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The Anthropological Crisis of the XXI Century: The Expression and the Church's Response to Its Forms in Catholic Schools

Abstract

Research problem: in the XXI century the values of the consumer society are not only underestimated by human spiritual needs, but also by the person and his religious dimensions. There is a need for the Church to respond to the various forms of anthropological crisis (AC), especially in Catholic schools (CS), to help educators understand the expression of the existing AC by recognizing it and by being prepared to have a response, hence conveying it to the younger generation. This research, which have not been discussed on the theoretical level, will help define AC (there are many different descriptions of this phenomenon, but there is no unified definition), presenting its expression and formulating the Church's response to forms of AC in CS. The role of the educator is becoming very important, in answering the question: How will the pupils receive the response and what position will they take in this respect through their learning in the CS? This research is important for the Catholic religious education, at least on the theoretical level; there will be a clear expression of the AC of the XXI century and the Church's response to its forms in an attempt to define the role of the educator in this perspective.

Keywords

anthropological crisis, the expression and the Church's Response, anthropological crisis forms in Catholic Schools.

1. Introduction

For a couple of decades, in both Christian and worldly media, a deepening crisis of anthropological and cultural nature has been discussed.¹ A cause for the crisis of various aspects has been accentuated since the encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*² by Pope Leo XIII, up to the encyclical letter *Amoris Laetitia*³ by Pope Francis. This is especially relevant these days, which are marked by such ideologies as secularism, materialism, relativism, liberalism, and their spread into many of the most important spheres of human existence, such as education, and in the context of it. Even students of Catholic schools (CS), and their educators, are not passed by one or another form of expression of this anthropological crisis (AC).

That is why this chapter is intended to give an expression of the forms of the AC in the XXI century recognized in society as a whole thus also in CS, from perspectives of theory and practice. From the theoretical perspective, it is important to try to clarify and define the AC, and give the concept of this crisis using the latest OR most recent works of authors on the theme of AC, documents of the Church, and works based on scientists' outlook on human and Christian values. From a practical perspective it is important to present the main expressions of the AC of the XXI century, which might be of help in giving the Church's answer to the forms of this AC, finding the means of answering this crisis in a CS and through this to help in understanding the role of an educator in this perspective. That is why this chapter will not only help educators recognize forms of AC of the XXI century in CS, but it will also help them to be prepared (ready) to have an answer to its expressions.

¹ E. Antonelli, *Family: work and celebration*, "Bažnyčios žinios" 10 (388), (2012), p. 27, file:///C:/Users/Asus/Downloads/bzinios_2012-10%20apie%20naujają%20evangelizacija.pdf (06.03.2019).

² Pope Leo XIII, *Encyclical of Rerum Novarum* (Rome: 1891), http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html (22.03.2018).

³ Pope Francis, *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia on love in the family*, Kaunas: Katalikų interneto tarnyba, 2016.

2. Research Question and Methods

In the XXI century the values of the consumer society are not only underestimated by human spiritual needs, but also by the person and his religious dimensions. There is a need for the Church to respond to the various forms of anthropological crisis (AC), especially in CS, to help educators understand the expression of the existing AC by recognizing it and by being prepared to have a response, hence conveying it to the younger generation. This research, which has not been discussed on the theoretical level, will help define AC (there are many different descriptions of this phenomenon, but there is no unified definition), presenting its expression and formulating the Church's response to forms of AC in CS. The role of the educator is becoming very important to answer the question: How will the pupils take the response and position in this respect through their learning in the CS? This research is important for the Catholic religious education, at least on the theoretical level; there will be a clear expression of the AC of the XXI century and the Church's response to its forms in an attempt to define the role of educator in this perspective.

In this chapter a method of aspect analysis will be used to define the concept of AC in the XXI century. Structural and aspect analyses will be used revealing the main causes of expression of the AC, thus also revealing the expression of the AC, furthermore giving the answer of CS to its forms relying on the answer of the Church and the aspects of the role of a Religious Educator at school.

In order to achieve a theoretical synthesis, the generalization method has been employed, to generalize the educological and theological literature so as to achieve the aim of the paper.

3. The concept of the anthropological crisis of the XXI Century

In the latter years a new term for AC – *crisis of values*⁴ – has been appearing not only in Christian, but also in popular media. This phenomenon can be found in the encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum*, by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, where socialist

⁴ G. Jakavonis, *Europos krizė- vertybių krizė*, (Vilnius: 2016). Looked up on 2019 February 18th. http://www.respublika.lt/lt/naujienos/nuomones_ir_komentarai/bus_isklausyta/es_krize__vertybiu_krize/ (18.02.2019).

ideas and unrestrained economic liberalism⁵ is condemned. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI saw the mentioned crisis mostly through the phenomenon of relativism, which he called the *dictatorship of relativism*: “We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.”⁶

Pope Francis uses the term AC directly by stating as a fact that “current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1–35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose.”⁷ It is stated that this aforementioned dictatorship is not self-contained, nor accidental. It is a tendentious forming of attitude, behind which is the rejection of ethics and God, because God is the only one who remains non-manipulable.⁸ But the formulation of this definition is not clearly defined and is understood by a description of a specific situation or ongoing processes and their context. Etymologically this term consists of two Greek words *anthropos* and *krisis*. The first means *human*, and the second means *turning point or hard transitional position*. Thus the use of the term AC means that we’re talking about a sudden change in something that is related to a situation influenced by the inner and outer changes of a human being/person that were normal until now. This clear or implied change is inseparable from such concepts as: secularism, pluralism, relativism, consumerism, liberalism, nihilism, humanism and these terms with ideological traits, which rise from factors impacting a person and society. The mentioned terms mostly encompass fields studied by sociology, philosophy, and theology. The most important ones are distinguished according to the direction and object of the article. As a phenomenon, AC has a characteristic

⁵ G. Jakavonis, *Europos krizė- vertybių krizė*, (Vilnius: 2016). Looked up on 2019 February 18th. http://www.respublika.lt/lt/naujienos/nuomones_ir_komentarai/bus_isklausyta/es_krizė__vertybiu_krizė/ (18.02.2019).

⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Homily of His Eminence Card. Joseph Ratzinger Dean of the College of Cardinals, Vatican Basilica* (2005), http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-prolegendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html. (23.05.2018).

⁷ Holy Father Francis, *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium on the Proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world* (Kaunas: Katalikų interneto tarnyba, 2014), 55.

⁸ Holy Father Francis, *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium on the Proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world* (Kaunas: Katalikų interneto tarnyba, 2014), 57.

postmodern and secular worldview, components of which are relativism and religious pluralism which stem from atheistic humanism and Neo-Darwinism. Thus the definition of an AC is not easily described and unequivocally defined. It exists in a secular culture marked by postmodern thinking, a common trait of which is the denial of a transcendent plane and its importance for the human being/person. This allows such worldviews as relativism and pluralism to gain a foothold. In relativistic thinking, which impacts not only the religious sphere but also cultural, political and artistic spheres, an absolute metaphysical truth is non-existing; only the subjective side of truth exists. Such worldview births the pluralistic way of thinking, which expresses itself as a combination of religious truths and religious practices or fragments – sincretism. Thus it is possible to say that the AC is a turning point of thinking on the scale of values, as a result of which the transcendent plane of a human being OR person (or the importance of it) and the supremacy of a human person in relation to other life forms or non-living matter, is denied. As we have described the definition of an AC, we can raise the question: What is the manifestation of the AC in the 21st century?

4. Expressions of the Anthropological Crisis of the XXI century

The expression of the AC of the XXI century can be revealed based on two worldviews, which are individualism and consumerism. Both of these worldviews are based on essential good – the person – who is higher than the ideals and goals of society. Thus the first worldview – a person according to the image of individualism, as an expression of the AC of the XXI century.

Pushing God out of the public and private life space is the reason why humanistic anthropocentrism is prevalent. Humanistic atheism is different from other forms of atheism because it is humanistic; a person is in the place of God as a measure of everything.⁹ Individualism and egoism is an inseparable trait of a secular society. According to a Lithuanian thinker, A. Maceina, egoism and individualism are born not only out of anthropocentrism, but also out of separation of love from justice. He, who places a person in the center of life, soon places his *I* in the place of this general concept. Anthropocentrism is always

⁹ A. Ramonas, *Evangelizacijos iššūkiai šiuolaikinėje visuomenėje*, Telšiai 2014, p. 86.

individualism, and individualism in practice is egoism.¹⁰ Advancement in science and technology has given the human person a lot of opportunity. The goal of this advancement – for man to be able to live better. In this way, a person can feel as being the center of everything.

Individualism as a phenomenon was not very common in the Medieval society. The place of a person in society was destined by their social hierarchy and other people's opinion about them. Liberalism promoted the freedom of an individual and was based on it. We can make three premises from this: *I* am an individual and I have one essence, which is non-divisible; I am surrounded by outer layers under which my real *I* is hidden; and the third premise is my real *I* is free. From the first premises we can say that an individual can know about himself what no one else can reveal. Only I, myself, can access my inner space. I cannot let anyone else decide for me, because no one else knows what I want and what is good for me, – such authority to the individual is given by liberalism.¹¹ Sociologist U. Beck has attributed these elements to individualism: liberation, social control, losing of stability. A person no longer feels safe, because since there's no God, or there's almost no God, in his life he feels like standing on water. Faith, and the meaning of life, were passed on from generation to generation, so that man felt safer. New social structures are required to match political, social and economic standards, which are based on the principle of pragmatism. This way the individuality of every person becomes irrelevant, their worth is disregarded a priori, but they are valued based on what function in society they can perform.¹² The processes of individualisation are always prompting the person to decide, to plan. It becomes especially harder to match the standards when the foundation of family, religion and culture is not that safe. It is also shown by the rising numbers of depression and suicides. The number of suicides is more than double in developed Western countries when compared to that in poorer and politically developing countries.¹³ Individualism, as mentioned before, is also spreading into the religious space. As Church religiousness is losing its significance, even though it has influence in forming religiousness, it is becoming more

¹⁰ A. Plėšnys, *Kapitalizmas kaip liga Antano Maceinos socialiniame teisingume*, "Problemos" 74 (2008), p. 5.

¹¹ Y.N. Harari, *Homo deus* (kitos knygos, 2018), 292.

¹² R.G. Rugevičiūtė, *Gyvenimo prasmės ieškojimo problemiškas ir krikščionybės atsakas*, "Soter" 33 (61), (2010), p. 139, https://eltalpykla.vdu.lt/bitstream/handle/1/33829/ISSN23358785_2010_N_33_61.PG_137_150.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y (20.05.2018).

