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## CATECHESIS – AN EXPERIENCE OF THE *MYSTERIUM ESSE PERSONALE*

### KATECHEZA DOŚWIADCZENIEM MISTERIUM *ESSE PERSONALE*

**Abstract:** The article is a personalist–hermeneutical study of the issue concerning the experience of the *mysterium esse personale* in catechesis. With the aid of the system of personalism and of personalist anthropology, a prosopological understanding of the person is presented, followed by an explanation of the value of experience, and specifically of the experience of *esse personale*, in catechesis. The first part presents a holistic, integral and realistic understanding of the person as an individual corporeal-spiritual subsistence, relational and community-forming. The second part explains the significance of experience, which faith renders a personal act and an interpersonal event based on the encounter with the Tri-Personal God through Christ and a permanent abiding with Him. The third part notes that catechesis is a process of union with the Person of Jesus Christ, which involves the entire human person and brings about the experience of the mystery of the Triune God and of the human person. The study employs a research method comprising elements such as content analysis in a personalist–hermeneutical approach, a comparative method enabling the comparison of analyses in the light of personalism, and synthesis consisting in the editing of the text of the analysed and synthesised research.

**Keywords:** person; catechesis; experience; mystery; encounter.

## INTRODUCTION

Catechesis as the work of the Church is an exercise in “the original pedagogy of the faith, which at the same time performs the task of initiation, upbringing and education”<sup>1</sup>. At the heart of each catechesis is a live encounter

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with the Person of Jesus Christ, and then a personam communion with Him as the Redeemer of mankind (*Redemptor hominis*). Therefore, “the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity”<sup>2</sup>. The catechetical message focused on the Person of Jesus Christ is Christocentric in nature. Since Jesus Christ is united with the Father and the Holy Spirit, trinitarian Christocentrism (“The kerygma is trinitarian”<sup>3</sup>)<sup>4</sup> gives rise to the theocentrism of catechesis. Christ’s relationship with the Church and with people implies, in turn, ecclesiocentrism and Christian personalism in catechesis<sup>5</sup>. Therefore the original pedagogy of the faith is the fruit of double fidelity: “fidelity to God and of fidelity to man”<sup>6</sup>. This is a unique characteristic of the pastoral and catechetical ministry, since man “is the primary and fundamental way for the Church”<sup>7</sup>.

Christianity is a world of personal relationships, where salvation and sanctification take place in the world of Divine Persons and human persons. Similarly, catechesis takes place thanks to persons, through persons, and in persons. Catechesis is an epiphany of persons: the Persons of the Holy Trinity, the Mystical Person of the Church, and human persons (the catechist and the one being catechised). For this reason, it is invariably inspired by Christ and His Person. In light of this Person (*Persona Perfecta*), every human being is capable of understanding Christianity, the Church, and themselves, and is moreover capable of self-fulfilment as a person. “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”<sup>8</sup>.

Catechesis, therefore, is the experience of the *mysterium esse personale*<sup>9</sup> as, in keeping with its principal objective, “the object of catechesis is ex-

<sup>1</sup> Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji* (Kielce: Jedność 2020), 166.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Catechesi tradendae*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Franciszek, *Evangelii gaudium*, 164.

<sup>4</sup> See Bogumił Gacka, „Personalizm trynitarny Edyty Stein”, w *Splendor personae*, red. Beata Gołkowska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW, 2019), 129–160.

<sup>5</sup> Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* (Kraków: WAM 2001), 21. See Piotr Tomasz Goliszek, *Personalistyczny wymiar katechezy* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2017<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa, *Dyrektorium ogólne o katechizacji* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1998), 145; Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*, 179.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Redemptor hominis*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Benedykt XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Every being has an inherent realm of meaning and mystery which cannot be reduced to “bare facts” and which requires respect for its hidden significance. In the context of *esse personarum*,

pressed in profession of faith in the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit”<sup>10</sup>, while “the message of salvation transmitted via catechesis must uncover the meaning of the message for the human person”<sup>11</sup>. Catechesis focused on the Person of Jesus Christ turns in two directions. Namely, it leads to the Father’s unbounded mercy in the Holy Spirit and to participation in the life of the Holy Trinity and of the human person<sup>12</sup>. That is why the *Mysterium Dei et mysterium personale* can be grasped and reliably acquired through personalistic reflection. For this reason, the experience of the *mysterium esse personale* in catechesis will be addressed in terms of personalism, via a prosopologic perception of the person, the understanding of experience in catechesis, and the experience of personal mystery.

