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**Church movements working in the spirit  
of the Social Teaching of the Church for the benefit  
of the welfare of youths and adults  
(Sub-table No. 5)**

**Introduction**

The leading theme of the Congress of Social Pedagogy, which took place on 17–18 September 2018 at the Faculty of Educational Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, was the issue: „Social Pedagogy – engaged pedagogy. Around social initiatives and movements”. The intention of the initiators and creators of the congress, i.e. the Social Pedagogy Team, which operates under the patronage of the Committee of Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, was, on the one hand, to define the new role of social pedagogy in the face of the challenges of reality, and on the other – to define these challenges, new problems, new human aspirations, a new language, a new social message and a new relationship between science and practice. The aim was to show the different „forces” of democracy, community and involvement/participation of pedagogues – researchers and social practitioners working in different fields and areas.

Among the various topics proposed for discussion in the so-called „sub-tables” was that concerning the „Church communities and movements”. Its moderators were prof. Bożena Matyjas, PhD from the Jan Kochanowski

University in Kielce and rev. Bogdan Stańkowski, PhD from the Ignatianum Academy in Kraków. As we treated the subject mentioned above as too general, it has been clarified and has adopted the following wording: „Church movements working in the spirit of the Social Teaching of the Church for the benefit of the welfare of youths and adults”. Therefore, the Social Teaching of the Church has been treated by us as a foundation, the main idea around which the discussion of participants of the discourse in this sub-table should be built. We sent such a suggestion to the pedagogues who declared their willingness to participate in the sessions of our sub-table (it was a total of 8 people – theoreticians and practitioners, representing various academic centers, institutions, foundations).

### **The Social Teaching of the Church and Christian personalism as the main ideas for the creation of church communities and movements and inspirations for social pedagogy**

The Catholic Social Teaching is „part of the Catholic Church’s teaching on moral and religious aspects of social, economic and political life” (Gocko 2003, pp. 261–324). An important document in the development of the Church’s social teaching is the encyclical „Rerum novarum” published in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII. This idea was further developed, mainly due to the findings of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965); the development and promotion of the Social Teaching of the Church has a lot to owe to John Paul II.

The concept of the social teaching of the Church refers primarily to Catholic, more broadly Christian social ethics. It covers such issues of life as:

- human life and dignity;
- family, community, participation;
- rights and obligations;
- respect for the poor and the weak;
- dignity of work and workers’ rights;
- solidarity.

Catholic social teaching is universal, theoretical and practical teaching, it deals with people living in communities and communes, it covers all dimensions of human existence, including the whole of social life, with the cultural, political, economic dimensions in particular (Sztaba 2011, p. 15). It can also be referred to pedagogy as a science of human upbringing.

The concept of man, which is formulated by Christian personalism, is particularly useful in the field of pedagogy, oriented towards the humanities. The starting point here is the subjectivity of the human person (Wojtyła 1979,

p. 10), which should be associated with respect for human dignity, freedom, solidarity and rights.

Christian personalism, which is at the heart of the Church's social teaching, emphasizes the paramount value of the human person, its dignity and freedom. „the human person is and should be (*est et esse debet*) the origin, subject and purpose of all communities, whether natural or organized on a voluntary basis” (Wojtyła 1979, p. 10). The human person is the foundation of every community, and its constitutive element is the „social nature” of man. A person is a criterion of social life (Starnawski 2005, pp. 184–190).

In pedagogy, referring to Catholic Social Teaching and Christian personalism, personalistic education is indicated as education for freedom, free choice of good; it is to serve the person and society. The educational dimension of personalism indicates the right to one's own development and one's own path of personal improvement, opposing the instrumental treatment of the ward. It directs the educational processes towards values, approaches the ward person integrally – as a child, an adult (Adamski 2005, pp. 13–14).

For the implementation of personalistic education, it is important that this work should be the fruit of many centers of influence: family, institutions, schools, the Church, youth associations and unions, the mass media and the social and legal norms that underpin the culture of each society. A convergence can be seen here with the assumptions of social pedagogy, especially the theory of environmental impact (synergy of impact of many environments on man/child) and the integral concept of man, their upbringing in the perspective of Helena Radlińska (Matyjas 2017, p. 96 et seq.).

