

Anna Zellma*

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (Poland)

THE CHARACTER OF SAINT JOSEPH – IN THE SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

Summary: Post-modernity, also referred to as postmodernism or late modernity, is a keyword used to describe contemporary social, cultural and religious changes. The first part of the paper presents the socio-cultural and religious context in which Christian education is provided. A fundamental question was put: can the character of St. Joseph still be an effective role model for the contemporary world in such an adverse context. Papal teachings were used when seeking the answer to this question, with particular focus placed on two documents: *Redemptoris custos* by John Paul II and *Patris corde* by Pope Francis. It was pointed out that particularly the latter, owing to its fresh approach and existential sense of its author, can provide guidance on where one should seek the answer to this question. There are no ready solutions concerning the way of talking about St. Joseph, so that Christian education does not become an empty, contentless *general moral topos*, with no consequence. Christian education, inspired by the character of St. Joseph, is a task to be performed by tutors at all times, especially those who try to present him as a living role model for their pupils.

Keywords: Saint Joseph, education, young, Church, Christian education, catechetics, pedagogy.

The “Year of Saint Joseph”¹ announced by Pope Francis on 8 December 2020 was a time of scientific reflection on this saint. Efforts were made to help the faithful discover the message delivered to the Church by Saint Joseph. People were encouraged to pray to him. References were made to the ecclesiastical letter entitled “*Patris corde*”, published on the occasion of “The Year of St. Joseph”. Questions were also asked about the role and importance of St. Joseph in the holistic education of the young.

This text is an attempt at seeking answers to the related questions: can the character of St. Joseph support the process of Christian education? Can this saint become a role model for tutors and pupils? If so, why and how? Or maybe

* Address: Prof. dr. habil. Anna Zellma, ORCID: 0000-0002-3612-3454; e-mail: anna.zellma@uwm.edu.pl

¹ The Year of St. Joseph was announced on the 150th anniversary of establishing Jesus’ Guardian as the Patron of the Catholic Church.

the opposite is true: the role of St. Joseph in Christian education in the current social, cultural and religious situation is doubtful, and it requires greater involvement in promoting St. Joseph as a role model in Christian education. Seeking an answer to this question requires a synthetic presentation of the contemporary socio-cultural context and Christian religious education in Poland. The analyses presented here only provide a contribution to the discussion.² They do not aspire to present the ultimate solutions. They rather have the form of a sketch, signalling the subject matter, which in future will require a discourse in the circle of pedagogues and catechists, enriched with the findings of empirical studies.

The term “Christian education” needs to be defined more precisely. It is not enough to reduce it to education based on Christian values, defined in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church or Christian communities. Christian education involves accompanying one’s pupils and supporting them in showing their development capabilities (in all the personality spheres) and enabling them to do morally good deeds. (Nowak, 1999, p. 287–288; Vatican Council II, 2002, No. 1) A pupil is regarded as an active subject who is on the way of holistic development and of becoming a person, being in interaction and dialogue with the tutor. (Nowak, 1999, p. 287–294; Zellma – Wiszowaty, 2017, p. 37–41) The tutor supports his pupil in holistic development, creating the proper conditions for it. He passes on values which a pupil can accept (internalise) or reject. The importance of a person in the process of education, their subjectivity, uniqueness and freedom, as well as respecting their dignity, is stressed. (Zellma – Wiszowaty, 2017, p. 37–41) The dialogical relationship between a tutor as a personal authority and the pupil developing through freedom-related acceptance of ideals is also important. (Cichosz, 2021, p. 5) Christian education aims at supporting the pupil’s improvement, acquisition of spiritual wisdom and inner freedom by cognition, wisdom and charity, achieving outer freedom by submitting to the common good, developing a dialogic attitude, discovering the value of the person and sense of life and societal relations, developing the ability to choose the common good, co-creating it and participation in it (Cichosz, 2021, p. 5–6; Łabendowicz, 2016, p. 52–54; Nowak, 1999, p. 287–288; Vatican Council II,

² This article deliberately does not make analyzes based on biblical texts. The pedagogical approach is important. The biblical context of perceiving the figure of St. Joseph was duly examined. More on this subject, e.g. in: Petro Barbagli, 1997, *Święty Józef w Ewangeliu*, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, Kraków; Zdzisław Janiec, 2020, *Święty Józef – kairos dla trzeciego tysiąclecia*, Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana, vol. 36, pp. 125–142; Michał Peter, 1979, “*Mąż sprawiedliwy*”: *św. Józef według tekstu Mateusza 1,19*, W drodze, 2, pp. 48–56; Tarcisio Stramare, 1996, *Święty Józef w historii zbawienia*, trans. Magdalena Serejska-Wróbel, Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów, Warszawa; Krzysztof Wons, 2017, *Cały sprawiedliwy (lectio divina z Józefem z Nazaretu)*, Salwator, Kraków; Mirosław S. Wróbel, 2021, *Biblijna ikona św. Józefa*, Wydawnictwo Gaudium, Lublin; Mirosław S. Wróbel, 2021, *Ojcowski wpływ św. Józefa na osobę Jezusa i Jego zbawcze dzieło*, Ateneum Kapłańskie, f. 3, pp. 436–445.

