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THE RAISING OF CHILDREN
FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION
AND THE DECISION OF ADOLESCENTS
TO FORGO CONFIRMATION.
A CANON LAW PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

The sacraments of Christian initiation, i.e. baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, form the three essential pillars that support the life of a conscious Christian, mature in faith. As *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* reads, they are the foundations of every Christian life. The sharing in the divine nature, which occurs through them, can be likened to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew through baptism; they are strengthened by confirmation; and they receive the food of eternal life in the Eucharist.¹

It is necessary for all people, including Christians, to participate in promoting the common good, including the community of the Church. People participate in the good of others and of society by taking care of the education of his or her family (CCE 1913-1914). Religious education, among

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¹ *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1997 [hereinafter: CCE], no. 1212.

other things, is particularly significant for Christians. It goes with the obligation to raise offspring towards the sacraments, including confirmation. Regrettably, the early 21st century saw a trend among the youth in Poland to forgo this sacrament of Christian maturity. This paper aims to highlight the relationship between this alarming phenomenon and the obligation imposed on both parents and pastors to raise young people in the Christian spirit. The discussion has been phased into three parts. First, the author looks at the canonical requirement of education of candidates for the sacraments of Christian initiation. Next, the author discusses the age of the candidate for confirmation as mandated by canonical norms against the background of parents' actual influence on the religious and spiritual choices of their offspring. Finally, the author attempts to address the problem framed in the title of this paper.

1. THE CANONICAL REQUIREMENT OF EDUCATION TOWARDS THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

The sacraments of Christian initiation are at the heart of life of a person sharing community with the Catholic Church. The daily spiritual and physical life of such a person should centre around them. Hence, great importance is attached to preparing a person to be properly administered baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist. In developed countries, where Christianity enjoys a centuries-old tradition, the first sacrament is usually administered to a small child at the request of his or her parents. However, they need to embrace certain legal requirements to be able to raise their offspring in the spirit of faith. The legislator in the 1983 Code of Canon Law² provides that for the licit baptism of a child, there should be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion. If there is no such hope at all, the baptism should be postponed and the parents should be informed why (can. 868 § 1, 2° CIC/83). When considering the desire for Christian upbringing of a child, the parents should also consider the role of godparents (sponsors) and close relatives [Krzywda 2011a, 56]. It should be noted that the legislator does not refuse the

² *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pars II, pp. 1-317 [hereinafter: CIC/83].

sacrament to a child but only inclines towards its postponement [Janczewski 2015, 113]. The ultimate decision is made by the responsible minister. It is not determined by the lack of request for baptism but motivated by to the lack of reasonable certainty as to commitment to Christian educational. The refusal criteria rely on the external symptoms of (not-)belonging to the Church. For example, a family lives a life that is far from faith or ecclesiastical community life or is in conflict with the Christian principles governing matrimony. Postponing the administration of the sacrament must be guided by a desire to help the parents to follow a path that is likely to rekindle their faith. It is therefore necessary to afford them the opportunity to adopt the principles of Christian life anew and help them reflect on their own ways in the light of the Gospel [Celeghin 1995, 69].

In Poland, for various reasons but mostly to perpetuate tradition, parents who do not live a Catholic life often approach a pastor to baptise their offspring. Such a situation creates a rare opportunity to suggest that baptism be postponed, in line with the norms of canon law, until the parents have completed religious “re-education.” Even today, they are obliged to attend a pre-baptismal formation course, although, in practice, it is rather intended for people who live in accordance with their professed faith. However, for less or no practising parents (or sponsors), the content and nature of such catechetical sessions should be adjusted to their specific spiritual condition. Such meetings should also be more numerous than the “ordinary” ones before baptism. Parents’ or sponsors’ consent to take part will also be a test of their actual motivation behind the request for baptism. Finally, it should be stressed that the Polish Episcopal Conference must finally address this more and more urgent issue by making such pre-baptismal instruction for parents mandatory [Janczewski 2015, 115-16].

The task of raising a baptised child does not rest solely with the parents. Canon law says that godparents (sponsors) should assist the parents to make sure that the baptised leads a life in harmony with baptism and to fulfil faithfully the obligations linked thereto (can. 872 CIC/83). Therefore, a sponsor should also engage in the religious education of the baptised, so that, living by faith, he or she would be able to enjoy other sacraments, including the Eucharist and confirmation. Hence, the legal requirement for a sponsor to be a Catholic who has been administered all the sacraments of Christian initiation and to lead a life in harmony with the faith (can. 874 § 1, 3° CIC/83). For the most effective catechesis is to set your

own example, which is particularly effective in religious matters. This was seen in early Christianity when martyrs sacrificed their lives for faith in Christ, thus setting an example of this faith for the pagans.