# 1. UNDERSTATING A PERSON

Personalism is a school of thought that uses the category of “person”, which means the entire human being. A person cannot be reduced to a concept, consciousness, body, soul, individual, thing, or any single element of reality. This school of thought is based on one fundamental assumption: to reveal the whole phenomenon of the person, their transcendence, and to uncover the avenues of their dynamic development<sup>13</sup>.

Personalism is not just about talking about the person, of stressing that a human being is a person, and that they are not a thing, but a person. The uniqueness of personalism lies in its perception of all reality through the lens of the person. The phenomenon of the “person” in personalism is the key to interpreting all reality. In this way, personalism prevents any reductionism and instead serves to personalise non-personal reality and the person themselves, both on an individual and social level<sup>14</sup>.

Personalism can be seen as a system or as personalist anthropology (personology or prosopology). Personalist anthropology looks at man and under-

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this means that a personal being in particular reveals this depth and inviolable intimacy, and any attempt to completely penetrate or ignore inevitably impoverishes the knowledge of the person. It is therefore a question of the deepest understanding of this inner realm of a personal being.

<sup>10</sup> Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*, 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego* (Poznań: Pallotinum, 2002), 234.

<sup>13</sup> Stanisław Kowalczyk, *Personalizm – podstawy, idee, konsekwencje* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2012), 23–29.

<sup>14</sup> Karol Wojtyła, „Człowiek jest osobą”, *Personalizm* 1(2001): 59–64; Czesław Stanisław Bartnik, *Osoba i personalizm* (Lublin: Standruk, 2012), 15–19.

stands man as a person, holistically, integrally, and realistically. Its analysis involves the entire world of a person where they exist, live, act, create, learn, and develop<sup>15</sup>. Personalist anthropology (prosopology) observes that a person is a being subsisting as someone (*subsistens ut aliquis, ut ego*) or as someone existing and subsisting (*aliquis ut existens et subsistens*) or a subsisting ego (*ego subsistens*). A person is a being that exists in the manner of someone or an "I" in the manner of existing: existing as Someone or Someone as subsisting. A person is someone subsisting in the self; the "I" subsisting bimodally, physically and spiritually; it is the ontological ecstasy of body and soul in synthesis; it is the ur-synthesis of self and existence in the infinity of immanence and transcendence<sup>16</sup>.

In ontological terms, a person is an individual corporal and spiritual subsistence. However, a person is by no means a simple a "compound" of body and soul or a simple connection between them. Nor can the person be reduced to the soul alone. The primacy of the soul over the body does not imply a reduction of the being of the person to the soul alone. Analytically, a human being consists of body and soul, but synthetically, integrally, they are a "person". The person is more than the "sum total" of body and soul. He or she is not someone who is merely a body or merely a soul. Body and soul constitute only the nature. The person is a higher kind of being, specifically a personal being. Therefore, it may be asserted that the person is an ontological "modality" of soul and body. He or she is their synthesis and their ecstasy toward transcendental being. The person thus remains a difficult-to-describe ecstatic synthesis of soul and body, in the depths of interiority, into the existential and spiritual ego. He or she cannot be confined solely to body and soul. Neither the body alone nor the soul alone constitutes a constitutive element of the person. The person constitutes in the human being a "sum total" of body and soul. The person is a mysterious super-synthesis within the subsistent self. It is, as it were, a super-synthesis of a character that is simultaneously transcendental and immanent in being.<sup>17</sup>

The person is not solely an individual subsistence, but is explained, realised, and fulfilled in a relationship to another person and with respect to other persons. "The person is, then, subsistence and relation"<sup>18</sup>. The relational nature of the person is at its highest in the capacity for interpersonal communion.