It proved that upbringing takes place „through society”; a huge role in this process is played by social influences, the source of which is e.g. the family, peer group, local community or place of work, education (school). According to Radlińska, the democratic system, of which she was a supporter and advocate, requires a new approach to the functions of upbringing and school, to open the way for each child to develop fully, to awaken „in every person the awareness of humanity”: its value, dignity, rights and participation in higher goods. The aim of upbringing should therefore be to inspire creativity, support development, release „potential forces” in the wards. The task of upbringing is to shape active and creative attitudes (Radlińska 1961, pp. 138–139).

It is therefore justified to consider Catholic Social Teaching and Christian personalism in social pedagogy involved in important social issues. They are inspirations for humanist-oriented pedagogy. The following dimensions of common interest should be mentioned here: subjectivity, integral development,

dignity, the rights of the person, cooperation, self-improvement (striving for holiness), internally motivated commitment to another person (solidarity), the good of man as the highest value. Questions that arise in pedagogy concern activities, initiatives that arise from the Catholic Social Teaching, from the proposed concept of man and translate into the creation of various types of communities, church movements serving the good of the human being/ward. Among them we can mention the family, the activities of associations, educational centers, volunteering – and thus the issues raised and taken up in the discussion by the participants of the fifth sub-table.

### **Humanistic social pedagogy – the theoretical and practical aspects of activating social life according to the assumptions of Catholic Social Teaching**

Social pedagogy, as a science focused on society, culture and upbringing, is situated in social sciences and humanities; it focuses on the problems of man and their upbringing environment. The primary goal of social pedagogy is to develop „human forces”, i.e. dynamics capable of transforming the surrounding reality. We can list here various types of activities, initiatives, which are initiated by man in their living environment to change the reality in which they grow, live, learn, work professionally. In humanistically oriented social pedagogy, the starting point is man and their comprehensive, integral development.

The area of social pedagogy with Catholic origins therefore focuses on „the humanistic reflection on man, their life and environment conditioned in many ways” – as rev. Zbigniew Babicki, PhD argued at the sub-table. He pointed out that social work seen from the perspective of humanistic social pedagogy creates a complex structure of ideas, tasks and actions, first of all of a social, caring, educational and moral character. This work is based on evangelical love and the principle of social justice and solidarity. It consists in providing material and spiritual help and protection against social exclusion.

It should be emphasized that Catholic social work initiates and develops social undertakings, at the same time becoming an important part of the forces in the local environment and beyond the local social life. As part of this work, NGOs and church institutions, such as Caritas, are being set up, which cooperate with local governments and state authorities. These entities, apart from their aid and support functions, are of great educational and socio-moral importance.

It is worth mentioning that Caritas (founded in 1926) was reactivated in Poland in 1990. It provides extensive charitable assistance through resources

from people of goodwill and institutions. Since 2004, it has had the status of a public benefit organization, which is an important information for donors. Caritas runs professional childcare facilities: Caritas Care Stations, rehabilitation centers, nursing and care facilities, social welfare homes, Occupational Therapy Workshops, Single Mother's Homes, kitchens for the poor, day care centers for children and the elderly and others. It also undertakes initiatives aimed at help during natural disasters in Poland and around the world. Caritas provides immediate and long-term financial and material assistance to the unemployed, the homeless, the sick, the elderly, children from poor families as well as immigrants and refugees.

The activities of Caritas result from the idea of mercy (helping another person in need of help, support), resulting from the Catholic Social Teaching and Christian personalism, which are implemented here in practice. They are also close to humanistically oriented social pedagogy, which focuses on man, especially man who cannot cope with the hardships of everyday life, in its various dimensions. This problem was taken up by prof. Barbara Skałbania, PhD. She indicated the activities of the Catholic Church aimed at the benefit of the sick and people with disabilities, who make up about 10 % of the population. It was Christ's Teaching and His testimony of life that became the source for the Christian civilization of love, from which the works of care for the disabled grew and developed (Śledzianowski 2015, p. 271). We can say that the Church is very active in caring for the sick and disabled – this is a result of its approach to man (Catholic Social Teaching, Christian personalism), in which their right to a dignified life is emphasized. John Paul II wrote that every disabled person is a „fully-fledged human subject” and is blessed with dignity (Śledzianowski 2015, p. 271).