Parents' obligation to prepare their offspring for the sacraments is also connected with the Eucharist. According to the norms of canon law, it is the responsibility of parents and those who take their place, as well as of the pastor, to make sure that children who are capable of using reason are correctly prepared to be nourished by the divine food (can. 914 CIC/83). What comes to the fore in the cited canon, as E. Górecki notes, is the responsibility of biological parents for preparing a child for Holy Communion. They have the "first right" and "profound duty" ensure the religious upbringing of their offspring. If they are absent or unable to fulfil this duty, it is assumed by legal guardians, relatives, or sponsors. However, parish priests must be vigilant to ensure that the children in their parish receive Holy Communion. This obligation is complementary and has an organizational nature in relation to catechetical formation and First Communion celebrations [Górecki 2011, 99-100].

In the early 21st century, parents increasingly perceive themselves as responsible for their children's comprehensive education, frequently making them attend prestigious and expensive educational institutions. They also prioritise their physical development, often investing in high-priced sports programmes. Spiritual and religious development tends to be sidelined, and the responsibility for religious education is often delegated to the parish or religion classes at school. Parents even make attempts to assert a right to the sacraments from pastors, often neglecting their own duty to prepare their children for the same.

Confirmation is the third sacrament conferred in the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. As in the case of the sacraments that precede it, one of the norms of the Code of Canon Law also addresses proper preparation for confirmation. Canon law provides that parents, shepherds of souls, and especially pastors should take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive it and approach it at the appropriate time (can. 890 CIC/83). J. Krzywda points out that the ecclesiastical legislator specifically emphasizes parents' obligations in this regard. They are the first guides and educators of their children, which is widely emphasized in the book, *The Order of Confirmation* [Krzywda 2011b, 78]. They also gave life to their child. If one of them has died or has been deprived of parental rights, the

other assumes the obligation [Pastuszko 2005, 319]. Similarly, if one of the parents is a non-unbeliever, professes another Christian or non-Christian religion, then the Catholic parent should see to the child's preparation for confirmation. As M. Pastuszko notes, too, biological or adoptive parents have the right and duty to baptise their offspring, so that they become members of the ecclesial community, and then make sure that they continue their path of Christian initiation until confirmation, through which they may delve even deeper into the mystery of the Church. They are the first to catechise the child, form his or her spirit of faith, and gradually strengthen this faith. Parents also have the responsibility to see to the child's further religious education under the supervision of shepherds of souls, who would not even have access to children without parents' assistance [ibid.].

Regrettably, parents frequently neglect or even deliberately reject these responsibilities as they invoke the purported right of the child to freely determine their own spiritual life journey. They overlook the commitment to raising the child in the Christian faith, made during baptism.³ They also fail to consider that, at least until reaching the age of discretion, it is not the young person who should determine the course of their education, but rather their parents and responsible institutions. Moreover, as underlined in the provisions of the Code of Canon Law, genuine education should strive for the holistic development of the person, considering both the ultimate goal and the collective good of society. Children and adolescents should be nurtured in a manner that facilitates the harmonious development of their physical, moral, and intellectual qualities (can. 795 CIC/83). This ultimate goal is salvation facilitated by Jesus Christ himself acting through the sacraments.

³ See *Obrzędy chrztu dzieci dostosowane do zwyczajów diecezji polskich*, Księgarnia św. Jacka, Katowice 2022, no. 77.

2. THE AGE OF CANDIDATES FOR CONFIRMATION AND THE REAL INFLUENCE OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE CHOICES

The age of candidates for the sacrament of confirmation is given in the Code of Canon Law. The sacrament is to be conferred on the faithful at the appropriate time. This is around the age of discretion. However, episcopal conferences are also empowered to specify a different age. However, another age can also be determined if there is danger of death of the candidate or in the judgment of the minister if a grave cause so urges (can. 890-891 CIC/83). The last two cases concern non-standard situations, so they cannot be considered a rule. Circumstances in which the minister of the sacrament has restricted possibilities to meet the candidates, such as in war-torn regions, areas where missions are being held, or low-population locations, should be regarded as a significant justification. Certainly, such circumstances can be many and various.