<sup>15</sup> Juan M. Burgos, *Personalizm* (Warszawa: Centrum Myśli Jana Pawła II, 2010), 194.

<sup>16</sup> Czesław S. Bartnik, *Studies in personalist system* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2007), 38–43.

<sup>17</sup> Czesław S. Bartnik, *Szkice do systemu personalizmu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2006), 61.

<sup>18</sup> Bartnik, *Szkice do systemu personalizmu*, 44.

The person develops, perfects themselves, lives, and thematises themselves in social relations. The person must be understood as an individual person, but always in reference and relation to the community. In this way, the person discovers themselves and comes to know others. This reference of the human person occurs on two levels: in relation to the subject of another individual person, and in relation to the community<sup>19</sup>. The phenomenon of the person is inexplicable without another personal existence and without a plurality of personal existences, since the person's essence and reason for existence is their relation to others. Ultimately, the human being exists, lives, develops, fulfils, and acts as both an individual and a social person. The human being as a person is thus an individual and social relation<sup>20</sup>.

In the concept of systemic personalism, the person is also conceived as a "third" kind of being, alongside matter and spirit. The person appears as a being on the principle of the "integration" of matter and spirit. All extra-personal reality boils down ontologically to the person, and not to things (personalism protects the human being from all forms of reductionism)<sup>21</sup>. Personalism does not treat the person as solely an object of reflection, but first and foremost as the subject of cognition and action, a method of knowledge acquisition, and a focus on the internal and external.

## 2. EXPERIENCE IN CATECHESIS

The human being can understand themselves most fully in Christ, and through intimacy with Him recognise that they walk the path of truth. Faith helps penetrate the depths of a person's inherent mystery and helps them grasp it adequately. Christian faith is above all the reception of the gift of God's love, who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, and subsequently a sincere adherence to Him and a voluntary decision to follow Him. Faith in the human being arises from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Risen One, Saviour

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<sup>19</sup> Kazimierz Belch, "The Human Person as the central value in a Community," *Personalizm* 10 (2006): 82–85.

<sup>20</sup> Jonas Norgaard Mortensen, *The Common Good. An Introduction to Personalism* (Frederiksværk: Boedal Publishing, 2014) 51–73.

<sup>21</sup> Benedict XVI points out that reductionist visions of man ultimately lead to "indifference to what constitutes the true nature of man. Many contemporary people deny the existence of a specific human nature, which makes possible the most extravagant interpretations of the constitutive elements of human existence". Benedict XVI, "The Human Person as the Heart of Peace" *Personalizm* 11(2006): 13–14.

and Redeemer, “who leads us in faith and brings it to perfection” (Heb 12:2). It is an act of the individual person, and at the same time it is communally subjectivised in the Church. It is not only the acceptance of the fact of revelation, but also striving, the will, a decision, and the orientation of oneself and one’s whole life toward God. It is a “a personal adherence of man to God; [...] a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed”<sup>22</sup>. Faith “involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words”<sup>23</sup>. Faith, then, is an event that is interpersonal and involves the entire person. It engages the intellectual, volitional, existential, and praxeological in man<sup>24</sup>.

Faith is a continuous process, which is born, develops, and is adequately formed. It thus requires constant effort on the part of both the Church and the human being. Catechesis is engaged in this process of development and growth, as well as in the maturation and transmission of the content of faith. Speaking of catechesis, two different but complementary processes are indicated: catechesis of initiation into faith and catechesis as continual formation in faith. These two fundamental and mutually completing forms of catechesis permeate and supplement one another. “The earlier process is initiation into faith, which takes place through catechesis of initiation, while the continuation of this process is formation in faith, which takes place through continual catechesis. In catechetical practice, both processes overlap and are often difficult to separate distinctly. The same must be said of the corresponding forms of catechesis”<sup>25</sup>.

