the Christian faith intended for modern man. The *Compendium* addresses the great problem of the present day, referring to the development of contemporary science, the role of conscience and human rights. It gained the status of a current, reliable and solid way to show the Christian faith at the beginning of the new century, adopting the form of an acceptable dialogue between a master and student, not a religious dictate as a form of communication. It contained 15 beautiful reproductions of works of art from various Christian art eras and styles, with comments, which were a kind of introduction to individual parts of the work.²² It was the right step towards encouraging believers to use the new *Catechism* for individual reading.

²⁰ Cf. Jan Paweł II, “Kompendium Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego. List papieża do kard. Josepha Ratzingera,” *L'Osservatore Romano* 5 (2003): 27.

²¹ *Kompendium Katechizmu Kościoła katolickiego*, trans. Roman Murawski (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność, 2005). https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html#INTRODUCTION accessed January 21, 2023.

²² Cf. Benedykt XVI, “Motu proprio Benedykta XVI w sprawie zatwierdzenia i publikacji Kompendium Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego,” *L'Osservatore Romano* 9 (2005): 11–12.

The next attempts to make the *Catechism's* content accessible to young people include the *Youcat. Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*,²³ published in connection with preparations for World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011.²⁴ Its content layer and compositional intention were faithful to the original German catechism of 2011, *Youcat. Jugendkatechismus der Katholischen Kirche*.²⁵ This catechism, having an introduction by the same author as the *Compendium's*, now Pope Benedict XVI, was born from the belief that “the text must be adapted to the needs of different environments to speak to individual communities in their language and address their problems” (*Youcat*, 9). The goal set by its creators was to attempt to translate the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* into the language of young people from different continents and representing various cultures. The *Youcat* catechism, like the *Compendium*, was written in the form of a dialogue, undertaking all 527 sets of questions and answers.²⁶

Also worth noting is the release of the handy pocket version of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, adapted to the typical Latin edition.²⁷ The publication's dimensions allowed this document to be very handy, without having to use the first, extensive edition.

In this context, the General Church Catechetical Directorates²⁸ should also be recalled, which not only determined the direction of catechization, but simultaneously directed people responsible for catechization towards the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *General Directory for Catechesis*²⁹ of 1997 redirects readers to the content of the *Catechism* twenty-five times. It also orders the creation of local catechisms built on a typical work, because

²³ Cf. Katarzyna Czarnecka, “Odpowiedzi katechizmowe jako sposób popularyzacji nauczania Kościoła. Uwagi o języku katechizmu «Youcat»,” *Poznańskie Zeszyty Humanistyczne* 20 (2013): 103–118.

²⁴ *Youcat. Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego dla młodych* (Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła, 2011).

²⁵ *Youcat. Jugendkatechismus der Katholischen Kirche* (Monachium; Pattloch Verlag, 2011). Cf. <https://ucymb.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/youth-catechism-of-the-catholic-church1.pdf> accessed January 21, 2023.

²⁶ Cf. Czarnecka, “Odpowiedzi katechizmowe,” 104.

²⁷ “Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego,” Poznań: Pallottinum, accessed May 29, 2022, <https://praweksiadzki.pl/wiara-ojcow/8187-katechizm-kosciola-katolickiego-wydanie-kieszonkowe-twarda-oprawa-9788370146979.html>.

²⁸ Cf. Andrzej Kiciński, “Rozwój dyrektorów katechetycznych po Soborze Watykańskim II (1971-1997-2020),” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 67 (2020): 11–27.

²⁹ Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa, *Dyrektorium ogólne o katechizacji* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 1997). Cf. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html accessed January 21, 2023.

“the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* indicates those aspects which must be taken into account when adapting or contextualizing the organic synthesis of the faith which every local catechism must offer” (GDoC 1997, no. 133). However, the *Directory for Catechesis*³⁰ published in 2020 on catechization has seventeen extensive points that recall the resources of the *Catechism*.

