

THEOLOGICAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION

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Summary. The author at the beginning defines the notion ‘education’ and defines the Christian and Catholic kinds of education. Then the Author indicates the theological foundations of Christian and Catholic education laid down by the Holy Bible and the Magisterium of the Church as well as the legal foundations in the Code of Canon Law of 1983.

Key words: Catholic Church, children, parents, Magisterium of the Church

The Code of Canon Law of 1983¹ lays down principles for Christian and Catholic education. It does not, however, use these notions synonymously or interchangeably, therefore the following questions arise: What is meant by Christian education and Catholic education? What are the theological and legal foundations of such an education? The aim of the article is, in the first place, to define the notion ‘education’ and to define the Christian and Catholic kinds of education. Then the Author will also indicate the theological foundations laid by the Holy Bible, the Magisterium of the Church, and those provided by CIC/83.

THE NOTION OF EDUCATION

The word ‘education’ encompasses consciously and purposefully arranged social activities aiming to bring about changes in human personality, shape proper attitudes and convictions, as well as enable the adoption of values, norms, behavioural patterns and life goals recognized by specific social environments such as the family, school or a social group, which constitute a dynamic and complex process occurring in a personal interaction². The *Pedagogical Encyclopaedia* defines this notion in religious and secular terms. From the religious point of view, education is to be understood as help given to the human person in the fulfilment of his or her humanity, in imparting an ultimate meaning to

¹ *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pars II, p. 1–317 [henceforth quoted as: CIC/83].

² W. Partyka, *Wychowanie*, in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, Vol. XX, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2014, col. 1039.

human life understood as a unification of the human being with God through “the exercise of charity”. In secular terms, education is a conscious, purposeful and specific pedagogical activity of people “who typically function in various communities (families, schools), conducted mainly through the word as well as other forms of interaction (especially by setting a personal example) that aim at achieving relatively stable results (changes) in the physical, mental, social, cultural, and spiritual growth of an individual”³.

The process of education is always focused on a person living in a specific reality⁴. The person, who is both the subject and object of education, is always at the heart of the educational process. Pope Paul VI stated:

God seeks His glory, His radiation in Universe, through the life of Man. Whoever denies the existence of God, extinguishes light upon the face of Man, thus depriving him of his greatest privileges. In the light of God, Man is a reflection of His creation, which is a work of love. Man has great dignity [...]. The sight of the human countenance should evoke in us a sense of dignity, inborn and sanctified beauty, and a sense of integrity and transcendence⁵.

Christian education

Christian education is to be understood as an education conducted in the spirit of Christianity, realised structurally within the three principal Christian denominations: the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant faiths⁶. It is a personalistic education⁷. It is intended to gradually introduce a person to the mystery of Salvation, which is supposed to initiate a personal transformation perceptible in an increased consciousness of faith and vocation, divine worship, especially in liturgy, and the testimony of life and hope⁸. Christian education relies solely on the teaching of Jesus Christ, so this category includes both Orthodox and Protestant educations.

Christian education is: 1) an education which is genuinely human and actual, i.e. reflects the culture of today; 2) an education which manifests its objectives and strategies through study areas concerning education carried out in the light of faith; 3) education which is ultimately subject to the attainment of specifically

³ W. Pomykała (ed.), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna*, Fundacja Innowacja, Warszawa 1997, p. 913 and p. 917.

⁴ J. Niewęglowski, *Zarys wychowania chrześcijańskiego*, “Seminare” 26 (2009), p. 268.

⁵ Paulus PP. VI, *Udienza generale* (28.07.1971), in: http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/audiences/1971/documents/hf_p-vi_aud_19710728.html [accessed: 31.10.2016]; R. Czupryk, *Wychowywać po katolicku. Szkic jurydyczny*, “Pedagogika Katolicka” 17 (2015), p. 201.

⁶ R.B. Sieroń, *Model wychowania chrześcijańskiego według św. Pawła Apostoła*, Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Sandomierz 2007, p. 69.