Catechetical pastoral work increasingly returns to enhancing the value of Christian experience. Faith and experience mediate and reinforce each other. “Faith deals with experience”; even faith in the Triune God is essentially connected with this human experience. The reception of faith allows the human being to integrate their often unclear, changeable, ambivalent, and fragmentary horizon of experience, called “pre-Christian”, and to see it in a new light. In this sense, to believe means “to make new experience out of experience”. In the perspective of faith, human experience of being in the world is stripped of indeterminacy and potentiality, and thus of all its numerous limitations,

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<sup>22</sup> *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, 150.

<sup>23</sup> *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Piotr T. Goliszek, „Doświadczenie wiary w katechetycznej posłudze”, w *Catechetica porta fidei*, red. Andrzej Kiciński, Piotr T. Goliszek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo NATAN, 2012), 115.

<sup>25</sup> Roman Murawski, „Wychowanie w wierze: co to jest?”, w *Wychowanie w wierze w kontekście przemian współczesności*, red. Roman Buchta, Stanisław Dziekoński (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Księgarnia św. Jacka, 2011), 18.

attaining its fullness precisely in God. Faith is, and must remain, on the side of human experience, so that it does not become pseudo-salvation or an escape into Gnostic irrationality. Its real connection with experience is also highlighted by the fact that faith allows itself to be legitimised and “verified” through and in experience. “The path of Christian formation (...) has always involved experience, without neglecting the understanding of faith. A decisive role was played by a living and compelling encounter with Christ proclaimed by authentic witnesses”<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, Christian experience consists above all in the encounter with Jesus Christ and in participation in the richness of the experience of God the Trinity, through the activity of faith, hope, and love. Thus, Christ is at the core of Christian experience and He Himself is its author<sup>27</sup>. The principle of Christian experience is thus both the internal and personal bond of the human being with the Tri-Personal God. This encounter with the Persons of the Triune God ought to give rise to a Christian experience recognisable by others, through the signs of God’s presence in those who have believed in Him<sup>28</sup>. Thus, enhancing the element of experience in catechesis entails a constant existential engagement, a whole-person reception of truth, and the orientation of the will toward the values recognised through the intimacy of the human being and God in Christ.

Seeking new solutions for catechesis in the contemporary cultural and pastoral context, Emilio Alberich sees the need for “transforming the entirety of religious and Christian experience in order to realise a new model of the Christian, a new Christian community, a renewed model of the Church”<sup>29</sup>. This is precisely what “a renewed catechesis in the framework of evangelisation in the service for personal and mature faith”<sup>30</sup> must be; it ought to offer a profound Christian experience of human life and action as ingrained in and built on Christ (cf. Col 2:7). Enhancing the value of Christian experience prepares the catechised person for a mature Christian existence, as the reception of Christ and abiding in Him through faith and the sacraments. It is a lasting

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<sup>26</sup> Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*, 97.

<sup>27</sup> Andrzej Perzyński, *Personalizm wiary według Jeana Mouroux*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2011), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Przemysław Kantyka, „Świadectwo wiary w podzielonym chrześcijaństwie”, w *Catechetica porta fidei*, red. Andrzej Kiciński, Piotr T. Goliszek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo NATAN, 2012), 60–62.

<sup>29</sup> Emilio Alberich, *Katecheza dzisiaj. Podręcznik katechetyki fundamentalnej*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, 2003), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Alberich, *Katecheza dzisiaj*, 35.

Christian in-existence<sup>31</sup>: an encounter with Jesus Christ, which is simultaneously an encounter with His Church and the actualisation of the Church.

Without a living bond with Christ and with His Gospel, there is neither Christianity nor the community of the Church. The essence of catechesis is founded upon this personal relationship with Christ, which leads the catechised person into communion with the Person of Christ, that is, it unites human experience with the Christian message. This is not only an intellectual process, but above all an existentially motivated decision, a new dynamism of Christian life.

