**Resilience through Environmental Education in Religious Education in Poland on the example of grade IV in primary school**

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The aim of the presentation is to answer the question of how the model of ecological education programmatically connected to the teaching of the Roman Catholic religion in Polish schools contributes to pupils' resilience. On the basis of current Church documents, a thesis is proposed that this topic should be widely represented in the content of religious education in schools. Based on the methods of source analysis and data synthesis, basic conclusions will be formulated. First, the relationship between the teaching of religion and the promotion of environmental attitudes will be shown. Then, the basis of the 2018 curriculum for the catechesis of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland will be examined in terms of the presence of environmental issues in it. Finally, an example of good practice in this area will be shown, based on a textbook for teaching religion in primary school class IV.

**Connections between religious beliefs and ecology**

Environmental problems lead to increased health risks, food shortages, poverty and forced displacement. A fundamental need regarding local environmental issues and the climate threat seems to point to the need for education and the formation of appropriate attitudes towards the environment.

Some studies cite the generally negative impact of religious attitudes towards the environment. However, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) believes that religion plays a key role in environmental protection and that religious schools can serve as an effective tool to achieve this goal. Similarly, a study by Mark Morrison et al. provided further empirical evidence that certain religious factors have an indirect effect on pro-environmental attitudes. Religious education offers insights into the dynamics of religious influence and directs it towards creative ecological initiatives. Jessica Crowe's study highlights the transformative impact of spirituality in environmental education. As the Directory for Catechesis states, religious education must "help believers realise that commitment to ecology is an integral part of Christian life. Religious education must therefore organise themes around ecology or the integrity of creation, the common good, respect for the human person and moral engagement with the world. In this way, it can also explore the great impact of religious movements on society and the environment.

From contemporary Church teaching on ecology, it is clear that the destruction of the environment can only be countered by a fundamental change in human thinking and behaviour in this area (ecological conversion). The commitment to ecology of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and finally Pope Francis is indisputable. The latter, in the aforementioned Directory for Catechesis, teaches that "one area in which the consequences of an excessively anthropocentric attitude are clearly visible is the ecological crisis. (...) A catechesis sensitive to the protection of the created world fosters a culture of care that must be directed both to the environment and to the people who inhabit it'.

**The role of religious education in shaping environmental attitudes**

Research on the interactions between practised religion and personal reference to environmental issues and ecology indicates a varied influence of the former on the latter, and this diversity is due to the anthropology adopted and the religious doctrine. Religious education is generally considered to make a significant contribution to the construction of attitudes that foster care for the environment and promote sustainable development. This claim is supported by data from studies conducted in different regions of the world, which have confirmed the positive correlation of religious education with environmental/ecological attitudes. Like the scientific community, the various religious denominations are also committed to the scientific consensus that our current climate and environmental problems are, to some extent, directly caused by human participation and intervention.

However, it is hard to disagree that Christians often view various environmental initiatives with suspicion, often linking their activities, not always truthfully, to broadly defined left-wing groups. The opposite is also true, however, in that many environmental movements do not always criticise the Church in a substantial, but nonetheless very harsh way, for its alleged negligence in this field. An effective model for cultivating an attitude of care for the environment is to integrate the curriculum with a culture of love through the presentation of Catholic environmental teaching. This model allows students to embrace the principles of sustainability and actively spread awareness of caring for the environment through workshops, films and practical initiatives. By directly involving students, for example by exposing them to pristine or degraded environments, it allows them to realise the immeasurable value of a beautiful ecosystem. Engaging experiences, such as nature excursions and experiential learning, are proven methods for developing environmental awareness.

A study by Stefan Altemeyer found that religious education can positively influence ecological behaviour and promote sustainability. Previously, Jessica L. Crowe confirmed this finding in a local study, which showed correlations between pupils' religious attitudes and pro-social and pro-environmental worldviews. Pupils who attended religious classes generally showed considerable concern for the environment and responsibility. Religious institutions, including churches, can therefore play a key role in shaping people's attitudes and behaviour towards the environment. However, as Altemeyer notes, the religious worldview itself plays less and less of a behavioural role for the vast majority of young people in Central Europe in terms of daily ethical orientation.