The early Church basically confirmed the faithful shortly after baptism, both children and adults. In Rome the practice persisted until the 9th century. The Middle Ages marked a time when various particular Churches began to confer confirmation on children prior to their First Communion [Nadolski 1992, 69]. In the 12th century, it was recommended to confirm older children, that is, after the age of seven. Gratian was among the supporters of this practice.⁴ It became common at the turn of the 14th century [Janczewski 2008, 213]. In his instruction, *Eoquamvis tempore*, Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) justified the administration of confirmation to seven-year-olds: they can use reason, so they are already mentally mature enough to be able to sufficiently comprehend the sacrament [Idem 1999, 175]. Evidently, it is rather mental or intellectual and not spiritual development that matters in this case. The 18th-century adolescents were undoubtedly moulded by their parental and religious education, hence the vast majority of them receiving confirmation.

The issue of age at which the sacrament is to be conferred evolved in practice after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In *Pontificale Romanum* issued by Pope Paul VI in 1973, episcopal conferences were authorized to set a higher age of candidates for confirmation required within

⁴ Cf. c. D. V.

their area. The change was motivated by pastoral reasons because it was found necessary to instruct the faithful to fully obey Christ and to bear firm witness to Him.⁵ This solution was also included in the previously cited Canon 891 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The Polish Episcopal Conference took advantage of that entitlement. *Instrukcja duszpasterska dotycząca sakramentu bierzmowania* [The Pastoral Instruction on the Sacrament of Confirmation], dated 16 January 1975, lays down a norm that confirmation in Poland is administered at the age of 14-15 (seventh or eighth grade of elementary school). This was justified by the fact that, at this age, young people enter puberty, start contemplating their future, and begin to grapple with life's challenges and issues related to their faith. Therefore, they have the chance to more consciously embrace the responsibility of receiving confirmation and the obligation to bear witness to their faith.⁶ At the end of the 20th century, in the years 1991-1999, Poland saw the local Second Plenary Synod. One of its resolutions sets out a standard raising the age required to be administered confirmation to 15-16.⁷ The synod also noted that the majority of young people in Poland receive confirmation, although they do not associate it with Christian maturity and their participation in the life of the Church later on is low.⁸

In the 21st century, some dioceses have attempted to set the age requirement for confirmation candidates even higher.⁹ Yet, such solutions lack the legal basis. The Code of Canon Law does not mandate bishops to increase the age of the candidates; only the episcopal conference can do this. Moreover, raising the age of confirmation above 16 prevents young

⁵ *Pontificale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II Instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP VI promulgatum, Ordo Confirmationis*, no. 11, standard edition, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1973, p. 19.

⁶ See *Instrukcja duszpasterska dotycząca sakramentu bierzmowania*, "Wiadomości Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej" 30 (1975), no. 7, p. 159, point 4.

⁷ See *Liturgia Kościoła po Soborze Watykańskim II*, in: *II Polski Synod Plenarny (1991-1999)*, Pallottinum, Poznań 2001, p. 209, no. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201, no. 62.

⁹ For example, the synod of the Diocese of Gliwice decided to set the age of candidates for confirmation to (approximately) 17, right after prior preparation taking place in the second grade of high school. See *Uświęcające zadanie Kościoła*, in: *I Synod Diecezji Gliwickiej (2017-2018), Statuty i aneksy*, Wydawnictwo i drukarnia Świętego Krzyża, Opole 2018, p. 91, no. 415.

people from acting as sponsors at baptism and sponsors for confirmation, which is permitted elsewhere in canon law (can. 874 § 1; can. 893 CIC/83).

The question that arises at this point is whether the parents of today's youth still have a real influence on their religious and spiritual choices. This influence seems to be on the decline. In many large cities, such as Warsaw or Katowice, high schoolers tend to withdraw from religion classes. Their parents are often indifferent or even approving when this happens. In some good-quality high schools in Katowice, only individual pupils attend religion classes, which, among other things, prepare for confirmation. A serious problem of non-confirmed spouses wishing to enter into marriage at church will begin to appear in the near future. How the Polish Church should respond to this challenge is a burning question to address.

3. ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Contemporary socio-cultural and religious changes, the influence of consumerism and neo-atheism spreading in highly developed European countries and the USA, also shape the religious attitudes of young people in our country. It is not uncommon for young people to discontinue their religious education and even sever ties with the Church upon finishing elementary school, after receiving the sacrament of confirmation, or, as mentioned elsewhere, even before that. Some of today's youth can be even said not to have achieved what is referred to as Christian maturity and may even remain in a state of "Christian infancy." For some adolescents, even if they decide to receive confirmation, it becomes their "sacrament of farewell to the Church." As already pointed out, one of the ideas for keeping these people in religion classes and, by extension, preventing their disengagement from the Church community is to raise the age of being confirmed [Janczewski 2008, 216].

A Christian without the sacrament of the Holy Spirit becomes a "crippled Christian." Setting aside the question of "flawed" participation in other sacraments (e.g. marriage cannot be contracted without confirmation) and an impious way of life (a Christian has a moral obligation to use all possible means to achieve salvation, including the sacraments), it should be stressed that this spiritual deficiency denies him or her the possibility

of benefiting from the graces embedded in confirmation. These graces are: a) growing deeper in God's sonship – through which a person comes even closer to the Creator, b) closer union with Christ – through which a person can increasingly participate in Christ's graces, c) multiplication of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – which, but not only, help a person persevere in faith despite hindrances and crises and defend faith boldly, d) improving the bond with the Church – which becomes even stronger and more durable, e) receiving the power to participate in the priestly, prophetic, and regal life of the Church.¹⁰

As L. Ligier notes, having received confirmation, the faithful are more capable of being a visible and open witness of Christ, following the line of God's salvation which materialises in history [Ligier 1990, 265]. In A. von Speyr's view, grace received through the sacrament of confirmation is about the ecclesial transmission of the Spirit, that is, the strengthening of the believers in their ecclesiastical intention and in the conviction that the Church is not only an institution but also life. Being a mature Christian means being able to see everything through the eyes of the Church [von Speyr 1975, 166].

Deprived of the graces conferred through confirmation, a Christian faces significantly greater challenges in approaching the spiritual difficulties associated with the period before adulthood. During adolescence, previously adored authorities, including parents' religious leadership, are often defied. They give way to visions of transforming the world, shaped by the opinions of somewhat older peers and the mainstream media propagating the most popular ideologies. Therefore, a desire to copy the prevailing attitudes often means foregoing confirmation or even breaking ties with the Church. Thus, it seems that conferring the sacrament of the Holy Spirit upon young people at a time when they no longer, at least in part, identify with the Community of Christ represents a considerable mistake. It is like throwing a life buoy to a drowning person who is already unconscious and below the surface of the water. If they had jumped into the water holding the life buoy before, the chance of rescue would have been many times higher. The graces conferred by confirmation are therefore essential and more beneficial prior to a crisis of faith than after young people

¹⁰ Cf. *Konstytucja dogmatyczna o Kościele*, in: *Sobór Watykański II. Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje*, Pallottinum, Poznań 2002, no. 10.

have already found themselves in that crisis. Now, what is the solution to the problem?

The solution is found in the basic norm of the Code of Canon Law. With the exception of extraordinary situations when the age is determined by the episcopal conference, confirmation should be administered around the age of discretion! (can. 891 CIC/83). This was also recommended by the 1917 code, i.e. confirmation should be administered around the age of seven (can. 788 CIC/17). As D. Cenalmor and J. Miras point out, unfounded are the views that the most important thing is the preparation of young people, while the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the sacrament is determined upon the celebration, or that confirmation is primarily to affirm baptismal commitments. The effort of catechetical preparation should serve to enhance rather than cloud the primacy of the gift given by God in the sacrament. It is advisable that pastoral guidelines advocating for an extended period of catechesis prior to confirmation be applied with flexibility. This would allow suitably prepared young people to receive the sacrament earlier, so that they can more effectively navigate through the critical period of their lives that adolescence usually is [Cenalmor and Miras 2022, 352-53]. The sacrament is for people and not vice versa. God's grace should not be used as a tool to justify a young person's presence at a religious education course at high school. As already noted, by gradually withdrawing from these classes, high schoolers risk that they will never receive the sacrament of confirmation in their lifetime. And this sacrament is intended to steer the person towards entering mature spiritual life more consciously. The sacrament must serve the Christian as divine support. This is the very purpose for which Christ instituted it. Hence, bishops of dioceses in which young people decide not to attend catechesis at school to prepare for confirmation should decide to administer the sacrament on the faithful earlier, e.g. in the fourth or fifth grade of elementary school.

