
Janusz Mariański, *Religijnosocjologiczne wyzwania dla pedagogiki religii. Studium socjologiczne* [Religious and Sociological Challenges for the Pedagogy of Religion. A Sociological Study],
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Janusz Mariański, an eminent Polish sociologist of religion and morality, author of several dozen books on the state and dynamics of religiosity and morality in Polish society, engages in a dialogue with the pedagogy of religion in the reviewed book. Yet, the title of the publication mostly suggests that this is a challenge for the pedagogy of religion from the pedestal of the authority of a sociologist of religion, since it points to the primacy of sociology over pedagogy rather than a partnership relationship between both disciplines. While pedagogy has always leaned towards sociology, over the years, sociologists have not entered that field. For pedagogy of religion, research and sociological findings help recognize socialization environments and assess the degree of effectiveness of upbringing and educational activities, also by indicating social determinants of pedagogization processes. The sociology of religion, diagnosing the religiosity of

children and adolescents and the world of adults, points to areas of neglect and deficiencies in the education and upbringing system at the level of school catechesis and parish pastoral ministry.

The wide spectrum of issues discussed in the book presents problems related with religion and religiosity in narrative and interpretative contexts. In a retrospective analyzes of past times, contemporary diagnoses and forecasts pointing to probabilistic directions of revaluation in the sphere of worldview and moral choices, Janusz Mariański refers to the rich sociological literature and his research findings. He is especially interested in the youth environment, on whom the future depends in every dimension, including those relating to the preservation of one's confessional tradition or, on the contrary, to betraying what has already been founded. Here, Janusz Mariański sees a field of activity for educators. After all, this largely depends on

the work of educators, on their skills and effectiveness in teaching and upbringing, and above all, in school catechesis lessons.

The book consists of six extensive chapters, preceded by an introduction and ending with a summary and an extremely rich bibliography. They testify to the author's erudition and comprehensive recognition of the issues raised in the work. "The sociology of religion and the pedagogy of religion are in some areas correlated with each other and complement each other; at the same time, they are two separate scientific fields. A sociologist can have much to communicate to an educator and vice versa." These two sentences taken from the introduction are the guiding motif of the whole work.

Chapter I. Sociology of Religion and Pedagogy of Religion - Autonomy and Dependence introduces the issues of both disciplines using a list of similarities and differences that unites and divides them. It unites catechesis with teaching religion in school, which results in the religious and moral conditioning of pupils. The pedagogy of religion is a relatively young sub-discipline in pedagogy, and, until recently, was structured together with catechetics, and both were included in theology. In Poland, the breakthrough moment for the crystallization of pedagogy of religion as a field of pedagogical and not theological knowledge was the 2007 publication of the impressive volume *Leksykonu Pedagogiki Religii* [Lexicon of Pedagogy

of Religion] with a multitude of different entries. „Pedagogy of religion is a theory for the process of religious teaching and upbringing, oriented towards practicing a Christian life;” it grows out of Christian personalism and the assumptions of Christian anthropology, referring to the achievements of theological and humanistic sciences.

Chapter II. Contemporary Sociological Theories Important in the Context of Religious Pedagogy. One of the theories is secularization, which reflects quite well what is happening in the public and private space in the context of the presence of religion and the Church. In a general sense, secularization means a historical and socio-cultural process taking place in modern and contemporary times, as a result of which various areas of social life (politics, economic life, science, philosophy, culture, school, education, upbringing, morality) gradually break away from the guardianship of religious organizations, becoming independent of religious and church institutions. On the individual level, secularization means freeing various elements of an individual's life from the dictates of religions and churches and moving towards the inherent regularities of human life. As a consequence, religions and churches are slowly losing their influence in various areas of individual and social life.