2002, No. 1) ‘Ultimately (...) development and perfecting a person is (and has to be) done by this person’s effort, which is a consequence of the person’s freedom...’³. (Cichosz, 2021, p. 5)

The question mark at the end of the title of this paper indicates a significant, topical issue, important from the cognitive and practical perspective. Given the social, cultural and religious processes (including rapid secularisation), there is a reasonable doubt as to whether the character of St. Joseph, in fact, supports the process of Christian education, benefiting both tutors and pupils.

Socio-cultural and religious context

Contemporary Christian education in Poland is provided in a constantly changing social, cultural and religious reality. Its characteristic features include the crisis of values, pluralism of ideas, moral permissiveness and the rapidly progressing process of contesting all norms. (Czupryński, 2019, p. 455) This manifests itself in various (e.g. social, moral, religious) spheres of life. It also affects family and school education. One can see a distinct crisis of education and of tutors. The need for unchanging, permanent authorities is disappearing. Young people change their opinions and beliefs constantly. They exhibit a lack of stability regarding authorities and moral choices. They often reject well-established authorities to choose various pseudo-authorities under the influence of the new media (including social media), without deep thought, and only for a short time. This also applies to fundamental aspects of human existence: the sense and purpose of life, the concept of happiness, interpersonal relationships, the model of society and family life. (Czupryński, 2019, p. 445; Wiszowaty, 2013, p. 182–185) Contemporary society is sceptical about objective truths and full of doubts regarding the true knowledge on any subject. (Czupryński, 2019, p. 455; Wiszowaty, 2013, p. 183–186) The categories of good and evil become blurred. Objective moral norms no longer play an important role in guiding human behaviour. They are often rejected, as they prove too narrow, uncomfortable and limiting individuals in their striving to achieve goals. Objective moral norms are replaced by pragmatic values. (Zellma, 2014, p. 110–114)

Increasing numbers of people, especially young ones, show no interest in religious matters and negate the sense of the institutional Church. (Podgórska, 2021, p. 1–2) They follow mainly what contemporary culture has to offer. These are apparent propositions, with no foundations, constantly changing, ambivalent,

³ The original language quote: “Ostatecznie (...) rozwój i doskonalenie osoby jest i musi być wysiłkiem samej osoby, co jest konsekwencją jej wolności...”.

increasing an individual's autonomy. They contain no clearly defined social rules, and they especially lack respect for each person's dignity and care about the truth, honesty, common good. This results in growing rivalry, diminishing solidarity, increasing individualism, egoism and ruthlessness. (Czupryński, 2021, p. 75–98) Contemporary individuals often live in an axiological void and measure the quality of existence only with the amount of material goods, while forgetting about the Decalogue. (Czupryński, 2021, p. 90–108) Participation in religious practices of a considerable group of people describing themselves as believers is only apparent, devoid of inner commitment, based on tradition. (Czupryński, 2021, p. 218–223) The consequences of such actions are visible and particularly harmful to school and family education. Examples include events of the past few years, taking place on streets of Polish towns and cities (so-called “marches of equality”, “women's strike”, “black march”) and in Polish schools (e.g. “the rainbow Friday”, students, especially in secondary schools, quitting religion lessons). (Sadłoń – Organek – Kamiński, 2021, p. 16–22, 31–39)

Apotheosis of self-love takes place in contemporary culture. Self-sacrifice and being good is becoming unfashionable. A person is a value to oneself. One's expectations, needs, goals are the most important to oneself. (Zellma, 2014, p. 110–115) Individual development – spontaneous and in line with one's feelings and beliefs – is regarded as important. ‘In consequence, the individual «I» becomes the supreme and only norm of conduct’⁴. (Tkocz, 2011, p. 58) What gives one pleasure determines one's attitudes and behaviours. One rejects the authority of God, tutors and significant others. A person is the highest authority to oneself. Imitating others in any form is unacceptable. (Czupryński, 2021, p. 75–108) It is perceived as copying, which limits one in pursuing one's needs and desires, or prevents one from being assertive and creative. (Zellma, 2014, p. 110–114)

Contemporary individuals are forced to prove their market value by being flexible, active, entrepreneurial, able to stand up to the competition, ready to face every challenge. His value is measured by the quantity and quality of material goods (money, real estate, cars), professional and social position, quality and style of clothes, ways of spending free time (including foreign travel). Hence, consumerist trends are increasing. Religious life is pushed into the private sphere and marginalised. (Czupryński, 2015, p. 220) This is accompanied by desacralisation of culture, eclecticism and the absence of a clear ethical system, which also affects people's attitudes towards the