The charitable work of the Church and the people gathered around it in numerous organizations, associations and foundations serves the sick and disabled in the medical, educational, social and spiritual dimensions. However, the largest number of acts of charity in 2014 concerned children and youths (1372), 494 acts were addressed to people with disabilities and 121,000 people were helped (Posługa charytatywna, pp. 11–12).

The group of emergency relief organizations includes Caritas Parish Groups and Caritas School Circles, which operate in almost 5,000 parishes and have about 63,000 members (data from 2014). In addition, among the parish organizations that provide ad hoc relief are such organizations as: Volunteering, Legal Advice, the Disabled, Association of Adults with Disabilities, Maltese Medical Service, Support Group for the Sick, Children's Community. In 2012, 662,000 people who did not belong to the organization

participated in charitable activities at the parish level, and in 2011, 668,000 sick people were helped. The group of works addressed to the disabled includes: occupational therapy workshops, occupational workshops, rehabilitation offices, rehabilitation equipment rentals, day care centers, educational centers (Posługa charytatywna, p. 19).

In addition, there are other forms of volunteering aimed at organizing charity events, festivals, collections of money and material resources, as well as visiting sick and disabled people at home.

In the Church's activities for the integral development of contemporary youth, understood as the activation of social life (development of human resources) in the idea of humanism and humanity, we should also mention the Missionary Voluntary Service, including the Salesian Voluntary Service, about which rev. Jan Hańderek, PhD spoke. He pointed to the wonderful, committed attitude of young people participating in missionary volunteering, their preparation for missionary work (culture, religiosity of a given community, climate specificity of the place and others). And also, the basic message of the mission, which is to preach the Gospel, to follow the principles of the Gospel, as well as the motivation of young people to work in missions in distant countries, which is to help others, children, adults and the elderly.

The Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service is also based, especially with regard to children and young people, on the system of St. John Bosco (Chrobak 2000, p. 169 et seq.). A special place is assigned here to the educational-pastoral community based on the criteria of co-participation, „pedagogical presence” (oratories). Young people going on mission are being prepared for this role in the Global Education Park in Kraków.

Another participant of the discussion in the fifth sub-table, rev. Bogdan Stańkowski, PhD, referred to rev. John Bosco's prevention system, presenting his research carried out in the Salesian Youth Educational Centers on the effectiveness of rehabilitation in the spirit of the preventive system. It is important for social pedagogy, pedagogy involved in research showing the relationship between theory and educational practice.

For over 20 years now, the prevention system has been used in Poland in work with socially maladjusted youth. At that time, three Salesian Youth Educational Centers and several care and educational centers were established. Contemporary researchers, pedagogues dealing with the prevention system of rev. Bosco, constantly strive to show new ways of educating in the Salesian spirit and update this system to the conditions in which contemporary youths live (Kutarña 2015, pp. 181–186). The whole system rests on understanding, religion and love. The purpose of upbringing in a preventive system that is

consistent with other systems can be described as the fullest development of the human personality. What constitutes a novelty in this system is a new approach to the ward, who is not a passive recipient, but an actively developing individual. In the preventive system of rev. Bosco, the ward is at the heart of the upbringing process (Matyjas 2000, p. 87).

Rev. B. Stańkowski, a Salesian, after a theoretical introduction to his research (using the preventive system with young, difficult, socially maladjusted people, coming from dysfunctional and pathological families; the pillars of the system, its originality) presented the results of his own research on the effectiveness of social rehabilitation in the examined Youth Educational Centers. The conclusions are as follows:

- the studied wards (in the vast majority) undertake the effort of building their own personality, treating time in the center as a time of reflection on themselves, their life up to that point;
- the studied persons admit that at the beginning of their stay in the Salesian educational center they went through a crisis, then they started to treat their stay very responsibly, they started to become more mature emotionally, they express their willingness to change their behavior;
- the majority of minors show positive signs of social rehabilitation (greater involvement in learning, „breaking away” from the bad company);
- the majority of respondents look for new, good relations with colleagues and family;
- only in the center (Youth Educational Center) have they started to think about how valuable their lives are, what axiological criteria they follow in life;
- the pupils in the center become more open, make progress, it is visible they have a positive attitude towards the educators; they notice that it is the educators who develop in them an attitude of choice and decision making;
- in the center, minors change their attitude towards religious and moral values – they declare that their lives here have acquired a certain spiritual color (closeness to God);
- the studied wards (especially the older ones) admit that more and more often they think about their future and become convinced that their fate lies in their own hands.