⁷ For more, see: R. Rybicki, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie – wychowaniem personalistycznym*, “Chrześcijanin w Świecie” 10 (1983), p. 49–60.

⁸ R.B. Sieroń, *Model wychowania chrześcijańskiego*, p. 100.

Christian goals through the processes of growth, and varied depending on the age and circumstances of the subjects⁹.

Catholic education

Catholic education takes place in accordance with the principles of the Catholic Church and is conducted under its authority. It specifies, or even substantiates, education in the Christian spirit¹⁰ and is a narrower notion than Christian education. Catholic education rests not only upon the teaching of Jesus Christ but it also takes into account the teaching of the Catholic Church. For this reason Catholic education should be carried out in the spirit of Christian values¹¹ and the Magisterium of the Church.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

We find the theological foundations of both Christian and Catholic educations in the Holy Bible, in Jesus Christ's words:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age¹².

The Church's Magisterium safeguards the Deposit of Faith. Therefore, the educational mission of the Church may be taken over by no other authority or office, this right being given to the Church only¹³.

Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Divini illius Magistri*¹⁴ – refers to as “the constitutional charter of education”¹⁵ – recognised the family's right to educate as being primary with relation to the State's right to educate, stressing the fact that this right is both inalienable and inviolable (no. 32). In the encyclical *Casti connubii*, he stated:

⁹ For more, see: G. Groppo, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie*, in: *Słownik katechetyczny*, J. Gevaert (ed.), Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, Warszawa 2007, p. 981–984; M. Sztaba, *Spoleczny wymiar wychowania chrześcijańskiego w nauczaniu Kościoła Katolickiego*, “Katecheta” 55 (2011), no. 5, p. 50–58.

¹⁰ M. Wolicki, *Wychowanie katolickie a wychowanie chrześcijańskie*, “Pedagogika Katolicka” 2 (2008), p. 101.

¹¹ For Christian values, see: J. Krukowski, *Respektowanie wartości chrześcijańskich w Polsce w procesie integracji europejskiej. Refleksje na kanwie jubileuszu 1050-lecia Chrztu Polski*, “Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Kanonistów Polskich” 26 (2016), no. 29, p. 92–94.

¹² *Holy Bible, New International Version*, Biblica, Inc.

¹³ J. Niewęglowski, *Kościół i wychowanie. Zarys problematyki*, “Seminare” 21 (2005), p. 453.

¹⁴ Pius PP. XI, *Litterae encyclicae de christiana iuventutis educatione Divini illius Magistri* (31.12.1929), AAS 22 (1930), p. 49–86.

¹⁵ R. Czupryk, *Wychowywać po katolicku*, p. 202.

Now it is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to certain ruin¹⁶.

In his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*¹⁷, he emphasises that

[...] It is of the utmost importance that parents exercise their right and obligation toward the younger generation by securing for their children a sound cultural and religious formation. They must also educate them to a deep sense of responsibility in life, especially in such matters as concern the foundation of a family and the procreation and education of children (no. 196).

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council ordered that the right to have children and bring them up in a family be protected¹⁸. They stressed that “although burdensome to the family, the duty to bring up children requires the aid of the whole society”¹⁹. Consequently, since

parents have this fundamental and inalienable obligation and right to educate children, [parents – M.S.] should enjoy true freedom in their choice of schools. The state authority, which is supposed to safeguard and defend the freedom of its citizens, should ensure, in accordance with distributive justice, such a distribution of state subsidies that parents are truly free to choose a school for their children as their conscience dictates (GE 6).

In his continuation of *Vaticanum II*, Pope Paul VI notes:

Education becomes a true service to Christ, as he said: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Should any of adolescent children become closed to the educational influence of their parents, they painfully participate, even physically, in the suffering of Christ who was rejected by people²⁰.

The Roman Pontiff spoke on the necessity to include every Catholic in the task of improving the temporal world, and the need to form Catholics in responsibility for the building of the “civilisation of love”.