Man becomes a Christian not by intellectual cognition but due to their faith in the Event of Christ. This is contingent on a profound personal relation with Christ, “a personal act anchored in the profundity of the human being”<sup>32</sup>. That is why faith is, in its essence, an encounter with Jesus and a personal life in Christ.

By explaining the fundamental mysteries of faith and leading to the experience of faith, catechesis aims to enlighten human life with the message of faith, strengthen the life of faith, and enable people to justify it in the world. “‘Faith working through love’ (Gal 5:6) becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life”<sup>33</sup>. Faith becomes an experience of the *mysterium esse personale* in that man experiences a personal encounter and relation with the Person of Christ.

### 3. THE EXPERIENCE OF *ESSE PERSONALE*

The person is the most mysterious being, concealing *within themselves* the most profound mystery of their being. This mystery is hidden, difficult to access, and full of secrets even for the human being. Therefore, it is difficult for a human person to go deep down into themselves. It is a mystery of God, which He Himself, if He so wills, can reveal to the human being. At the same time, it must be remembered that God is also a mystery. Moreover, the mystery of God must remain a mystery, for as the *Ipsissimum Esse Personale* He conceals Himself entirely. Through the mystery, God is the “Being” of Pure

<sup>31</sup> Andrzej Kiciński, Vincenzo Annicchiarico, “The Cultural Dimension of Catholic Liturgical Rites in Catholic Religious Education in the Context of the Objectives of the Education System in Italy” *Verbum Vitae*, 40 (2022) 4: 843–868.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Patrzeć na Chrystusa*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Salwator, 2005), 34.

<sup>33</sup> Benedykt XVI, List apostolski *motu proprio Porta fidei* ogłaszający Rok Wiary, (Ząbki: Wydawnictwo Apostolicum, 2012), 6.



Subsistent Existence. It is solely in the light of the *Mysterium Ipsissimum Esse Personale* that we can grasp the *mysterium esse personale* of man<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, the fact of the mystery of human being makes every human, as a person, someone unique among other persons. Man is singular and unique in their being and this uniqueness is predicated on communion with God, who is a Communion of Persons<sup>35</sup>.

The mystery of the person is not an obstacle. On the contrary, it is a necessity of the person. The mystery of the person is essential to the person herself or himself. This fact makes the person non-transferable to others. One cannot hand over one's own person to others. The person has a chance to enter into relations with other persons, into communion, without losing oneself. By remaining a mystery to oneself, one in a sense conceals or hides oneself, thus being unique and unrepeatable.

It seems, moreover, that the person "must" remain a mystery. Through the mystery, one possesses oneself, one disposes of oneself, and is one's own. "The person reveals the mystery, and the mystery reveals the person, but also: the person conceals the mystery, and the mystery conceals the person. Respect for the person invokes respect for the mystery that the person harbours within"<sup>36</sup>. It is therefore necessary to grasp and understand the mystery of the person and to receive it as a gift. "The logic of the gift shows that the person does not keep his or her mystery for himself or herself in order to remain with it, but in order to reveal it to others"<sup>37</sup>. The key to understanding the person as a gift is love, which does not demand to know and understand everything. Therefore, the knowledge of the other person becomes possible only through love.

In view of the mystery of the person, the introduction to the experience of *esse personale* in catechesis is vitally important. Introducing the catechised into the mystery of the faith (*mysterium fidei*), the mystery of the Church (*Communio Personarum et personarum*), introduction into the mystery of liturgy, sacraments, and prayer (*mysterium salutis et personale*) introduces into the *Mysterium Esse Personale et mysterium esse personale*, i.e. into the mystery of God and man. Catechesis in the Church is directed chiefly towards the human person to uncover the personal love of the Father and the closeness of Jesus Christ, and thus to uncover one's deepest identity. Accordingly, the cat-

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<sup>34</sup> Grzegorz Barth, *Hermeneutika osoby*, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013), 237.