⁴ The original language quote: “W konsekwencji indywidualne «ja» staje się najwyższą i jedyną normą postępowania”.

institutional church and religion lessons in schools (e.g. a decreasing percentage of people attending Sunday Mass, a decreasing number of students attending religion lessons in schools). (Sadłoń – Organek – Kamiński, 2021, p. 16–22, 31–39) The number of acts of apostasy is increasing. (Orlikowski, 2021, p. 1–6)

The Catholic Church in Poland is in a serious crisis. (Kobyliński, 2021, p. 1–5) It is both a crisis of the Church as an institution and a crisis of the authority of the clergy (bishops, priests). Moreover, the public trust in the Church is plummeting. (Sadłoń – Organek – Kamiński, 2021, p. 16–22, 31–39) All this has its causes in, for example, cases of sexual abuse in the Church, concealing cases of paedophilia, the “lavender mafia”, the lack of financial transparency and political influence. In consequence, the number of believers in the Catholic Church in Poland is decreasing rapidly, which applies mainly to young people, who do not see the faith as a necessary choice, but only a possible one. (Sadłoń – Organek – Kamiński, 2021, p. 16–22, 31–39)

Information transmission in contemporary culture is rapid – what is topical today becomes *passé* and invalid tomorrow – which favours combining various concepts (including styles) of teaching and education. Attempts are made “to arrange education as a hybrid, a mixture of Christianity with free market. They [teachers, tutors, parents – A.Z.] are torn between the hierarchical order and liberal agnosticism...”⁵. (Nalaskowski, 2008, p. 217) And this is why they instil in the young uncertainty, doubt and clear axiological chaos. The instability of value systems and discrepancies in educational circles (e.g. between general education, in religion lessons, at home) always have a negative impact on the holistic development of the young generation.

Seeking one’s path

Therefore, the very method of conducting Christian education requires redefining, which applies particularly to the tasks that are supposed to support pupils in holistic development, in meeting Jesus Christ, in communion with Him, in professing the faith in God the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit and in following the Gospels in everyday life. Such conduct – in other words, the moral dimension of the faith – requires a clear and precise presentation of the evangelical values, regarded as universal until not long ago. In order not to be regarded as abstract and detached from the reality of life, discussions on values must be concrete, and this is the dimension in which the character of St. Joseph – a patron for difficult times – can provide invaluable services to the Christian

⁵ The original language quote: “Sami [nauczyciele, wychowawcy, rodzice – A.Z.] szarpia się pomiędzy porządkiem hierarchicznym i liberalnym agnostycyzmem...”.

education of the young generation. To make it possible, this character should be demythologised, i.e. freed from the notions associated with iconography, rarely related in any way to the gospels, and proposed as a model of a responsible person, facing the hardships of life at the time, finding the inner freedom and serenity in his faith in God. Does the proposition not seem too illusory in view of the contemporary socio-cultural and religious context, does a Christian tutor (including a religion teacher) who wants to implement it not risk hearing what St. Paul heard when he started preaching the resurrection in the Areopagus: “We’ll listen to you some other time”? After all, according to Tomasz Szlendak: ‘The consumerist culture (...) is a complicated network, made of the sphere of industrial design, interested manufacturers, coordinated promotion systems, public relations, advertising and media. And individuals are caught in such an intricate network, like flies are caught in a spider’s web. The main values of consumerist culture include utilitarian and hedonistic ones, and the value network tries to propagate them, turning them into a simple – and attractive through its simplicity – and effective ideology’⁶. (Szlendak, 2008, p. 65) What chance does showing St. Joseph have as a modern role model, playing a key role in Christian education, implemented in religion lessons in schools, especially if religion teaching has some flaws and is done amid media reports on paedophile scandals and the crisis in the Church? It would obviously be difficult to answer this question, and it would require an extensive theoretical and empirical study. However, it is noteworthy that ‘since consumerism is a kind of ideology, like all ideologies, it is a misleading solution and it leads one into a dead end. The mystery of human existence, which includes suffering, death, sense of life, cannot be explained in an enclosed circle of earthly life, even with such a strong anaesthetic as consumption in a broad sense of the term. One has to leave this circle and refer to the light that the word of God gives’⁷. (Wiszwaty, 2013, p. 187) This is also why, in this cultural context – in the words of Pope Benedict XVI – “very many people, while not claiming to have the gift of faith, are nevertheless sincerely searching for the ultimate meaning and definitive truth of

⁶ The original language quote: “Kultura konsumpcyjna (...), to skomplikowana sieć, która utkana jest ze sfery wzornictwa przemysłowego, zainteresowanych producentów, skoordynowanych systemów promocyjnych, *public relations*, reklamy i mediów. I w taką misternie uplecioną sieć wpadają jednostki, niczym nieświadome muchy w pajęczynie. Głównymi wartościami kultury konsumpcyjnej są wartości utylitarne i hedonistyczne, a sieć wartości te stara się maksymalnie rozpropagować, tworząc z nich prostą, acz przez swą prostotę i atrakcyjność skuteczną ideologię”.