¹³ Y.N. Harari, *Homo deus* (kitos knygos, 2018), 35.

and more individualised. Individuals themselves create systems of meaning, which often cross the line of any religion, thus becoming hostages of personal belief and religious neologisms. Individual, non-communal religiousness is the most important factor when choosing the viewpoint to follow in various religions or churches. Thus, in contemporary society, religious people associate religion with faith, peace, strength, morale, and safety. For those who are partly religious, of which there is more in number, religion gives peace, meaning and certainty of moral life.¹⁴ This situation was very influenced by mass urbanisation in Europe in the 70s. City living eradicated man from many traditional communities, and their moral life became their own personal matter. The city's parish, most commonly, is no longer a natural comforting community. And in this context, the thought that religion is a personal matter and the Church is like a public control council, kept getting stronger.¹⁵

A common trait for both a communal and an individualistic person alike is loneliness. It is a paradox, but a person can feel lonely in a crowd. This happens on a spiritual plane. In a big city a neighbor is just another individual, whose destiny most often is not important. Thus city dwellers can be called a crowd of loners.¹⁶

So in this time of exalting postmodern narcissism and one's own *I* it is often inclined to not acknowledge anything that would limit individual expression. Unlimited freedom is acknowledged in relation to the other, so the individual unavoidably inclines to use the other person for their own interests and satisfaction of their needs. This new stage of individualism – narcissism – shows that a type of person who has a special focus on themselves and their body, a new relation with the world and the other, is becoming more popular. This is happening in the time when the so called authoritarian capitalism is giving up its positions to hedonist and liberal capitalism. A new pure individualism is forming, which is trying to lose social and moral values, which coexisted with the great man of economy. And the essence of the private sphere itself is changing,

¹⁴ K. Meilius, *New Age: religinio sinkretizmo ir sekuliarizacijos sąsajos*, "Soter" 34 (62), (2010), pp. 153–154, https://eltalpykla.vdu.lt/bitstream/handle/1/33757/ISSN23358785_2010_N_34_62.PG_149_178.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowe (20.05.2018).

¹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner, Kodėl šiandien dar esu krikščionis?* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2008), pp. 11–12.

¹⁶ P. Gaida-Gaidamavičius, *Krikščionis tarp kolektyvizmo ir individualizmo*, in: *Suvažiavimo darbai*, VIII t. Roma: LKMA, 1974, p. 88.

since there are no transcendent guidelines left and this sphere now depends on unstable desires of the individual.¹⁷

Narcissism-based individualism influences and encourages a consumerist culture because in this type of worldview the individual himself is a value, and it is not desirable to acknowledge anything higher than this value. This way another person becomes the object of consumption. That is why the second worldview has the features of a social crisis: consumerist society as an expression of the anthropological crisis of the XXI century.

In the global world, science and technology take up a dominant position. This way man's spiritual search and questions of purpose and meaning of the world are pushed away. As technical inventions and consumerism prevails, ethical values are rejected and man is guided by instincts. People's relationships are grounded on mutual benefit. This is inseparable from the loss of spiritual values, which unavoidably imprisons in egoism and loneliness.¹⁸ Globalization is the unification of the world; the world is becoming a unified system ruled by more and more subtle technology, it is a phenomenon of universal inter-dependence, which is getting stronger. This process can be valued in two ways. On the one hand, it resembles a grandiose economic mechanism organized by the big corporations. It seems that the ideal goal of such globalisation is a worldwide consumerist society, which is easily manipulated because it only thinks superficially. Culture and religion would only be used by the protagonists of such globalisation as a means of ruling the masses, as propaganda. Globalisation, understood in this sense, is the arch nemesis of authenticity of culture and religion. This thought process is only directed to go wide, refusing to be directed to the depth. But in globalisation we can also see another worldwide movement going in the other direction than the one mentioned before. Another meaning of globalisation is the coming together of individuals, nations, cultures, and religions, stronger dialogue, and exchange of experiences. This process of coming together, it must be emphasized, is happening not by destroying one's identity, but by enriching it, not by pursuing cheap sincretism, but by pursuing maturity of one's own

¹⁷ G. Lipotevsky, *Tuštumos era: esė apie šiuolaikinį individualizmą*, Vilnius 2013: Mintis, p. 60.

¹⁸ R.G. Rugevičiūtė, *Gyvenimo prasmės ieškojimo problemiškas ir krikščionybės atsakas*, "Soter" 33 (61), (2010), p. 139, https://eltpykla.vdu.lt/bitstream/handle/1/33829/ISSN23358785_2010_N_33_61.PG_137_150.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y (20.05.2018).

understanding of the world.¹⁹ So globalisation means not only a unified world system, but also as new conditions for the unity of humankind. Thus the term of globalisation is difficult, but an inseparable trait of this term is a consumerist society. Our society is a society of consumers in that essential meaning in which the modern society of our ancestors, in its embryonic, industrial, stage, was a “society of manufacturers”. The two stages of modernism are “only” different in accents and priorities, but changed accents destined huge changes in essentially all planes of society, culture and the individual life. Those changes are so deep and diverse that we can fully reasonably talk about our society as being of another type – a society of consumers. The consumer of this society is a completely different being than consumers of any societies before. Our ancestors philosophers, poets and moralists preachers discussed the question, Do we work to live, or do we live to work? However, now the most discussed dilemma is whether it is necessary to consume in order to live, or do we live in order to consume.²⁰ In other words there is a question: Are we still capable and feel the need to differentiate between life and consuming. The most characteristic value of a consumer society in relation with which the value of other values is determined, is a happy life. A society of consumers is probably the only one in the history of humanity that promises happiness while living on earth and in every coming “now” that is to be. Fast and eternal happiness is promised. And it is probably the only society which refuses to tolerate unhappiness and portrays it as something ugly; something to be avoided at any cost.²¹ But sociological studies show that consuming, as any activity, is not a synonym for happiness. An article in the *Financial Times* states that the opposite tendencies were observed: stress, depression, worsening relationships, nervousness, lack of self-esteem. So whatever happens the consumer will never be satisfied, but this is the goal of a consumeristic society, for unsatisfied desires to create new ones. So the person is kept as if in an enchanted circle, always marked with the status of a client.²² Moreover, the insatiable desire to own rises from the unlimited pretense of consumerism.