<sup>35</sup> Edyta Stein, *Budowa osoby ludzkiej. Wykład z antropologii filozoficznej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 2015), 87–90.

<sup>36</sup> Grzegorz Barth, *Hermeneutika osoby*, 234.

<sup>37</sup> Grzegorz Barth, *Hermeneutika osoby*, 235.

echetical ministry remains at the service of persons and is directed to them. The entire catechetical process takes place in the world of persons<sup>38</sup>.

Catechesis, then, seeking to elucidate the mystery of man in light of the mystery of the Incarnate Word, elucidates the mystery of existence of man's own person. Christ, "by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear"<sup>39</sup>. Catechesis therefore both reveals the mystery of God and reveals the mystery of man. The mystery of man is revealed most fully in God, because Love unravels mystery. God, who is Love (1 Jn 4:8), knows man completely and helps man to understand themselves and discover themselves.

Catechesis makes it possible to experience the *personal mystery* of God and man, in particular when it leads to a live encounter with the mystery of Christ. "The encounter with Christ engages the person as a whole: their heart, mind, and the senses. It concerns not only the mind, but also the body, and above all the heart. In this respect, catechesis, by helping to interiorise faith and thus making an irreplaceable contribution to the encounter with Christ"<sup>40</sup>. This is how the overriding objective of catechesis is met, a union with Christ, i.e. entry into communion with the Persons of the Triune God. This communion therefore means participation in the life of the Holy Trinity. In this manner, joining mystery and personalism, catechesis "is an initiation into the mystery of God, who speaks to us, above all in Jesus Christ, in the Church"<sup>41</sup>. The experience of the *Mysterium Esse Personale* is the mutual the interpenetration of the Divine Person and the human person, i.e. of the *Mysterium Esse Personale et mysterium esse personale*. This is a kind of perichoresis. The term *perichōresis* literally denotes a cyclical movement, reciprocity, exchange, interpenetration, and openness of persons. The prefix *perí* indicates the movement "around", while *chōresis* is linked to space, place, and moving forward. Perichoresis, then, means mutual openness, a kind of thinking that penetrates the consciousness of others, the capacity for learning, offering, and receiving. We can say without exaggeration that perichoresis in its strictest sense means love.

<sup>38</sup> See Piotr T. Goliszek, "Personalistic dimension of ecclesia-forming catechesis" *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej* 22(2023): 7–22.

<sup>39</sup> Sobór Watykański II, Konstytucja duszpasterska o Kościele w świecie współczesnym. *Gaudium et spes* (1965), 22.

<sup>40</sup> Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji, *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*, 76.

<sup>41</sup> Marian Finke, *Odnova katechetyczna. Zarys katechetyki kerygmatycznej*, w *Pod tchnieniem Ducha Świętego. Współczesna myśl teologiczna*, red. Marian Finke, Czesław Stanisław Bartnik (Poznań-Warszawa-Lublin: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1964), 588.

The possibility of human communion with God arises from the fact of the person's relationality. An interpersonal relation is possible because the person possesses the capacity to unveil himself or herself before the other and to share himself or herself without losing oneself or one's mystery. Therefore, only the person is capable of communion, and for this reason this process is possible only between persons. Thus, the human being, to whom catechesis makes possible a personal encounter with and experience of the Person of Jesus, begins to be a participant in a living relationship with Christ. In this way, he or she attains the highest level of human possibilities in relation to God. The relationship between persons takes place in the most adequate manner in community, because the essence of the human being is expressed most fully in community. Moreover, the relationship with other persons attains its fullness in love. The one who loves exists and reveals himself or herself most fully, for love is the most perfect form of the person. When a human being loves truly and sincerely, his or her person is expressed all the more fully. One is personally someone inasmuch as one loves. The more the human being loves, the more he or she exists, and conversely, he or she exists inasmuch as he or she loves. Love defines and signifies the existence of the human being. The gift of love: *being-for-others* is the "an 'inclination' of one's own existence towards the other. Therefore, the encounter with the Person of Christ is an experience of love that touches the whole of a human being's existence. This means that the human person, a *being-in-relation*, concretises the fullness of this relation only in reference to Christ"<sup>42</sup>, since catechesis is meant to educate "the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ"<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, catechesis engages the whole being of the human person, introducing them into a personal communion with Jesus Christ. It may thus be stated that catechesis introduces one into the Mystery of the Tri-Personal God and into the mystery of the human person. Both mysteries permeate one another and, in a manner proper to each, explain one another in a mysterious way. The mystery of God and of the human being is most fully revealed and explained by Christ the Lord! "Christ knows 'what is in man'. He alone knows it"<sup>44</sup>. This is how catechesis is the experience of the *mysterium esse personale*.