The presented conclusions from the research are positive from the pedagogical point of view, but the author also pointed out the difficulties and the „lower” effectiveness of social rehabilitation in relation to a certain (small but nevertheless) group of wards in the Salesian educational centers under study (Stańkowski 2018).

In the discussion on the Catholic Social Teaching, its assumptions and implementation in everyday life of given communities, prof. Aniela Różańska, PhD, pointed out the importance of building relationships and experiencing unity through ecumenical dialogue. Having personal and family experience in this area, not to mention the fact that she lives in Cieszyn Silesia, she has expressed a very positive opinion about common existence and undertaking many social and charitable initiatives organized in cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church. It is a great example of a common, supra-religious Movement, which allows to create local communities of people associated around the idea of helping others, promoting common values, culture. According to social pedagogy, it is an excellent use of „human resources” to build democratic order in this particular area.

The following ladies also took part in the session of our sub-table: Adrianna Weimann and Natalia Chwiałkowska, representing the Wielkopolska branch of the „Wiosna” Association. They spoke in an interesting manner about two socially and pedagogically important activities of the association, i.e. „Akademia Przyszłości” (“Academy of the Future”) and „Szlachetna Paczka” (the „Noble Pack”) initiative. Both the former and the latter are examples of good practices, the involvement of young people (although not only) in social, aid and educational activities.

The Academy of the Future was founded (just like the other undertaking) by rev. Jacek Stryczek in 2003. Generally speaking, it is a group of volunteers (mainly in big cities) who help neglected children with difficulties in learning. „It leads children from failure at school to success in life.” It also cooperates with parents of children, teachers and school management. The basic principles of the Academy’s work are: to motivate and appreciate, to set requirements, to design experiences, to give the possibility of co-decision, to understand and respond to the causes, to gaze at the future and perceive the potential (it lies in every child, pupil, ward). The participants emphasized that the Academy of the Future is an innovative educational programme addressed to children from primary schools; an important role is played by the tutor with whom the child develops and co-creates the rules of joint work. This shows a subjective approach to the child, respect for the child as a person, creating opportunities for integral development and encouraging work on oneself.

The second initiative undertaken by the Wiosna Association is the annual initiative/campaign „Noble Pack”. This is an excellent project aimed at families as well as specific units, carried out during the Christmas and New Year period. The volunteers (a huge initiative in each voivodeship) deliver pre-prepared packages of products that the family needs and dreams



of. This campaign is based on the evangelical principle of helping others. It is becoming more and more common in Poland, involving more and more groups of helpers, donors and volunteers.

### **Final remarks**

Describing various types of social, pedagogical activities, discussion participants pointed to the main idea underlying this activity, i.e. Catholic Social Teaching and Christian personalism, which creates a specific vision of man. They emphasized that these ideas are an inspiration for humanistically oriented pedagogy (in terms of theory and practice). They tried to answer the question: how are these ideas (forms, methods) implemented in pedagogical practice? Their statements referred to specific activities in which they participate, deal with in science and research terms. And these activities concern, among others, volunteering, social and educational work, work with difficult and socially maladjusted youth, charitable work for the sick and disabled, education of children and young people, socio-cultural animation, the initiatives of Caritas, Ecumenical Movements and others.

It should be emphasized that it is important (engaged pedagogy) to activate „human resources” in given communities, the potential inherent in individuals, groups. By initiating and creating given social movements, ecclesiastical and secular communities, these people build democratic order in their local communities, but also in the whole country. These are usually leaders who, understanding the need for social change (the possibility of improving the situation), participate in various forms of action and initiatives.

Factors such as: human resources, institutional, material resources, social potential as well as substantive and methodological preparation of the authors of changes, their professionalism and motivation to act are also of great importance for the creation of communities and social and religious movements. It is important that all activities are directed towards a common goal, which is to shape/build a Christian concept of man, community, society.

Finally, I would like to underline that sub-table five was manned by people who referred to the Catholic Church's undertakings in their presentations, but there have not been participants representing the point of view of other churches, which also form movements for the welfare of young people, adults or entire communities. However, this was not the subject of our discussion.

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