¹⁹ P. Aleksandravičius, *Kultūra ir religiniai uždaviniai globalizuotame pasaulyje*, “Socialinių mokslų studijos” 9, (2018), pp. 139–140.

²⁰ Z. Bauman, *Globalizacija: pasekmės žmogui*, Vilnius 2002: Strofa, p. 46.

²¹ Z. Bauman, *Vartojamas gyvenimas*, Vilnius 2011: Apostrofa, p. 85.

²² Z. Bauman, *Vartojamas gyvenimas*, Vilnius 2011: Apostrofa, p. 88–90.

There is much more satisfaction in ownership of living beings than in ownership of property. This way ownership is extended by involving friends, lovers, health, trips, pieces of art, ones' ego and even God.²³ A constant seeking for happiness and dissatisfaction with temporality urges the person to search for new unexperienced experiences, which eventually also do not satisfy the inner needs of a person. In a capitalist, materialistic and consumerist society a person becomes alienated to oneself, to one's relatives, and even to one's nature. By consuming others even oneself becomes an item, and starts looking at the other person as an investment for which one could get the most profit. Everyone seeks to be near the other, yet everyone remains totally lonely, permeated by a strong feeling of being unsafe, of anxiety and guilt, which always appear when strong alienation between people is not defeated.²⁴

Pope Francis speaks about the situation of the contemporary world, which raises feelings of uncertainty and unsafeness, and which promotes forms of collective egoism. As the human person becomes egocentric and enclosed in oneself, one's greed also grows. The more empty the heart of a human becomes, the more he needs to buy, own and consume. In such a context it seems impossible to admit that reality can have limits of consuming. In this approach no common good exists. If such subject type dominates the society, norms are only respected as long as they do not contradict the needs of the individual. In this discussion one has in mind not only the possibility of big climate phenomena or natural changes/anomalies, but also catastrophes caused by social crises, because an irresistible desire for a consumeristic way of living, especially when not many individuals can use it, can cause violence and destruction of both sides.²⁵

This bizarre behaviour influenced by consumption and a culture of idolatry, is not overcome by living detached from God and from one another, in a trade which is not based on a relationship of love. Trades based on other qualities/values give a temporary satisfaction to a person, because trades like that are based on pragmatism, not altruism. So it is possible to say that an individual, living in the manifestation of individualism and consumerism, remains lonely because they become more of an object than a purpose. Thus, a very important

²³ È. Fromas, *Turėti ar būti*, Vilnius 1990, Mintis, p. 101.

²⁴ È. Fromas, *Menas mylėti*, Vilnius 1992, Valstybinis leidybos centras, p. 63.

²⁵ Holy Father Francis, *Encyclical letter Laudato si on care for our common home* (Kaunas: Katalikų interneto tarnyba, 2015), 204.

question comes up, What is the possible answer of the Church, based on which CS should and could answer these forms of the AC of the XXI century?

5. Possible answers by Catholic schools to the different forms of the anthropological crisis, based on the teachings of the Church

There are three possible answers by the Church, based on which CS could also answer the different forms of AC in the XXI century: new evangelization, missionary activities of the Church, and the spreading of Christian values. The first possible answer to the AC of the XXI century – new evangelization – would help in bringing back God and the dimension of a common transcendent being, to the society suffering from an AC, and to the lives of individuals and communities. Since the contemporary human person, in some or other circumstance, has lost the understanding that one is made in the image of God and does not notice their potential likeness which is built-in through moral law and inborn ethical norms, thus *homo deus* started taking the place of God. In the 19th century, in some dialectic directions of theology, this theme was thought of as the manifestation of human arrogance, as one compares oneself to God, or in equating oneself to God. That is why there is an invitation to renew and bring humans back to the understanding of the *imago Dei*. For this to happen, renewed means of evangelisation are needed. Protestant pastor Rick Warren compares evangelists with surfers catching good waves. In his thoughts, which were written a couple of decades ago, the author says that “Today, God is creating wave after wave of people receptive to the Gospel. Due to a plethora of problems in our world, more people seem to be open to the Good News of Christ than at any other time this century. Unfortunately, because our churches haven’t been taught the needed/necessary skills, we are missing the spiritual waves that could bring revival, health, and explosive growth to our churches.”²⁶ These thoughts can be applied to the contemporary situation. The new evangelisation was developed exactly for this purpose.