⁷ The original language quote: “Konsumeryzm, ponieważ jest rodzajem ideologii, podobnie jak wszystkie ideologie – jest rozwiązaniem złudnym i prowadzi człowieka w ślepy zaułek. Zagadki ludzkiego istnienia, obejmującej problem cierpienia, śmierci, sensu życia, nie da się bowiem wyjaśnić w zamkniętym kole doczesności, nawet przy użyciu tak silnego środka znieczulającego, jakim jest szeroko rozumiana konsumpcja. Konieczne jest wyjście poza ten krąg i odwołanie się do tego światła, które daje słowo Boże”.

their lives and of the world. This search is an authentic ‘preamble’ to the faith, because it guides people onto the path that leads to the mystery of God”. (Benedict XVI, 2011, No. 10) The words of Pope Benedict XVI have lost nothing of their topicality, also with respect to Christian education. In this climate of search, a Christian tutor should abandon his self-confidence because the degree of theological certainty of an article of faith is not identical with the psychological certainty of a believing or seeking person. Christian education, also that oriented towards discovering the character of St. Joseph, should be a type of journey with pupils towards The One who will always be the “great mystery of the faith”, both to the religion teacher and to his pupils. It is supposed to be companionship, in which the Christian tutor ‘can listen and get an insight into the dynamics of the one’s maturation process, (...) help his brothers patiently and gradually to grow up in the Christian life and go with him towards God’⁸. (Papal Council for New Evangelisation, 2020, No. 113) Referring to the biblical story of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), one can say that involvement of a Christian tutor in discovering the character of St. Joseph as a role model should more than ever be like opening the listeners’ eyes, which are tethered (cf. Lk 24:15 b, 16). Nowadays, it is more difficult than ever to “free”, “open” young people’s eyes, as they are tethered by colourful advertisements, promising paradise on earth, or by consumption, entertainment, new information and communication technologies, easy life and pleasure without commitments. (Wiszowaty, 2013, p. 188)

In this context, one can remember the words of Pope Benedict XVI, which – although not directly referring to St. Joseph – point to the role of saints in each form of preaching the faith: ‘Therefore, we need to try to express the whole substance of faith as such – but to express it in a new way. (...) The presence of theologians is very important as they can explain the treasure hidden in their faith so that it can be the word for the secularised world. (...) This can be successful only when (...) (Christian tutors [including religion teachers]) live with the Coming One. Only then will they be able to express Him. A statement, intellectual explanation, assumes an existential explanation. It is here that the importance of saints becomes seen – those who live a Christian life now and in future. Christ coming from within their existence can be explained in such a way so that he can be present on the horizon of understanding the secularised world. And this is a great task ahead of us.’⁹ (*Benedict XVI w rozmowie...*, 2011,

⁸ The original language quote: “potrafi słuchać i wnikać w dynamikę dojrzewania człowieka, cierpliwie i stopniowo (...) pomagać braciom dojrzewać w życiu chrześcijańskim i podążać w nim w stronę Boga”.

⁹ The original language quote: “Musimy więc spróbować wypowiedzieć całą substancję wiary jako taką – ale wypowiedzieć ją na nowy sposób. (...) Ważna jest obecność teologów, którzy potrafią tak przetłumaczyć skarb ukryty w swojej wierze, aby w zsekularyzowanym świecie mógł on być słowem dla tego

p. 74–75) The point of Christian education lies in what is called an ability to refer the values, carried by St. Joseph, to pupils' joys, sorrows, hopes and anxieties. This ability is not only the outcome of theological and pedagogical studies but the fruit of cooperation with God's grace and self-formation. An authentic Christian tutor (including a religion teacher) can look at himself and at his pupils, entangled in a web of various socio-cultural factors, as at persons created by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ and following the path of faith towards a common goal. (Härtner – Eschmann, 2008, p. 20) The awareness of the common fate helps tutors to avoid mentoring, moralising and putting themselves above their pupils, to which they can be induced by their mission of supporting the process of holistic teaching and education in faith.