In his postsynodal apostolic adhortation *Familiaris consortio*, John Paul II reminded that the right-obligation to educate

is something *significant* and it is associated with the very transmission of human life. It is *primary and superior* to the educational tasks of others on account of the uniqueness of the love between

¹⁶ Pius PP. XI, Litterae encyclicae de matrimonio christiano spectatis praesentibus familiae et societatis condicionibus, necessitatibus, erroribus, vitiis *Casti connubii* (31.12.1930), AAS 22 (1930), p. 539–592, no. 16.

¹⁷ Ioannes PP. XXIII, Litterae encyclicae ad Venerabiles Fratres Patriarchas, Primate, Archiepiscopos, Episcopos aliosque locorum Ordinarios, pacem et communionem cum Apostolica Sede habentes, itemque ad universum clerum et christifideles catholici orbis: de recentioribus rerum socialium processibus ad christiana praecepta componendis *Mater et Magistra*, (15.05.1961), AAS 53 (1961), p. 401–464, no. 196.

¹⁸ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis *Gaudium et spes* (7.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025–1115 [henceforth quoted as: GS], no. 52.

¹⁹ Id., Declaratio de educatione christiana *Gravissimum educationis* (28.10.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 728–739 [henceforth quoted as: GE], no. 3.

²⁰ Paulus PP. VI, Allocutio *Sodalibus Consociationis v. d. «Equipes Notre Dame» e variis nationibus, coram admissis* (4.05.1970), AAS 62 (1970), p. 428–437, no. 10.

parents and children. It *excludes substitution and is inalienable*, and hence it may neither be conveyed fully to others nor appropriated by others²¹.

In the letter to families *Gratissimam sane*, he adds:

They share their educational mission with other individuals of institutions, such as the Church and the State. But the mission of education must always be carried out in accordance with a proper application of the *principle of subsidiarity*²².

Simultaneously, he explains that the said principle

implies the legitimacy and indeed the need of giving assistance to the parents, but finds its intrinsic and absolute limit in their prevailing right and their actual capabilities. The principle of subsidiarity is thus at the service of parental love, meeting the good of the family unit. For parents by themselves are not capable of satisfying every requirement of the whole process of raising children, especially in matters concerning their schooling and the entire gamut of socialization. Subsidiarity thus complements paternal and maternal love and confirms its fundamental nature, inasmuch as all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities *in the name of the parents, with their consent* and, to a certain degree, with *their authorization* (GrSa 16).

In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI reminded of the purpose of the Church's participation in public life. He stated that it was the protection and realisation of human dignity. He also indicated that the attainment of this goal is possible only when non-negotiable principles are taken into account. Apart from the protection of life in all its stages, from the conception to a natural death, and recognition and promotion of the natural family model, i.e. a union of man and woman based on marriage, Pope mentioned the protection of parents' right to educate their own children²³.

In the Final Report of the Synod of Bishops of 2015²⁴, the Synod Fathers stressed that the family is the first place for education, and the Church is to support its unique formative mission. In his post-synodal, apostolic adhortation *Amoris laetitia*²⁵, Pope Francis reminded that by entering into marriage baptised persons become bound by a legal relationship whereby they become "ministers of education" (no. 85).

²¹ Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica de Familiae christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis *Familiaris consortio* (22.11.1981), AAS 74 (1982), p. 81–191, no. 36.

²² Idem, Litterae Familiis ipso volente Sacro Familiae anno MCMXCIV *Gratissimam sane* (2.02.1994), AAS 86 (1994), p. 868–925 [henceforth quoted as: GrSa], no. 16.

²³ Benedictus PP. XVI, *Allocutio ad Congressum a «Populari Europae Factione» provectorum* (30.03.2006), AAS 98 (2006), p. 345; Id., Adhortatio apostolica postsynodalis de Eucharistia vitae missionisque Ecclesiae fonte et culmine *Sacramentum caritatis* (22.02.2007), AAS 99 (2007), p. 105–180, no. 83.