New evangelization was the theme of teachings of St. John Paul II for 27 years. Moreover, Benedict XVI wrote with prophet-like intuition: “Making my own the concerns of my venerable Predecessors, I consider it opportune to offer

²⁶ R. Warren, *Tikslu vedama Bažnyčia*, Vilnius 2007: Misionieriškas labdaros fondas *Licht im Osten*, p. 10.

appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization. Above all, this pertains to Churches of ancient origin, which live in different situations and have different needs, and therefore require different types of motivation for evangelization.”²⁷ And later, the Pope emphasized that “The Church always evangelizes and has never interrupted the path of evangelization. She celebrates the eucharistic mystery every day, administers the sacraments, proclaims the word of life – the Word of God, and commits herself to the causes of justice and charity. And this evangelization bears fruit: It gives light and joy, it gives the path of life to many people; many others live, often unknowingly, of the light and the warmth that radiate from this permanent evangelization. However, we can see a progressive process of de-Christianization and a loss of the essential human values, which is worrisome. A large part of today’s humanity does not find the Gospel in the permanent evangelization of the Church: That is to say, the convincing response to the question: How to live? This is why we are searching for, along with permanent and uninterrupted and never to be interrupted evangelization, a new evangelization, capable of being heard by that world that does not find access to “classic” evangelization. Everyone needs the Gospel; the Gospel is destined to all and not only to a specific circle and this is why we are obliged to look for new ways of bringing the Gospel to all.”²⁸

According to these prompts the Pontifical Council has taken its first steps. Three things that must be done are highlighted. The first one says that “adequate answers” must be given. The crisis that the world is currently living through is mainly of an anthropological nature. The consequences of secularization determined the unlawful removal of God, and this has strongly deformed the landmarks of personal identity: one is not able to justify oneself and to coordinate their being. Also, the Church is in this situation because of a deep faith crisis, caused by indifference, not knowing the essential Church teachings, and gradual estrangement from the Christian community, which causes the loss of the feeling of belonging to a community.

²⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Motu proprio Ubicumque et sempe* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: 2010), http://w2.vatican.va/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_2010_zdk-freiburg.html (03.05.2010).

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Naujoji evangelizacija*, “Bažnyčios žinios” (2011), <http://www.baznycioszinios.lt/old/bz0102/102dok4.html> (06.03.2019).

The second answer says that a new missionary flight is a must. It should overcome all hardship, which has determined a wrong understanding of the mission of the Church for decades, without comprehension of the task of every baptized person, which is to proclaim the Gospel of salvation. Many started to wrongfully think that analyzed proclamation is not needed, and a simple testimony of life will become the new form of evangelization. But the essence of a testimonial also covers the explicit proclamation, explaining why one is choosing to follow Christ. Also, the emphasizing of unifying aspects did not help to overcome the hardships because of fragmentation among Christians and other religions.

Regards the third answer about what action must/can be taken, the Holy Father Benedict said that there are many different situations which need different approaches to evangelization. There are various charismas working with different methodologies; but first of all every Christian is a model of the new evangelization. Thus it is important for the complementarity of expressions not to lessen, while maintaining unity of a common project which the Church tries to carry out through the new evangelization, whilst also seeing the goal to be achieved through it.²⁹

Precisely in the new evangelization the essential aspect comes clear – missionary-like – which is the second option in answering the AC.

Pope John Paul II wrote about the need for the Church to once again become a Church of missions so that like Paul, we would receive the grace “to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ” (*Eph* 3, 8). Newness of life in him is the “Good News” for men and women of every age: all are called to it and destined for it. Indeed, all people are searching for it, albeit at times in a confused way, and have a right to know the value of this gift and to approach it freely. The Church, and every individual Christian within her, cannot keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God’s bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind.³⁰

Joseph Ratzinger, who was still a cardinal at the time, called the missionary vocation of the Church the main method of Evangelization. The proclamation of Christ, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, presupposes listening to his

²⁹ R. Fisichella, *Naujajai Evangelizacijai nauji evangelizuotojai*, “Bažnyčios žinios” 7 (385), (2012), p. 28, http://www.baznycioszinios.lt/site/files/file/pdf/bzinios_2012-07.pdf (06.05.2019).

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* On the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate (Katalikai. Lt, 1990), 11, https://eis.katalikai.lt/vb/popieziai/jonas_paulius_ii/enciklikos/redemptoris-missio/eiss=sensus-fidei. (23.05.2018).

voice in the voice of the Church. “Not speak on his own authority” means: to speak in the mission of the Church. Many practical consequences come from this law of expropriation. All reasonable and morally acceptable methods should be studied – to use these possibilities of communication is a duty. But words and the whole art of communication cannot reach the human person to such depths as the Gospel must reach.³¹ Christ is the origin and centre and life of all the new men. He came into the created universe of His own will, bringing with Him the new life. And He transmits it not by heredity but by what I have called “good infection.” Everyone who gets it gets it by personal contact with Him.³² So the content, around which and into which the whole missionary activity must be going is the person of Christ. Only through a personal contact with Him can contemporary man discover that he himself is a loved person made in the image of God and that he is called to become similar to Him through Christ, as an icon of the Father, and in this way finding the appropriate response to ideas of humanistic atheism-neodarwinism and globally observed crisis of values. The mentioned personal connection is also a calling to discover a communal dimension of the Gospel, which comes from the reality that “it is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2, 18), this way resisting individualism, materialism, and a sterility of interpersonal testimony. As a Pope, on his apostolic journey to Germany, Benedict XVI emphasized thus: “We see that in our affluent western world much is lacking. Many people lack experience of God’s goodness. They no longer find any point of contact with the mainstream churches and their traditional structures. But why is this? They need places where they can give voice to their inner longing. And here we are called to seek new paths of evangelization. Small communities could be one such path, where friendships are lived and deepened in regular communal adoration before God.”³³

The aforementioned kerygma-based ways of evangelization of the missionary Church are not based solely on the efforts of the blessed members of the Church. The current pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation, reminds us that the whole nation of God is called to this in their innate *sensus fidei*. “As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Naujoji evangelizacija*, “Bažnyčios žinios” (2011), <http://www.baznycioszinios.lt/old/bz0102/102dok4.html> (06.03.2019).