Inspirations in papal teachings in *Redemptoris Custos* and *Patris corde*

Although the gospels devote relatively little space to St. Joseph, (Karczewski, 2012, p. 87–98; Wiszowaty, 2013, p. 109–114) he has been the focus of attention of nearly all the popes since the early 19th century.¹⁰ The whole 20th century was difficult for the Church, and it was then that a particular topicality of this extraordinary and reliable patron was noticed. The papal statements and documents show St. Joseph not only as a patron for hard times but also as an advocate in the difficult challenges facing the Church. (Wiszowaty, 2012, p. 109–112)

Two papal documents devoted to St. Joseph are of particular importance to Christian education: “Redemptoris custos” (John Paul II, 1989; cf. Jezierski, 2012, p. 219–226) and “Patris corde”. (Francis, 2020) One can see in them inspirations with cognitive and practical value concerning the role of St. Joseph in Christian education.

The first of these documents was the result of John Paul II's personal initiative, born out of his deep, personal veneration of St. Joseph and care for the

świata. (...) Może się to udać tylko wtedy, gdy (...) (wychowawcy chrześcijańscy [w tym nauczyciele religii]) będą żyli Przychodzącym. Dopiero wtedy będą potrafili Go wypowiedzieć. Wypowiedź, intelektualne tłumaczenie, zakłada tłumaczenie egzystencjalne. Tu widać więc znaczenie świętych, którzy żyją po chrześcijańsku obecnie i w przyszłości. Z wnętrza ich egzystencji przychodzący Chrystus jest możliwy do przetłumaczenia w taki sposób, aby mógł być obecny w horyzoncie rozumienia zsekularyzowanego świata. Oto wielkie stojące przed nami zadanie”.

¹⁰ These issues are discussed in detail in: Janusz Bujak, 2021, „*Idźcie do Józefa*” (Rdz 41,55). *Nauczanie papieża o św. Józefie. Od bł. Piusa IX do Franciszka* [“Go to Joseph” (Gen. 41, 55). *Papal Teachings on St. Joseph. From Blessed Pius IX to Francis*], Pallottinum, Poznań, pp. 238; Edward Wiszowaty, 2012, *Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Custos, as a source of inspiration for homily preaching*, in: Katarzyna Parzych-Blakiewicz, Jacek Maciej Wojtkowski (eds.), *Mary and Joseph at the origins of Christian culture*, Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Olsztyn, pp. 109–122.

Catholic Church. (Wiszwoty, 2012, p.112–117) Reading it not only reminds one about (but also emphasises) the fundamental rule which should be valid in Christian education inspired by St. Joseph¹¹. John Paul II reminds us that St. Joseph is a living (and the most authentic) comment on the evangelical truth. The pope refers to the Fathers of the Church. He writes in the introduction to the exhortation: “Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church from the earliest centuries stressed that just as St. Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ’s upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ’s Mystical Body, that is, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model”. (John Paul II, 1989, No. 1) An in-depth analysis of the text reveals a rule, which can be formulated as the need to take the charismatic and prophetic dimension into account in Christian education. St. Joseph is mainly a charismatic person, entrusted by God with a special task in the Church, (Wiszwoty, 2013, p. 273) which he recognises as his life’s calling. “In the words of the ‘annunciation’ by night, Joseph not only heard the divine truth concerning his wife’s indescribable vocation; he also heard once again the truth about his own vocation”. (John Paul II, 1989, No. 19) He is, therefore, a model for an attitude of listening and insight as well as openness and readiness to carry out his calling.

A prophetic dimension of Christian education is revealed not in that it repeats with different words what has been said but in an update which involves showing new perspectives of God’s word. This was the nature of prophecies of Jesus, and later by the apostles. Following that spirit, the Fathers of the Church saw in Jesus’ and Mary’s guardian the protector and defender of the Church, indicating his role in the life of every Christian. (Wiszwoty, 2012, p. 112–117) It is worth reminding pupils about it, accompanying them in discovering St. Joseph as someone really important, who can inspire one to listen, to be open, humble, obedient, and responsible.

John Paul II described St. Joseph’s life path as a “pilgrimage in faith”. (John Paul II, 1989, No. 4) When explaining the sense of the pilgrimage, the pope wrote that he had not said a word upon hearing his “annunciation”, but only *did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him* (Mt 1:24). Since the faith and life in the lives of many pupils seem to run in separate routes, this trait of St. Joseph’s faith, meaning that he took up his duty resulting from his calling, seems to be particularly topical now. (Wiszwoty, 2012, p. 117–120)

John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation, with all its educational importance, may be more theological and doctrinal in nature, but Pope Francis’ apostolic letter “*Patris corde*” reflects his particular existential sense, manifesting itself

¹¹ More on this subject in: Wiszwoty, 2012, p. 112–117.