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<sup>42</sup> Por. Piotr T. Goliszek, "Foundations of personal mystagogy in catechesis", *Roczniki Teologiczne* 66(2019)11: 25-27.

<sup>43</sup> Jan Paweł II, *Catechesi tradendae*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> John Paul II, Homily of his holiness John Paul II for the inauguration of his pontificate, St. Peter's Square, 22 October 1978. Accessed 16.11.2025. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1978/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19781022\\_inizio-pontificato.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1978/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19781022_inizio-pontificato.html).

## CONCLUSION

Catechesis is an experience of the *mysterium esse personale*, i.e. of the personal existence of God and man, which must be recognised and practiced on the existential and relational level. When the principal aim of catechesis is union with Christ, who leads to the love of the Father in the Holy Spirit and to participation in the life of the Tri-Personal God, the process of initiation, formation and instruction is directed chiefly towards a personal relationship with God. Ultimately, the human being needs only one thing, in which everything is contained and explained. As a person, the human being needs God, who reveals and explains Himself as a Communion of Persons and who reveals the human being to himself. There is therefore a need for a personalist orientation of catechesis<sup>45</sup>, in order to enable various individuals, believers and non-believers alike, to experience Christ and to participate in the life of the Holy Trinity and the Church, a precondition of a mature and enduring faith.

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<sup>45</sup> See Piotr Tomasz Goliszek, „The personalistic concept of catechesis”, in *Person Encounters, paradigms, commitment and applications*, ed. Diana Prokofyeva, Colin Patterson (Wilmington-Málaga: Vernon Press Philosophy of Personalism, 2023), 203–218.

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#### KATECHEZA DOŚWIADCZENIEM MISTERIUM *ESSE PERSONALE*

##### Streszczenie

Artykuł jest personalistyczno-hermeneutycznym opracowaniem zagadnienia dotyczącego doświadczenia misterium *esse personale* w katechezie. Z pomocą systemu personalizmu oraz antropologii personalistycznej zaprezentowano prozopologiczne rozumienie osoby. Następnie wyjaśniono wartość doświadczenia w katechezie oraz doświadczenie *esse personale*. W pierwszej części ukazano całościowe, integralne i realistyczne rozumie osoby jako indywidualnej subsystemy cielesno-duchowej, relacyjnej i wspólnototwórczej. W drugiej części wyjaśniono znaczenie doświadczenia, które umożliwia wiara jako akt osobowy i jako wydarzenie oparte na trwałym spotkaniu z Trójosobowym Bogiem przez Chrystusa. W trzeciej części stwierdzono, że katecheza to proces zjednoczenia z Osobą Jezusa Chrystusa, które angażuje całego człowieka i prowadzi do doświadczenia misterium Trójjedynego Boga i człowieka. W opracowaniu została wykorzystana metoda badawcza zawierająca takie elementy, jak: analiza treści w ujęciu personalistyczno-hermeneutycznym, metoda komparatystyczna umożliwiająca porównanie analiz w świetle personalizmu, synteza polegająca na redakcji tekstu zanalizowanej i zsyntetyzowanej pracy badawczej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** osoba; katecheza; doświadczenie; misterium; spotkanie.