Speaking of the obligation to educate children for the sacraments of Christian initiation, there is the persistent need to remind parents and guardians of the importance of keeping the course relentlessly. Parental duties come with this responsibility, at least until the offspring come of age, which is 18 in Poland. Although, in point of fact, someone can also be considered adult if they are able to provide for themselves, being financially independent from their parents. Therefore, at least before the age of

18, parents have the right and duty to make decisions on the child's education and the school subjects that he or she will enrol for. Allowing a child to independently decide whether or not to attend religious education classes is both baffling and fundamentally at odds with the covenants undertaken by the parents during the child's baptism. Moreover, no parent will ask his or her adolescent son or daughter whether they wish to attend mathematics, Polish, or foreign language classes at school.

Young people will be less likely to forgo the sacrament of confirmation if pastoral efforts directed toward both them and their parents are intensified with a view to deepening and strengthening their faith and broadening their religious knowledge. Only then will parents and shepherds of souls be able to have a real influence on the youth's life choices, including religious decisions.

CONCLUSION

The sacraments of Christian initiation are at the heart of life of a person participating in the Catholic Church. The daily spiritual and physical life of such a person should centre around them. Hence, the need to prepare a person to be properly administered baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist. However, parents must embrace certain requirements to be able to raise their offspring in the spirit of faith. Canon law provides that for the licit baptism of a child, there should be a founded hope that it will be brought up in the Catholic ways. If there is no such hope at all, the baptism should be postponed to later. In Poland, for various reasons but mostly to nurture tradition, parents who do not live a Catholic life often approach their parish priest to baptise their offspring. Such a situation creates a rare opportunity to suggest that baptism be postponed until the parents have completed religious "re-education." Godparents are expected to assist the parents to make sure that the baptised leads a life in harmony with baptism. For that purpose, they are required to fulfil faithfully the obligations assumed at the baptism ceremony. Therefore, godparents should also engage in the religious education of the baptised, so that, living by faith, he or she would be able to receive other sacraments, including the Eucharist and confirmation. Hence, the legal requirement for a spon-

sor to be a Catholic who has been administered all the sacraments of Christian initiation and to lead a life in harmony with the faith.

The obligation to prepare a child for the sacraments is also connected with the Eucharist. According to the norms of canon law, it is the responsibility of parents and those who take their place, as well as of the pastor, to make sure that children who are capable of using reason are correctly prepared to be nourished by the divine food.

Confirmation is the third sacrament conferred in the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. As in the case of the sacraments that precede it, one of the norms of the Code of Canon Law also addresses proper preparation for confirmation. Consequently, shepherds of souls, and especially pastors should take care that the faithful are properly instructed to receive it and do so at the appropriate time. Unfortunately, parents frequently neglect or even deliberately reject these responsibilities by highlighting the purported right of the child to freely choose their spiritual path. They overlook the commitment to raising the child in the Christian faith, made during baptism. They also fail to consider that, at least until reaching the age of discretion, it is not the young person who should determine the course of their education, but rather their parents and responsible institutions. As the relevant provision of the Code of Canon Law says, genuine education should strive for the holistic development of the person, considering both the ultimate goal and the shared good of society.

The faithful are also bound to receive confirmation at the appropriate time. This is around the age of discretion. However, episcopal conferences can set a different age. In *Pontificale Romanum* issued by Pope Paul VI in 1973, episcopal conferences were authorized to decide the age of candidates for confirmation in their area. The change was motivated by pastoral reasons because it was found necessary to instruct the faithful to fully obey Christ and to bear firm witness to Him. This solution was also included in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. The Polish Episcopal Conference took advantage of that entitlement. *Instrukcja duszpasterska dotycząca sakramentu bierzmowania* [The Pastoral Instruction on the Sacrament of Confirmation] of 1975 lays down a norm that confirmation in Poland is administered at the age of 14-15. This was justified by the fact that, at this age, young people enter puberty, start contemplating their future, and begin to grapple with life's challenges and issues related to their faith. Therefore, they have the chance to more consciously embrace the responsi-

bility of receiving confirmation and the obligation to bear witness to their faith. However, in later resolutions of the Second Plenary Synod of Poland (1991-1999), a norm was established that raised the age required to receive the sacrament to 15-16.

The question that arises at this point is whether the parents of today's youth still have a real influence on their religious and spiritual choices. This influence seems to be dwindling. In many large cities, high schoolers tend to withdraw from religion classes. Their parents are often indifferent or even approving when this happens. Socio-cultural changes, also affecting the spiritual sphere, the influence of consumerism and neo-atheism spreading in highly developed European countries and the USA, also shape the religious attitudes of young people in our country. It is not uncommon for young people to discontinue their religious education and even sever ties with the Church upon finishing elementary school, after receiving the sacrament of confirmation, or, as mentioned elsewhere, even before that.