with extraordinary sensitivity to various life situations. (Francis, 2020) It is seen in the preamble, in which the pope writes about St. Joseph as “this extraordinary figure, so close to our own human experience” (Francis, 2020) and in the very structure of the apostolic letter “*Patris corde*”, in which Pope Francis, in view of the deep crisis of marriage and family, with a crisis of fatherhood as one of its clear manifestations¹², does not hesitate to show Mary’s husband as a beloved father, kind and obedient, with creative courage and a father in the shadow. Pope Francis touches on – it would seem – the most intimate human matters with extraordinary empathy, so that a Christian tutor (e.g. parent, teacher, teacher of religion) has the impression that it is about him and his life dilemmas. Describing St. Joseph as an affectionate father, he does not dwell on the emotional dimension of the “father-son” relation, although it is also present here (the pope refers to the fatherly relation of God with Israel, cf. Hos. 11:3-4), but moves on to the plane of every human life, claiming that “we must learn to look upon our weaknesses with tender mercy”. (Francis, 2020, No. 2) Pope Francis goes on to explain: “The evil one makes us see and condemn our frailty, whereas the Spirit brings it to light with tender love. Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us. Pointing fingers and judging others are frequently signs of an inability to accept our own weaknesses, our own frailty. Only tender love will save us from the snares of the accuser (cf. *Rev 12:10*)”. (Francis, 2020, No. 2) How uplifting these words are and how different from the tone used by many Christian tutors. Writing about the receiving Father, Pope Francis refers to the fact that St. Joseph trusted the Angel’s words and received Mary with no preconditions. It is also a task and a challenge for a contemporary Christian tutor: to receive and to accept a pupil unconditionally. And again, Pope Francis prophetically points to its importance to life in the contemporary world: “Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow”. (Francis, 2020, No. 4) St. Joseph teaches tutors and pupils faith, calmness, obedience, simplicity and humility. He is also a model of a heart open to God and listening to God’s word.

Let us stop for a while on the creative courage, which is a characteristic feature of St. Joseph as a father. He can inspire not only biological, but also

¹² The crisis of fatherhood, taking into account the Polish context, is discussed in detail in: Węclawska, 2020.

spiritual fathers to show courage, commitment, caring and acting with responsibility. Pope Francis rightly points out: “If the first stage of all true interior healing is to accept our personal history and embrace even the things in life that we did not choose, we must now add another important element: creative courage. This emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties”. (Francis, 2020, No. 5) The pope continues: “In the face of difficulty, we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. At times, difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had. (...) A superficial reading of these stories can often give the impression that the world is at the mercy of the strong and mighty, but the ‘good news’ of the Gospel consists in showing that, for all the arrogance and violence of worldly powers, God always finds a way to carry out his saving plan. So too, our lives may at times seem to be at the mercy of the powerful, but the Gospel shows us what counts. God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence”. (Francis, 2020, No. 5)

It is worth pointing here to the issue of the “father in the shadow”. There is a typically Polish thread in it. Pope Francis writes: “The Polish writer Jan Dobraczyński, in his book *The Shadow of the Father*, tells the story of Saint Joseph’s life in the form of a novel. He uses the evocative image of a shadow to define Joseph. In his relationship to Jesus, Joseph was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father: he watched over him and protected him, never leaving him to go his own way. We can think of Moses’ words to Israel: *In the wilderness... you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled (Deut 1:31)*. In a similar way, Joseph acted as a father for his whole life”. (Francis, 2020, No. 7) It is a perfect encouragement to all contemporary fathers and tutors.

Therefore, by choosing St. Joseph as a role model in Christian education, one can skilfully accompany young people in their holistic development. However, tutors need to adopt a proper attitude, particularly humble readiness to answer difficult questions and the ability to face various problems and life situations, with empathy, unconditional acceptance and respect for the pupil’s dignity.

Instead of conclusions

The contemporary world, indifferent to the sacrum, brings many challenges to Christian education. Presenting the character of St. Joseph to various groups: husbands, fathers, teachers, pupils, is one of them. These people should be

encouraged to internalise the values exhibited by St. Joseph. It is an open issue of how tutors should support their pupils in discovering the character of St. Joseph.

The propositions presented in this paper indicate the originality of supporting pupils in discovering the character of St. Joseph. They signal the key issues for Christian education, especially now that ‘we do not have ready narratives – not only for the future, but even for the «now», for the ultra-fast transformations of the contemporary world. We do not have the language, points of view, metaphors, myths, new tales’. (Tokarczuk, 2021, item 2) The method of presenting the character of St. Joseph shown in the Apostolic letter “*Patris corde*” seems to face the issue, thereby providing the answer to the questions put in the first part of the paper.