The second most popular contemporary phenomenon is the differentiation (diver-

sification) of religion, theories of religious pluralism, and the third is the theory of the privatization of religion. Evangelizing catechesis is indispensable for counter-acting secularization, differentiation and privatization. Here, the doors are open for the field of the pedagogy of religion. The sociology of religion, through its diagnosis of socio-religious reality, can be helpful in the pedagogy of religion in reading the „signs of the times.”

Chapter III. Religiousness of Polish Youth. The theories discussed above are part of the diagnosis of the religious character of contemporary youth. The multiplicity of the results of sociological research cited in the book makes one realize how dynamic Polish sociology is, from which the pedagogy of religion can draw “handfuls” of hard data.

Chapter IV. Religious Practices in the Process of Change. Religious practices are important indicators of religiosity in its individual and social dimensions. Religiousness is expressed in specific activities, and without them, it would be a kind of worldview, philosophy or ideology. In research on religiosity, much attention is paid to religious practices as the most visible and practical manifestations of the acceptance of faith in God in a person's life, or at least as the most tangible symptoms of a relationship with the Church. Reports from sociological research and public opinion polls allow us to conclude that the percentage of people absent from religious

practices is increasing among secondary school and university youth, including the percentage of people expressing their doubts about the faith, and especially concerning the institutional Church.

Chapter V. Pro-Family Morality in the Awareness of Young People. Sociologists emphasize that in contemporary societies, pro-family morality is becoming more and more autonomous, meaning independent of religiosity. The greatest breach exists between religiosity and morality in matters related to marriage and the family. Sociology talks about new family models, about families instead of a family, about secondary, reconstructed, incomplete, cohabitant, and even homosexual families. Family life and family relationships are recognized as taking many forms, and no one form is considered privileged. Some sociologists predict a far-reaching cultural revolution aimed at a radical deconstruction of the family institution in a form appropriate to European civilization and based on Christian anthropology.

Marriage and the family are slowly losing their character as permanent, long-lasting institutions. In the light of the sociological research conducted so far, it can be argued that certain attitudes and human behavior judged by the Catholic Church as morally reprehensible are valued as positive under certain circumstances in the opinion of many Catholics, even those who define themselves as regularly practicing believers. The fam-

ily, although it is not the only factor supporting the continuity of the social, cultural, moral and religious heritage, is nevertheless one of the most important educational institutions. The weakening of trust in the Church entails the erosion of the values and moral norms it proclaims, and ultimately, negatively impacts religion itself, including the religious social capital important for integrating society.

Chapter VI. The Catholic Church in the Social Context. In pre-modern societies, Christian churches enjoyed great authority. They implemented a specific order of values and norms, a kind of everyday life social imperative. Institutions operating in these societies determined one's „course of life” and social roles along with their expectations and social interactions. Modern pluralism disrupts the Church's monopolistic position. There is a constant process of erosion of religious faith in Christian churches, especially in the area of specifically Christian truths of the faith and specifically ecclesiastical moral norms. Church norms such as the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, to go to confession and receive Easter communion or fasting have lost their regulatory and binding force. The crisis present in traditional Christian churches does not exclude the renaissance of religion in developed or late modernity. The Catholic Church in Poland is going through an experimental phase in leaving the era shaped more or less by the Catholic faith and entering into a new

situation marked by social and religious pluralism.

The position and role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland is considered to be a special case as compared to other societies subject to extensive processes of secularization, pluralization and individualization. Nevertheless, even our country is also slowly beginning to notice a process that can be described as a transition from the popular (mass) Church to the Church of choices. The Church is dangerously close to political power and is losing the trust of its faithful as an institution of social credibility. Concerning significant social circles in Poland, the Church is not granted a socio-political mandate, and the statements of Poland's Episcopate preceding presidential or parliamentary elections are perceived as political interference that qualify as political statements that do not relate to the spiritual or ethical dimension. Expectations made on the Church do not always coincide with the tasks that the Church assigns itself and wants to fulfill for its followers. Attempts to influence the election decisions of citizens, and even the top-down imposition of moral rules, harms the Church more than benefit it. The coming years will be described by dissonances, conflicts and criticism of the Church in Polish society.