Altemeyer's findings highlight the involvement of religious education in guiding students to support environmental sustainability through conservation. We therefore examine the assumptions of the catechetical core curriculum of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in terms of the implementation of the environmental education model adopted.

**Environmental education in religious education in Poland**

In the Curricula for the Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland (2018), in the specific requirements for grades I-IV of primary school under the task: Developing Knowledge of Faith, we find content components A.1 and A.3, which aim to direct pupils' attention towards exploring the traces of the Creator's action in the surrounding reality of nature, emphasising the relationship between God and his creation, based on the virtue of love, which implies an ethical understanding of the relationships that occur permanently and affectively between the personal God and the created world. Also important is the immediate context of this content, which becomes the reference to the Word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures. As part of the correlation of religious education with school education at this formative stage, nature education in classes I-III and the subject of nature in class IV are also indicated, in terms of forming responsibility for the natural environment and applying the principles of caring for one's own and others' health and life.

It is worth emphasising that the structure of the basic catechetical programme reflects the division into educational stages: kindergarten, primary school classes I-IV, primary school classes V-VIII, secondary school stage and special schools. Considering the entire document, the term 'ecology' appears only five times in the content of the core curriculum. The term 'environmental protection' appears as part of the correlation with biology and safety education in grades V-VIII. The insignificant representation of ecological issues in the core curriculum for the catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland may, on the one hand, be an example of the transformation that has taken place in this area thanks to the documents of Pope Francis, in particular the encyclical Laudato si' and the exhortation Laudate Deum. On the other hand, it calls for a greater emphasis on the presence of ecological issues and their inclusion in the content of religious education during the continuing education and in-service training of religious education teachers.

It is therefore important to note the examples of good practice in which the under-represented contents of the core curriculum find a much broader implementation in religious education textbooks. This is the case of the textbook Living in Community with God, intended for the teaching of religion in primary school class IV, where a section entitled Thank You for the Gift of Creation is devoted to ecological themes. There are five themes that shape pupils' ecological sensitivity.

The authors of this manual felt that the period after First Communion is the right time for children to develop gratitude and care for the created world. Pupils are introduced to the biblical account of creation. The teacher emphasises the value of the created world. They also become familiar with ancient images of the cosmos and learn to distinguish between natural facts and theological (salvific) truths. Pupils also acquire the ability to discover God's qualities through the beauty of the cosmos, e.g. by emphasising that God loves beauty (which flowers and stars help us to discover), that God is inventive (e.g. through birdsong, the colours of the chameleon, etc.), that God is tender and delicate (because he created snowflakes, children, small animals, ladybirds, etc.), and that God is a creator of the cosmos. The theocentric and anthropocentric view of ecology is linked to the indication of man's similarity to God and the consequent task of man to manage the world wisely. In the contents of religion education we find, among other things, the information that 'all human beings have been invited to co-create our world', as well as many ecological curiosities and concise definitions of ecology, recycling and ecological conversion (this is the development of permanent ecological attitudes, a kind of ecological virtue). Thus, the lessons also include separating waste, saving paper, saving water and moving away from consumerism and food waste. In the last cycle of ecological lessons, pupils work with extracts from the text of St. Francis' Canticle of the Sun and learn about him as "a special friend of nature, whose (...) simple and humble life helped him discover the riches of nature".

Conclusions

Religious education positively influences environmental behaviour. This is confirmed by empirical studies that show a correlation between pupils' religious attitudes and pro-social and pro-environmental worldviews. Religion thus plays a significant role in shaping human interaction with the environment. Religious institutions, including churches, can play a key role in shaping people's attitudes and behaviour towards the environment, contributing to pupils' resilience to consumerism and waste culture. Creative examples of environmental education in religious lessons hopefully resonate quite clearly that we have a long Christian tradition of nature conservation, from St Francis or St Hildegard of Bingen to Gustave Thibon in our time, and that nature conservation is part of a belief in transcendence and a humanism in which the human being occupies a central place. Environmental education must therefore have a prominent place in the religious education of children and young people and also find its way into the religious education of adult Christians.