Bibliography

- Barbagli Petro, 1997, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, Kraków.
- Benedict XVI, 2011, *Apostolic letter “Motu proprio data” Porta fidei Of the supreme pontiff Benedict XVI For the indiction of the year of faith* [online], access: 10.10.2021, <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei.html>.
- Benedykt XVI w rozmowie z Peterem Seewaldem, 2011, *Światłość świata. Papież, Kościół i znaki czasu*, tłum. P. Napiwodzki, Znak, Kraków.
- Bujak Janusz, 2021, „*Idźcie do Józefa*” (Rdz 41,55). *Nauczanie papieża o św. Józefie. Od bł. Piusa IX do Franciszka*, Pallottinum, Poznań.
- Cichosz Marek, 2021, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie – perspektywa teoretyczna i praktyczna koncepcji*, in: Repozytorium Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego w Bydgoszczy [online], access: 28.10.2021, <<https://repozytorium.ukw.edu.pl/bitstream/handle/item/6295/Wychowanie%20chrze%C5%9Bcija%C5%84skie%20-%20perspektywa%20teoretyczna%20i%20praktyczna%20koncepcji.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>.
- Czupryński Wojśław, 2015, *Przygotowanie do małżeństwa w obliczu współczesnych wyzwań kulturowych*, Studia Warmińskie, vol. 52, pp. 215–225.
- Czupryński Wojśław, 2019, *Wychowanie w rodzinie w zderzeniu z ideologią gender*, Studia Elckie, vol. 21, f. 4, pp. 455–469.
- Czupryński Wojśław, 2021, *Małżeństwo i rodzina w świadomości policjantów na przykładzie studentów Wyższej Szkoły Policji w Szczytnie. Studium teologiczno-pastoralnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, Olsztyn.
- Francis, 2020, *Apostolic letter Patris corde Of the Holy Father Francis On the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as patron of the universal church (Roma, 08.12.2020)* [online], access: 10.10.2021, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html>
- Härtner Achim, Eschmann Holger, 2008, *Predigen lernen. Ein Lehrbuch für die Praxis*, Ruprecht Göttingen.
- John Paul II, 1989, *Apostolic exhortation Redemptoris custos of the supreme pontiff John Paul II on the person and mission of saint joseph in the life of christ and of the church*

- (15.08.1989) [online], access: 28.10.2021, <https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_15081989_redemptoris-custos.html>.
- Janiec Zdzisław, 2020, *Święty Józef – kairos dla trzeciego tysiąclecia*, Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana, vol. 36, pp. 125–142.
- Jezierski Jacek, 2012, *Św. Józef w adhortacji apostolskiej Jana Pawła II „Redemptoris Custos”*, in: Jacek Jezierski, Katarzyna Parzych-Blakiewicz, Paweł Rabczyński (eds.), *Św. Józef w wierze, kulcie, teologii i sztuce. Perspektywa regionalna i uniwersalna*, Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Olsztyn.
- Karczewski Marek, 2012, *St Joseph and fulfilment of messianic prophecies in Mt 1-2*, in: Katarzyna Parzych-Blakiewicz, Jacek Maciej Wojtkowski (eds.), *Mary and Joseph at the origins of christian culture*, Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Olsztyn, pp. 87–98.
- Kobyliński Andrzej, 2021, *Nie widzę w polskim Kościele żadnej siły moralnej, która mogłaby zatrzymać kryzys*, access: 10.09.2021, <<https://wiesz.pl/2021/03/04/ks-kobyliniski-nie-widze-w-polskim-kosciele-zadnej-sily-moralnej/>>.
- Łabendowicz Stanisław, 2016, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w katechezie szkolnej*, Roczniki Pedagogiczne, vol. 8, nr. 2, pp. 49–76.
- Nalaskowski, Aleksander, 2008, *Zateizowana transcendencja czyli niejasność wychowania*, in: Wit Pasierbek (eds.), *Pedagogika ignacjańska wobec wyzwań współczesnego humanizmu*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków, pp. 211–222.
- Nowak Marian, 1999, *Podstawy pedagogiki otwartej. Ujęcie dynamiczne w inspiracji chrześcijańskiej*, Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin.
- Orlikowski Paweł, 2021, *Kościół liczy wiernych. Z roku na rok jest ich coraz mniej. To już kryzys* [online], access: 22.10.2021, <<https://www.money.pl/pieniadze/kosciol-liczy-wiernych-z-roku-na-rok-jest-ich-coraz-mniej-to-juz-kryzys-6686331430410784a.html>>.
- Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, 2020, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*, Jedność, Kielce.
- Peter Michał, 1979, *“Mąż sprawiedliwy”: św. Józef według tekstu Mateusza 1,19*, W drodze, nr 2, pp. 48–56.
- Podgórk Joanna, 2021, *Najmłodsza Polska jest już w jednej trzeciej niewierząca* [online], access: 29.11.2021, <<https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/2144868,1,najmlodsza-polska-jest-juz-w-jednej-trzeciej-niewierzaca.read>>.
- Sadłoń Wojciech, Organek Luiza, Kamiński Karol, 2021, *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia. Dane za rok 2020*, Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego SAC im. Witolda Zdaniewicza, Warszawa, [online], access: 7.07.2022, <<https://www.iskk.pl/images/stories/Instytut/dokumenty/annuario-statisticum-ecclesiae-in-polonia-dane-za-rok-2020.pdf>>.
- Sobór Watykański II, *Deklaracja o wychowaniu chrześcijańskim „Gravissimum educationis”* (28.10.1965 r.), in: Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje*, tekst polski, nowe tłum., Poznań 2002, pp. 314–324.
- Stramare Tarcisio, 1996, *Święty Józef w historii zbawienia*, przekł. Magdalena Serejska-Wróbel, Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów, Warszawa.
- Szlendak Tomasz, 2008, *Supermarketyzacja. Religia i obyczaje seksualne młodzieży w kulturze konsumpcyjnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław.
- Tkocz Elżbieta, 2011, *Niedostosowanie społeczne młodzieży na tle wychowawczych reperkusji postmodernistycznych przemian społeczno-kulturowych*, in: Roman Buchta, Stanisław Dziekoński (eds.), *Wychowanie w wierze w kontekście przemian współczesności*, Księgarnia św. Jacka, Katowice, pp. 53–62.
- Tokarczuk Olga, 2019, *„Czuły narrator”. Pełny tekst wykładu noblowskiego Olgi Tokarczuk*, access: <<https://glos.pl/czuly-narrator-pelny-tekst-wykladu-noblowskiego-olgi-tokarczuk>>.