Chapter VII. Religious Education in School and Parish Catechesis. The pedagogy of religion emphasizes the importance of religion in a person's over-

all education. It works out the basics and principles of religious education for people who live in specific civilizations and cultural conditions. Disruptions in the proper functioning of the family have a demobilizing and even destructive effect on the proper course of the process of religious socialization in the family. Thus, there is a growing need to use the educational potential of teaching religion in school. In the context of social reevaluation, and due to the systemic transformation that caused specific social effects, the question arises as to what extent teaching religion in school responds to contemporary needs. The universality of school catechesis and the mass participation of children and youth in it do not exempt it from caring for the quality of its didactic and educational processes. The pedagogy of religion deals with the study of the processes of religious education and socialization, and in its Christian understanding, it aims to undertake educational activities inspired by religious beliefs. Teaching religion in school is essential for religious socialization.

In Poland, since religion classes returned to schools in the 90s of the twentieth century, the task of teaching religion in school is part of evangelization, transformed to some extent into parish catechesis. Most Poles were in favor of introducing Catholic teaching to public schools, but its position as non-obligatory lessons was also quite commonly shared. Even at the beginning of the 1990s, the

return of religious education to public schools, which was a sign of the political and socio-cultural transformations taking place at that time, aroused many discussions and even disputes. Many years after religion returned to schools, the situation has stabilized, and for most young people, it is something natural. Discussions about whether religious education should take place in Church or school have become less relevant. Numerous sociological studies show that young people value religion lessons in school and their level of knowledge about their religion. Despite the intensification of the quantitative and qualitative efforts of catechetical education, gaps in knowledge among Catholics are quite clear, as the researchers of the issue conclude.

The low or at least insufficient level of religious knowledge among Polish youth, the vast majority of whom are catechized at the primary and secondary levels, is a challenge for representatives of the pedagogy of religion and catechetics. Certainly, without a sociological understanding of the problem, meaning the causes and conditions of such a state of affairs, religious educators will be deprived of real and practical guidelines on how to counteract the established deficiencies. In the opinion of most students, teaching religion should not be a form of Catholic indoctrination; instead, they opt for a broader formula of teaching similar to religious studies or ethics. On its part, the Church treats

religious instruction at school as an evangelizing service in educational institutions. Meeting these two different expectations, those of school youth and the Episcopate, seems difficult to reconcile. Here, a new area opens up for activating the sociology of religion as a useful auxiliary discipline in the search for answers to the dilemmas that concern catechesis in Poland, and thus the pedagogy of religion.

Each of Fr. Prof. Janusz Mariański's books is fascinating reading. They not only convey knowledge supported by a multitude of statistical indicators documenting and legitimizing the professor's assessment of reality, but also show the complexity and often unpredictability of human choices. He does not provide ready-made answers, thus forcing the reader to think and reflect personally. Like every publication by Fr. Janusz Mariański, this book gives the reader food for thought.

He also does not give the Church ready-made prescriptions and unambiguous indications. Rather, the book suggests probabilistic scenarios, indicates condi-

tions, contexts and multiple dependencies. Janusz Mariański's book, apart from its scientific value, undoubtedly has the advantage of easy narration and communicative language. Thus, it does not limit itself to a narrow group of readers of sociology. The author also addresses it to representatives of other scientific disciplines, to those practicing church life, that is, the people who are concerned about the fate of the Catholic Church, to religious educators, catechists and youth educators. It is a call to reflect on the social and religious condition of the Catholic Church in the public space of Polish society in the 21st century.

Father Prof. Janusz Mariański, an outstanding Polish sociologist and at the same time a Catholic priest, has by far the most complete and real picture of contemporary religious reality. His sociological analyses result not only or not primarily from a cognitive need, but are also due to concern for the good of the Catholic Church in the world. This book has additional value as it is a virtual meeting between sociologists and those in religious education.