The publication of the text of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is included in the work of the great renewal of catechization and finds a place in the set of important events in the life and mission of the modern Church (DoC 6). The text of the *Directory* also includes important information that “the Church has seen fit to offer an organic exposition of the faith through a catechism of a universal character, which is an instrument of Catechisms in the history of the Church ecclesial communion and also a point of reference for catechesis” (DoC 2020, no. 182). This is a confirmation of a forty-year strategy announced by John Paul II in the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*.

The Polish document in the rank of the *Directory* on the subject of local catechization also indicates the fulcrum of this inspiration, which is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.³¹ Poland’s *Catechetical Directory* has been written so that catechesis will be founded on a systematic lecture on the doctrine of the faith contained in the traditional catechetical pattern used in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Analysis of the content of Poland’s base document entitled *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* [The Catechetical Directory of the Catholic Church in Poland] shows that its authors have repeatedly referred to the issue of catechism in teaching religion.³²

Planning catechetical activities also facilitate the core curriculum. Three such documents appeared in Poland in the analysed period. In the first, published in 2001, there is information that, in 1992, the Church was offered the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as an act of its official teaching, in which the whole of the Catholic faith should be synthesized, and the document “is a reference, assistance and incentive to developing new local catechisms.”³³

³⁰ Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji* (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność, 2020). *Directory-for-Catechesis-Study-Edition.pdf* accessed January 27, 2023.

³¹ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2001).

³² Cf. *ibid.*, 32.

³³ Jan Szpet, “Powstanie i główne założenia podstawy programowej katechezy z 2001 roku,” in *Programy nauczania religii i katechetyczne (1920-2020)*, ed. Roman Ceglarek, Kazimierz

After the 2008 educational reform, another catechesis core curriculum was published. The document refers to the previous one and contains information that the necessary reference point in catechization should be the contents of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.³⁴ However, the current catechesis core curriculum³⁵ includes suggestions that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* be used as a help “in recognizing and hierarchy of values to make proper choices.”³⁶

Currently, religion and catechization in Poland’s schools are conducted by twenty-four churches and religious associations, which achieve their goals in the confessional model of teaching religion.³⁷ What differentiates the religious lessons of the Roman Catholic religion is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The curricula for teaching the Roman Catholic faith, built according to the catechesis curriculum presented above, break down into individual educational stages of information on how to get to know and apply the indications of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in everyday activities.

At the same time, the applicable programmes and series of textbooks for teaching religion are presented on the website of the Polish Episcopal Conference Committee. Analysing this content clearly shows that the basic source of the serious message following biblical texts is the content defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.³⁸ Studies on teaching catechesis included in textbooks, methodological guides and work cards for primary, secondary, technical and vocational schools showed that the proposed educational packages contain a significant variety of catechism texts. Their subject matter mainly concerns the personal faith of the catechised, prayer activity, man’s human dignity and the issue of the emergence and development of Christian culture in the world. Pope Benedict XVI, strongly involved in promoting the

Misiaszek, Albert Wołkiewicz (Częstochowa: Częstochowskie Wydawnictwo Archidiecezjalne, 2021), 285.

³⁴ Cf. Marcin Falkowski, “Przewodnie myśli Podstawy programowej katechezy z 2010 roku,” in *Programy nauczania religii i katechetyczne (1920-2020)*, 285.

³⁵ See Marek Korgul i Jarosław Kowalczyk, *Działalność Komisji Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski w latach 2010-2020* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Drukarnia Kokociński, 2021), 47.

³⁶ Cf. Marek Korgul, “Prace nad nową podstawą programową katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce,” in *Programy nauczania religii i katechetyczne (1920-2020)*, 411.

³⁷ Cf. Bogusław Milerski, “Odnowienie umysłu, czyli o refleksyjnym charakterze kształcenia religijnego,” in *Świat idei edukacyjnych*, ed. Władysława Szulakiewicz (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2008), 179.

³⁸ See Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, “Programy i podręczniki do nauczania religii,” accessed May 29, 2022, <http://katecheza.episkopat.pl/kwk/programy-i-podreczniki>.