A Christian without the sacrament of the Holy Spirit becomes a "crippled Christian," deprived of the graces conferred through confirmation. Such a person faces significantly greater challenges in approaching the spiritual challenges associated with the period before adulthood. During adolescence, previously adored authorities, including parents' religious leadership, are often rejected. They give way to visions of transforming the world, shaped by the opinions of somewhat older peers and the mainstream media propagating the most popular ideologies. Not wanting to be sidelined by their peers, a young person will often decide to forego confirmation or even sever ties with the Church. Proposing young people to accept the sacrament of the Holy Spirit at a time when they no longer, at least in part, identify with the Church is a serious mistake. One of the fundamental norms contained in the Code of Canon Law provides a solution: confirmation should be administered around the age of discretion. The same approach was also adopted in the 1917 code. The sacrament is for people and not vice versa. God's grace should not be used as a tool to justify a young person's presence at a religious education course at high school. As already noted, by gradually withdrawing from these classes, high schoolers risk that they will never receive the sacrament of confirmation in their lifetime. And this sacrament is intended to steer the person

towards entering into mature spiritual life more consciously. It must provide divine support, which is the ultimate idea behind its establishment.

Speaking of the obligation to educate children for the sacraments of Christian initiation, parents and guardians must be continuously reminded of the importance of keeping the course relentlessly. Parental duties come with this responsibility, at least until the offspring come of age. Allowing a child to independently decide whether or not to attend religious education classes is in conflict with the commitments made during the child's baptism. Young people will be less likely to forgo the sacrament of confirmation if entire pastoral efforts directed toward both them and their parents are intensified with a view to deepening and strengthening their faith and broadening their religious competence.

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The Raising of Children for the Sacraments of Initiation and the Decision of Adolescents to Forgo Confirmation. A Canon Law Perspective

Abstract

Baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist, the sacraments of Christian initiation, are at the core of life of a mature Christian. Hence, the great importance of raising children by their parents to receive these sacraments, which is emphasized by the provisions of canon law. In the 21st century, when in many countries, including Poland, young people will receive confirmation as high schoolers, foregoing the sacrament and parents' leniency toward such choices of their children has become a challenge. This article presents this problem and analyses the current law of the Catholic Church in terms of how to find a solution. The work has three parts. The first presents the canonical requirement of education for the reception of the sacraments in question. The second part concerns the regulations determining the age of the candidate for confirmation and the context of the real influence of parents on the spiritual decisions of their children. The last part of the article discusses a possible way to solve the problem posed in the title.

Keywords: sacraments of Christian initiation; baptism; confirmation; Eucharist; canon law; age of candidate for confirmation; Christian education.

Wychowanie potomstwa do sakramentów wtajemniczenia a rezygnacja młodzieży z przyjmowania bierzmowania w świetle prawa kanonicznego

Abstrakt

Chrzest, bierzmowanie i Eucharystia, czyli sakramenty wtajemniczenia chrześcijańskiego, są filarami życia dojrzałego chrześcijanina. Stąd ogromna waga wychowania dzieci przez rodziców do przyjęcia tych sakramentów, na którą zwracają uwagę przepisy prawa kanonicznego. W XXI w., kiedy w wielu krajach, w tym także i w Polsce, młodzież przyjmie bierzmowanie w szkole średniej, pojawia się poważny problem rezygnacji z przystąpienia do niego i tolerowania takiej postawy przez rodziców. Niniejszy artykuł ukazuje ten problem i analizuje obowiązujące prawo Kościoła katolickiego pod kątem jego rozwiązania. Składa się z trzech części. Pierwsza ukazuje kanoniczny wymóg wychowania do przyjęcia omawianych sakramentów. Część druga dotyczy przepisów określających wiek kandydata do bierzmowania oraz kontekstu realnego wpływu rodziców na decyzje duchowe swoich dzieci. Ostatnia część artykułu to konkretna próba rozwiązania problemu postawionego w tytule.

Słowa kluczowe: sakramenty wtajemniczenia chrześcijańskiego; chrzest; bierzmowanie; Eucharystia; prawo kanoniczne; wiek kandydata do bierzmowania; wychowanie chrześcijańskie.

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