²⁴ Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *The Final Report of the Synod of Bishops for Pope Francis* (24.10.2015), Polish translation in: *XIV Zgromadzenie Zwyczajne Synodu Biskupów. Powołanie i misja rodziny w Kościele i świecie współczesnym. Dokumenty i komentarz*, ed. K. Lubowicki, transl. S. Tasiemski, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2016, p. 11–119.

²⁵ Pope Francis, *Post-synodal apostolic adhortation "Amoris laetitia" on love in the family* (19.03.2016), transl. Secretariat of State of the Holy See, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2016.

This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them. [...] Still, “a rift has opened up between the family and society, between family and the school; the educational pact today has been broken and thus the educational alliance between society and the family is in crisis” (no. 84)²⁶.

LEGAL FOUNDATIONS

The legal foundations of Christian (cann. 217; 226 § 2) and Catholic kinds of education (cann. 793–821) are found in CIC/83. With respect to Christian education the legislator provides:

Since they are called by baptism to lead a life in keeping with the teaching of the gospel, the Christian faithful have the right to a Christian education by which they are to be instructed properly to strive for the maturity of the human person and at the same time to know and live the mystery of salvation (cann. 217).

The right of the baptised to a Christian education enforces its fulfilment by others: parents and priests²⁷. Parents are called upon by cann. 226 § 2 to show their concern about “the Christian education of their children according to the doctrine handed on by the Church”. Similarly, can. 835 § 4 makes them subjects who participate in the sanctifying mission of the Church by “leading a conjugal life in a Christian spirit and by seeing to the Christian education of their children”. The Church does not leave parents to their own devices in their efforts to educate their children. Through the sacrament of baptism and inclusion into the ecclesiastical community, the process of personal growth continues, as is the human relationship with both God and the community of faith – the Church²⁸. Therefore the undeniable right to a Christian education implies an obligation for priests whose task is to pave the way for this education²⁹ and help to put it into practice³⁰.

The legislator deals with Catholic education in CIC/83, Title III, Book III. The first canon of the Title recalls the obligation and right of parents to educate their offspring, but it does not specify the kind of education. This follows not only from the whole Title III of this part but is reaffirmed by the very next sentence in which parents “have the duty and right of choosing those means and

²⁶ Cf. Id., General audience *Parents must not forgo bringing up their children* (20.05.2015), “L’Osservatore Romano” 6 (373) 2015, p. 45.

²⁷ J. Krukowski, *Obowiązki i uprawnienia wszystkich wiernych chrześcijan*, in: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, vol. II/1: *Księga II. Lud Boży. Część I. Wierni chrześcijanie. Część II. Ustrój hierarchiczny Kościoła*, ed. J. Krukowski, Pallottinum, Poznań 2005, p. 34.

²⁸ R.J. Kaslyn, *The Obligations and Rights of All the Christian Faithful*, in: *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. J.P. Beal, J.A. Coriden, T.J. Green, Paulist Press, New York–Mahwah 2000, p. 273.

²⁹ Also in respect of preparation for the Sacraments, see cann. 865 § 1; 890; 913–914; 1027; 1063.

³⁰ Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica de catechesi nostro tempore tradenda *Catechesi tradendae* (16.10.1979), AAS 71 (1979), p. 1277–1340, no. 14.

institutions through which they can provide more suitably for the Catholic education of their children” (cann. 793 § 1). This disposition is followed by the next prescript, in which the legislator recognises the right and duty of the Church to educate, too (cann. 794). Parents are to ensure that other bodies are involved in the educational process and the Church is authorised and bound to educate.

The legislator provides parents with a major tool for the education of their children, namely schools (cann. 796 § 1), the choice of which should be free (cann. 797). Also, the Church protects the educational role of parents by imposing on them a duty to send their children to schools where a Catholic education is ensured. However, if they are unable to do so, they are obliged to take care that such education is provided for their children outside school (cann. 798)³¹. Even the fulfilment of this obligation is facilitated by the Church, which has a right to establish and manage schools (cann. 800 § 1)³².