Catechism of the Catholic Church appealed for this, and he also indicated it was a tool for the new evangelization of the contemporary Church.³⁹

3. ASSESSING THE RECEPTION OF THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

Even a cursory observation of the catechesis strategy reveals that there are many truths of the faith, but not all of them are included in the *Creed*. It is also known that all truths of the faith have great formative value, but not all of them are equal. All of them must be intellectually accepted with obedience to the faith and emotionally identifying with them, but only some deserve exceptional adherence and acceptance by believers. Although none of these truths should be underestimated, because they all have the power to save, being offered by God himself in his Word, not all of them are deeply rooted in the Gospel to the same extent. Therefore, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* plays a crucially important role in theological thinking, planning catechetical activities and hierarchizing the truths of faith in the lives of believers. It contains a detailed analysis of the most important truths of the faith, rooted in the thinking and practice of the Church's functioning. The *Catechism* also presents a conciliar understanding of the foundation of the Christian faith, which is why this document is of such great importance for catechetical activity and invariably retains its guiding importance for Church catechesis.⁴⁰

During the International Catechetical Congress organized by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for the Clergy, Card. Ratzinger delivered a paper entitled *Current Doctrinal Relevance of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Defining the area of the deposit of Revelation given by God at the disposal of the teaching Church, he used the phrase "compendium of the faith."⁴¹ The then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated that the function of the *Catechism* is not to practice theology, but to authentically preach the faith. However, for the proper transmission of faith, intellectual reflection is necessary. Faith is the

³⁹ Cf. Michał Jędrzejski, *Nowa ewangelizacja w nauczaniu Josepha Ratzingera – Benedykta XVI* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2021), 341.

⁴⁰ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "Wprowadzenie," in *Kompendium Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego* (Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność, 2005), 10.

⁴¹ Joseph Ratzinger, "Aktualność doktrynalna Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego", *L'Osservatore Romano* 3 (2003): 49.

object of understanding and theological reflection.⁴² In this statement, some indications help define the importance of the *Catechism* for catechesis in past times, as well as setting postulates for the future. John Paul II, pointing to what should be expected from the *Catechism*, stated: “With the grace of God and the good will of the shepherds and the faithful, it will certainly be able to become an effective tool for further deepening of knowledge and result in authentic spiritual and moral renewal.”⁴³

One can risk saying that catechesis in the last four decades was in line with the spirit of the *Catechism*, because it represented a new style of teaching and theology associated with the Second Vatican Council. This was evidenced by references to the content of the conciliar documents and the extension of responsibility for catechesis to all believers. The compatibility of catechesis with the spirit of the new *Catechism* emphasizes its Christocentrism, meaning assigning a central place to the Person of Jesus Christ in catechesis. The above relationships are further deepened by the biblical side of the catechetical message postulated by the *Catechism*, with fidelity to the centuries-old Tradition of the Church, by referring to the Fathers of the Church and later eminent Catholic theologians, but above all the principle of “fidelity to God and man” postulated in the *Catechism* and implemented in Poland’s catechesis programme.⁴⁴

Catechesis, following the spirit of the *Catechism*, appears in the preparation and promulgation of Poland’s key catechesis documents. Considering the indications of the *Catechism*, later specified in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, the Commission for Catholic Education of the Polish Episcopal Conference led to the publication of three important catechetical documents. They are: *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*⁴⁵ [Catechetical Directory of the Catholic Church in Poland], *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*⁴⁶ [Core Curriculum for Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland] and the *Program nauczania religii*⁴⁷ [Religious Education Curriculum]. It was a step taken not only to inform but

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*

⁴³ Jan Paweł II, “Nowy katechizm darem dla wszystkich,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 14 (1993): 7.

⁴⁴ Tadeusz Panuś, *Główne kierunki katechetyczne XX wieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo „M”, 2001), 166.

⁴⁵ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne*.

⁴⁶ Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2001).

⁴⁷ Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program nauczania religii* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2001).

also actually implant the content of the *Catechism* into the local Church structures and catechesis in Poland.