- Węclawska Anna, 2020, *Panorama problematyki współczesnego ojcostwa*, Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne „Akapit”, Toruń.
- Wiszowaty Edward, 2012, *Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Custos, as a source of inspiration for homily preaching*, in: Katarzyna Parzych-Blakiewicz, Jacek Maciej Wojtkowski (eds.), *Mary and Joseph at the origins of christian culture*, Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Olsztyn, pp. 109–122.
- Wiszowaty Edward, 2013, *Przepowiadanie w ponowoczesności*, Studia Pastoralne, vol. 9, pp. 178–190.
- Wons Krzysztof, 2017, *Cały sprawiedliwy (lectio divina z Józefem z Nazaretu)*, Salwator, Kraków.
- Wróbel Mirosław S., 2021, *Biblijna ikona św. Józefa*, Wydawnictwo Gaudium, Lublin.
- Wróbel Morosław S., 2021, *Ojcowski wpływ św. Józefa na osobę Jezusa i Jego zbawcze dzieło*, Ateneum Kapłańskie, f. 3, pp. 436–445.
- Zellma Anna and Wiszowaty Edward, 2017, *O Policję bliższą ludziom. Inspiracje pedagogiczne w służbie funkcjonariuszy*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Policji w Szczytnie, Szczytno.
- Zellma Anna, 2014, *Formacja sumienia uczestników lekcji religii w czasach „płynnej nowoczesności”*, Forum Teologiczne, vol. 15, pp. 109–120.

Postać świętego Józefa w służbie wychowania chrześcijańskiego?

Streszczenie: Kluczowym słowem w opisie współczesnych przemian społecznych, kulturowych i religijnych wydaje się ponowoczesność, określana również mianem postmodernizmu lub późnej nowoczesności. W pierwszej części artykułu wskazano na kontekst społeczno-kulturowy i religijny, w którym dokonuje się wychowanie chrześcijańskie. Sformułowano również zasadnicze pytanie, czy w tak niekorzystnym kontekście postać św. Józefa może być jeszcze skutecznym wzorem osobowym dla współczesnego człowieka. Poszukując odpowiedzi na tak sformułowane pytanie, zwrócono uwagę na nauczanie papieży, koncentrując się przede wszystkim na dwóch dokumentach: *Redemptoris custos* Jana Pawła II i *Patris corde* papieża Franciszka. Wskazano, że ów ostatni dokument, dzięki swojej świeżości i egzystencjalnemu zmysłowi jego Autora, może być wskazówką, gdzie poszukiwać odpowiedzi na wyżej postawione pytanie. Gotowych rozwiązań, jak mówić dzisiaj o św. Józefie, by wychowanie chrześcijańskie nie stało się pustym i pozbawionym treści *ogólnym moralnym toposem*, z którego nic nie wynika, nie ma. Wychowanie chrześcijańskie inspirowane postacią św. Józefa jawi się bowiem jako zadanie przed wychowawcami każdego czasu, zwłaszcza przed tymi, którzy tę postać chcą ukazać jako żywy wzór osobowy dla swoich wychowanków.

Słowa kluczowe: Święty Józef, edukacja, młodzież, Kościół, wychowanie chrześcijańskie, katechetyka, pedagogika.