Of the bodies obliged to assist parents in Catholic education of their offspring one should mention pastors (cann. 528 § 1) and all those members of the clergy who have a duty to provide Catholic education, especially in the liturgy of the Divine Word, when they deliver a sermon³³.

The legislator guarantees to parents a right to be assisted in their educational function not only by the Church but also by the State (cann. 793 § 2). This is a crucial right since it implies a duty for the faithful to participate in public life. If the goal of the Church’s participation in public life is protection and realisation of human dignity, and this realisation is to account for, among others, the principle of protecting parents’ right to educate children, then all the faithful are obliged to substantiate this carry out this principle. The lay Catholics in particular are bound by this duty, as they are the ones who can influence national legislation. The Church recognises their activity, respects and supports the political freedom of citizens and their responsibility in that respect (GS 76). Moreover, the Church teaches the faithful:

Indeed all can have influence on the choice of legislators and governments by voting, while in other ways they can contribute to the determination of directions for those policies and legislation which they think are the most valuable for the common good³⁴.

³¹ Apart from that the Church has authority with respect to religious education in any kind of school, even by means of the mass media. In this respect, episcopal conferences should issue general norms, while diocesan bishops are to “regulate and watch over” this area (cann. 804 § 1). For more, see: P. Lewandowski, *Kompetencje biskupa diecezjalnego dotyczące środków społecznego przekazu w Kodeksie Prawa Kanonicznego z 1983 roku i polskim pokodeksowym ustawodawstwie partykularnym*, Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos, Tarnów 2015.

³² Congregazione per i Vescovi, *Direttorio per il ministero pastorale dei vescovi Apostolorum successores* (22.02.2004), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004, no. 133.

³³ Congregazione per il Culto Divino e la Disciplina dei Sacramenti, *Direttorio omiletico* (29.06.2014), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2015, no. 121.

³⁴ Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Nota doctrinalis de christifidelium rationibus in publicis negotiis gerendis* (24.11.2002), AAS 96 (2004), p. 359–370, no. 1.

The lay faithful, who for various reasons are simultaneously Church members and citizens, have a tangible impact on legislation in terms of religious and moral education, to name but a few, curricula in the schooling system, the mass media, or financial aid given to families (cf. cann. 797, 799).

Catholic education should encompass the complete formation of the human person, therefore “children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life” (cann. 795).

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the analysis above, we should note the following:

1. The notions “Christian education” and “Catholic education” should not be used interchangeably.
2. Christian education implies an educational activity conducted in the spirit of Christian religion, and the teaching of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of it.
3. Catholic education is realised in accordance with the principles of the Catholic Church, in the spirit of Christian values and the Magisterium of the Church.
4. Christian and Catholic kinds of education have their theological foundation in the Holy Bible and the Magisterium of the Church, which expands on the subject of education and parents’ rights to educate their children.
5. The legal foundations of Christian education (cann. 217; 226 § 2) and Catholic education (cann. 793–821) are to be found in the Code of Canon Law of 1983.
6. The duty and right of parents to educate their children springs from the natural law, so they are not given but taken for granted. The family, being the primary social unit, is entitled – in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity – to obtain assistance from the State in the realisation of its entitlement.

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PODSTAWY TEOLOGICZNE I PRAWNE WYCHOWANIA CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIEGO I KATOLICKIEGO

Streszczenie. Autor w pierwszej kolejności definiuje pojęcie „wychowanie” oraz określa, czym jest wychowanie chrześcijańskie i katolickie. Następnie wskazuje podstawy teologiczne wychowania chrześcijańskiego i katolickiego zawarte w Piśmie Świętym i Magisterium Kościoła, a także podstawy prawne zawarte w Kodeksie Prawa Kanonicznego z 1983 r.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół katolicki, dzieci, rodzice, Magisterium Kościoła