It is not difficult to demonstrate how the *Catechism* adapts for use in youth catechesis, because it is abundantly quoted in all available religious textbooks.⁴⁸ At the same time, it was good that, in the discussed period, there were no attempts to adapt the *Catechism* for small children who are not able to understand it correctly. It should also be remembered that the reception of the *Catechism* in catechesis addressed to individual groups of believers does not necessarily mean quoting the individual fragments of the document verbatim, because “fidelity to the *Catechism* consists in faithfulness to the spirit and its main ideas.”⁴⁹ This is the first postulate for the future, that all adaptations should be subordinated to the spirit of the *Catechism*, whose educational value has not lost its significance.

The second postulate is an appeal to catechists to build the conviction among those being catechized that God, who speaks to them through the *Catechism*, is different from the matters of this world. God also uses a different economy and laws. If we are so closely bonded to the material world, then, to counterbalance, we must also become interested in our spiritual lives, the key to which may be reading the *Catechism*. A critical response to the instructions of the *Catechism* means an attitude in which the received knowledge is treated not as something found by chance and not only as human wisdom, but as a call from God who, through the teaching contained in the *Catechism*, demands saving works from every human being.

The future of this document is not subject to any discussion. This follows from the words of Pope Benedict: “In its very structure, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* follows the development of the faith right up to the great themes of daily life. On page after page, we find that what is presented here is no theory, but an encounter with a Person who lives within the Church.”⁵⁰

According to this opinion, the proficiency in the *Catechism*'s arrangement of content means that, initially, God speaks to man's conscience. Therefore, man must enter into dialogue with God, which in the liturgy extends to the community and is expressed through formulas and religious rites. The li-

⁴⁸ Cf. Andrzej Offmański, *W kierunku katechezy ewangelizacyjnej* (Szczecin: Szczecińskie Wydawnictwo Archidiecezjalne “Ottonianum”, 2000), 218–226.

⁴⁹ Piotr Tomasiak, “Katechetyka fundamentalna,” in *Historia katechezy i katechetyka fundamentalna*, ed. Józef Stala (Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos, 2003), 224.

⁵⁰ Benedykt XVI, *List apostolski w formie motu proprio «Porta fidei» ogłaszający Rok Wiary* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2011), 11. Cf. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei.html accessed January 21, 2023.

turgy and the sacraments lead directly to personal prayer and contemplation of revealed truth, and “thus, the *lex credendi* becomes the *lex orandi*.”⁵¹ According to Benedict XVI, the new evangelization, catechesis and preaching “should never lack [...] these basic themes.”⁵²

CONCLUSION

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is the result of cooperation within the entire Episcopate of the Catholic Church, including theological and catechetical institutes, is an extraordinary “symphony of the faith.” Over the past four decades, it has become a content base for the development of new local catechisms adapted to Poland’s environment and culture, and at the same time caring for faithfulness to Catholic teaching. Also, the catechesis conducted during the discussed forty years in Poland’s conditions was basically in line with the spirit of the *Catechism*, because it represented its evangelization-kerygmatic style of teaching, emphasized Christocentrism and the biblical nature of the catechetical message, and implemented the principle of “fidelity to God and man.”

The heritage of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was constantly preached, heard, celebrated, experienced and commented on in Poland’s catechesis programme. The vision of catechesis suggested by the ecclesiastical legislator in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* took place through the renewal of its entire structure, both in the substantive and methodological layers. Traces of the *Catechism* are present in many theological publications, including popular academic and religious quiz publications. This trend should be continued. Searching for traces of catechetical renewal after the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* revealed that individual elements of catechesis were transformed by the work of its adaptation to local conditions.

⁵¹ Cf. Benedykt XVI, “W trosce o wiarę i kult Eucharystii. 19 IX – Do nowo mianowanych biskupów uczestniczących w kursie formacyjnym,” *L'Osservatore Romano* 11–12 (2005): 26.

⁵² Benedykt XVI, “Św. Tomasz z Akwinu (III). Katecheza podczas audiencji generalnej 23.06.2010”, *L'Osservatore Romano* 8–9 (2010): 54.

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