³² C.S. Lewis, *Tiesiog krikščionybė*, Vilnius 2007: Katalikų pasaulio leidiniai, p. 243.

³³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Meeting with the Catholic lay faithful*, Apostolic Journey to Germany (2011), https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110924_zdk-freiburg.html (15.02.2019).

with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression. In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples." If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: "We have found the Messiah!" (Jn 1,41).³⁴

This joy, of the one who has found Christ, comes not only from oral proclamation, but first from a personal conversion and testimony of life. Only in this way is it possible to engage those searching for the meaning of life and fulfilment that faith can give, or those who call themselves Christian but have lost or still have not found a personal connection with Jesus and with communities of/ within the Church. Conversion means I separate myself from the formula "to live as all others" (I do not feel justified anymore by the fact that I do as everyone does and I find my own person in front of God, my own personal responsibility. But true personalization is always also a new and more profound socialization. The "I" opens itself once again to the "you," in all its depths, and thus a new "We" is born. If the lifestyle being spread throughout the world implies the danger of de-personalization, of not living one's own life but the life of all the others, in conversion, a new "We" of the common path of God, must be achieved. In proclaiming conversion we must also offer a community of life, a common

³⁴ Holy Father Francis, *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world* (Kaunas: Katalikų interneto tarnyba, 2014), 119–120. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

space for the new style of life. We cannot evangelize with words alone; the Gospel creates life, creates communities of progress; a merely individual conversion has no consistency.³⁵ Finally people of this day and age want to know why is it worth it to be Christian. Then the missionary strength of the Church can be the hope carried for the world which is disappointed in the possibility to create something that would satisfy it, and almost lost all hope.³⁶ This hope allows the proclaimer himself not to lose the joy of proclaiming. Hopeful joy is what makes the Gospel appealing.

The third possibility for the answer of the Church and CS to the AC is the spread of Christian values. Keeping in mind the spread of the Gospel, it is important to emphasize that throughout all times, the Church found the answer to the struggles and challenges in different times, which consolidated the proclamation of the Gospel, and in those times the Church existed as a part of those times itself being not from the world. The apostle Paul spoke to the Gentiles in a language that they understood, and missionaries from various countries implemented inculturation in those places where they traveled, inspired by the Spirit. Eventually the Gospel was proclaimed with the help of writing, and to those who couldn't read it spoke through art, sculptures, architecture. So all known measures were used for the mission.

The first printed book was the Bible, it came out in 1456. Regular religious radio programmes began broadcasting two months after the beginning of regular radio programmes in 1920. Religious programmes were among the first TV shows that came out in 1940. The Church always had enthusiastic communicators who strived to reveal opportunities of mass communication in carrying out the mission of the Church.³⁷ Back in 1990, Pope John Paul II observed the scale of secularization, globalization and the speed of technological advancements and encouraged Catholics to engage in the area of communications to make not only the Good News of the Gospel available for the masses but also to engage with society: “There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian

³⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Naujoji evangelizacija*, “Bažnyčios žinios” (2011), <http://www.baznycioszinios.lt/old/bz0102/102dok4.html> (06.03.2019).

³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karl Rahner, Kodėl šiandien dar esu krikščionis?*, Vilnius 2008: Aidai, p. 83.

³⁷ J. Milušauskienė, *Visuomenės komunikavimo tarnystės prioritetai Katalikų Bažnyčioje Lietuvoje*, Licenciuoto darbas, Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2012, p. 49.

message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology.³⁸ However paradoxically it might sound, technologies destine the denial of not only humanity, but also the state of a spiritually stronger humanity, in the configuration of which religion certainly plays an important role.³⁹ Criteria, by which the fruitfulness of the communication of the Church in the XXIst century's multicultural, AC-stricken environment of the Western world can be measured, are important. The same criteria are applied in CS. The first criteria is dialogue. Jesus himself used this method. He was in personal contact and dialogue with the people of his time. The importance of dialogue was also emphasized by the Second Vatican Council, and Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Francis also frequently emphasizes the importance of dialogue and says that the most important goal in any situation is to be able to dialogue with the men and women of today, to understand their expectations, doubts, hopes. To dialogue means believing that the other participant also has something worthy to say and to take their views into account. You don't have to give up your ideas and traditions, but to refuse the pretense that only one's ideas and views are worthy and absolutely right, says the Pope. Pope Francis also emphasizes the importance to accept those who don't think like us, who don't have faith or have lost it, also those who are persecuted, jobless, or people of other culture. A man is not convinced with arguments, strategies, tactics or technologies, but by how he is accepted.⁴⁰

The second criteria is Christocentrism. Benedict XVI talked about the crisis of theology and said that theology must turn back in order to become true theology, because Christians often live as if God didn't exist. This problem of "God not existing" mentioned by the then still Cardinal Ratzinger, often permeates into messages communicated by the Church. As already mentioned, humanistic and secular views provide an understanding that the reason and goal of everything

³⁸ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate (Katalikai. Lt, 1990), 37, https://eis.katalikai.lt/vb/popieziai/jonas_paulius_ii/enciklikos/redemptoris-missio/eiss=sensus-fidei (23.05.2018).

³⁹ P. Aleksandravičius, *Kultūra ir religiniai uždaviniai globalizuotame pasaulyje*, "Socialinių mokslų studijos" 9, (2018), p. 141.

⁴⁰ J. Milušauskienė ir A. Narbekovas, *Pagrindiniai teologiniai Katalikų Bažnyčios komunikacinio pranešimo vertinimo kriterijai*, "Soter" 60 (88), (2016), pp. 76-77.

is the human being. Such worldview influences the understanding of the activities of the Church, especially communication. (Sometimes) Believers try not to mention the “uncomfortable” name of God, even in CS, and more often there are cases/situations when, whilst concentrating on specific pastoral guidelines or passing of moral values, the essence of proclamation – to pass on the synthesis of the news of the Gospel – is lost. Only through theocentrism coming from a personal relationship with Jesus, is the goal of any communication of the Church achieved. The execution of various ethical, moral and church commitments comes only from this meeting. That is why talking about ethical, moral, and church organisation without talking about the relationship with Jesus Christ, loses all meaning. Without this aspect of christocentrism, the communication of the Church will remain an ideology, manipulation and theological sophism.⁴¹

The third criteria is the testimony of life. It comes from the fact that the proclaimer of the news of the Church is also a means of communication. Pope Paul VI said that “for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one’s neighbor with limitless zeal, [because] Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.⁴² According to Paul VI, the Church first communicates with the testimony of its holiness, with its own holy behaviour and life: faithfulness to Jesus, renunciation of riches and worldly power. So the communicator of the Church first communicates with his being and with his lifestyle, in which his message – Jesus Christ – can be seen. Such living testimony of the communicator encourages the audience to decide, and to actively and with faith, respond to the Word of God.⁴³

In 1971 when the development of technologies was just beginning, apart from radio, television, cinema, printed material or theatre, society didn’t have this many possibilities to use the new technologies.. But even then, the Church understood that people “have grown so used to the entertaining style and skilful presentation of communications by the media that they are intolerant of what

⁴¹ J. Milušauskienė ir A. Narbekovas, *Pagrindiniai teologiniai Katalikų Bažnyčios komunikacinio pranešimo vertinimo kriterijai*, “Soter” 60 (88), (2016), p. 78.

⁴² Pope Paul VI, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi: on evangelization in contemporary world* (Katalikų interneto tarnyba, 1999), 41, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost-exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html

⁴³ J. Milušauskienė ir Andrius Narbekovas, *Pagrindiniai teologiniai Katalikų Bažnyčios komunikacinio pranešimo vertinimo kriterijai*, “Soter” 60 (88), (2016), p. 79.

is obviously inferior in any public presentation. It makes no difference if this be a religious occasion, such as, for example, a liturgical ceremony, a sermon or religious instruction. In order to make the teaching of Christianity more interesting and effective the media should be used as much as possible. Every effort should be made to use the most appropriate technique and style in fitting a communication to its medium.⁴⁴ After all, people, just like in any age, are guided by five senses, and though spiritual senses exist, empirical senses remain dominant in understanding the world and communication. It would probably be hard to deny that contemporary man most commonly uses hearing and seeing out of all senses, and prioritizes seeing out of those two. So visual communication is based on images, visuals. And images become messages which are not only seen as the image, but the brain, whilst participating in this process of seeing, gives meaning to the image.⁴⁵ Endless possibilities for imagination became reachable with the Internet. “The Internet is the latest and in many respects most powerful in a line of media – telegraph, telephone, radio, television – that for many people have progressively eliminated time and space as obstacles to communication during the last century and a half. It has enormous consequences for individuals, nations, and the world.⁴⁶ And although the Internet encourages a consumerist culture, individualism, egocentrism, and alienation in the global context, thus adding and promoting the deepening of the AC, however, like all means of communication, it can tremendously serve the spread of Christian values. With the help of the Internet not only is immediate communication through social media achieved, but also advertising, information about Christian events, camps, parish activities can be passed on, especially to the youth. Together with other means of communication it passes on news and introduces to religious events, ideas and personalities, and is a tool for evangelization and catechesis.

⁴⁴ Popiežiškoji visuomenės komunikavimo priemonių komisija, Pastoracinė instrukcija, “Communio et progressio”, “Katalikų interneto tarnyba” (2000), pp. 130–131. Looked up on 2019 March 6th http://www.lcn.lt/b_dokumentai/instrukcijos/communio_et_progressio.html#2.%20Komunikavimo%20priemoni%C5%B3%20nauda%20Evangelijos (06.03.2019). http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html (06.03.2019).

⁴⁵ Ž. Matulevičienė, *Biblinės pastoracijos svarba įveikiant pastoracijos ir evangelizacijos atskirtį*, Licenciatų darbas, Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2011, p. 30.

⁴⁶ Popiežiškoji visuomenės komunikavimo tarnyba, *Interneto etika*, “Katalikų interneto tarnyba” (2002), 2, https://eis.katalikai.lt/vb/romos_kurija/popieziskosios_tarybos/vkp/2002-02-22_interneto-etika (06.03.2019), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_ethics-internet_en.html (06.03.2019).

These means of communication inspire, encourage and provide the possibility to follow Holy Mass and other prayer services for people who are stuck at home or are in shelters. But the Internet gives many more distinctive advantages. It allows people to momentarily and directly reach important religious and spiritual sources – huge libraries, museums and places of cult, documents of the Magisterium, writings of the Church Fathers and Teachers, and religious wisdom accumulated through the ages.⁴⁷

The most characteristic worldview trends of the 21st century linked with the manifestation of an AC are individualism and a consumeristic Western culture. Their most common traits: the affirmation of one's "I" and putting personal interests higher than the morals of society. These traits manifest as a possibility to use another person, community, and natural resources according to the subjective needs of an individual.

New evangelization, the proclamation of which is described as a renewal of a missionary spirit, is offered as a possible answer of the Church, and also of CS to the manifestation of the AC. This character of evangelization consists of using all possible and acceptable means of contemporary communication to spread the Good News – the Internet, social networks – with the help of which, reviving the sense of community of separate individuals. But a question remains, given the possible answers of CS to the AC: What is the role of the educator in this perspective and how can an educator contribute to the implementation of this answer at school?

6. The Role of a Religious Educator at School

The role of a Religious Educator in a CS can be revealed in two different perspectives. The first one is that Religious Educators need to recognize the manifestations of the AC or, to be more exact, to realise to what extent they are personally influenced by the consumerist society and how they (try to) respond/resist to individualism and loneliness which are a result of a consumerist society. Only a Religious Educator who has walked this path will be able to fruitfully recognize not only these, but also other manifestations of AC of the 21st

⁴⁷ Popiežiškoji visuomenės komunikavimo tarnyba, *Interneto etika*, "Katalikų interneto tarnyba" (2002), 5, https://eis.katalikai.lt/vb/romos_kurija/popieziskosios_tarybos/vkp/2002-02-22_interneto-etika (06.03.2019).

century in their students.⁴⁸ The second perspective is that a religious educator who has recognized the manifestations of the AC of the 21st century in their students at school, conveys a possible threefold answer of the Church and at the same time of the CS to the AC, as described above. Looking from these two perspectives, the key answer to the role of a religious educator is *community spirituality*.⁴⁹ Religious Educators themselves must/need to live out a community dimension of spirituality and integrate it into their religious education in a CS. One may ask, Why does community spirituality become the main answer? From one side, the creation of communion and community may be the answer to balance the manifestations of the AC of the 21st century – individualism and consumerism – the consequence of which is loneliness.⁵⁰ For this to happen a person first needs a new evangelization, so they come to desire communion and to be with the Other. This way, by living out community spirituality and understanding the importance of it, a Religious Educator carries out a mission and fulfils the education and motivation of the Church's missionary character, by an active manifestation of altruism and values of communion. The advantage of this combined answer, based on the integration of community spirituality in religious education and in personal and communal planes, is the rebuilding and strengthening of the relationship with God and the Church, and in creating a renewed connection between individuals based on a transcendent dimension.

On the other hand, based on the integration of community spirituality in religious education, the role of a Religious Educator is formed by three different perspectives. The first is the position of the religious educator himself/herself: their life in CS according to the example of an educational family. The second is his/her reciprocity; approaching the other, taking a step to meet the other, seeking a dialogue, and focusing on community pedagogics. The third is the

⁴⁸ Micahele de Beni, *Švietėjiškas minties iššūkis*, in: M. de Beni, V. Šimović, A.L. Gasparini (Eds.), *Pedagogy of Communion and the Agazzi Method*, Croatian: Zagreb 2012, pp. 17–21.

⁴⁹ "CS enables the cultures of love and unity, dialogue, and commonality functioning in various spheres of life, including educational institutions". Ausra Vasiliauskaite, *Integrating community spirituality into religious education: a school educator's role*, in: M.T. Buchanan, Adrian-Mario Gellel (Eds.), *Global perspectives on Catholic religious education in schools, Vol. 2: Learning and leading in a pluralist world*, Singapore: Springer Nature Ltd. (2019): p. 453.

⁵⁰ G. Milan, *For the pedagogy of community*, in: M. de Beni, V. Šimović, & A.L. Gasparini (Eds.), *Pedagogy of Communion and the Agazzi Method*, Croatian: Zagreb 2012, pp. 281–289; Michele De Beni, *Reciprocity. Renaissance of a person and the community*, in: M. de Beni, V. Šimović, & A.L. Gasparini (Eds.), *Pedagogy of Communion and the Agazzi Method*, Zagreb, Učiteljski fakultet u Zagrebu 2012, pp. 295–298.

educator's input to pupils on the basis of the pedagogy of the CS. One of the most important outcomes is the positive education of young people. In conclusion, these perspectives reveal the usefulness and importance of the integration of CS into RE in order to fully reveal the role of an educator at school.⁵¹

7. Conclusion(s)

The AC can be defined as a turning point in a system of values, as a consequence of which the transcendent plane of a human (or the importance of it) and the supremacy of a human regarding other life forms or non-living matter is denied. AC as a characteristic phenomenon for contemporary technological Western society is most widespread in the Old Continent, especially in politically and economically advanced countries. The manifestation of the AC is linked with the most important parts in the lives of a person and society: politics, economy, religion, ethics, education, culture, medicine, and spread of information. The manifestation of crisis can be hard to recognize and discuss because of the fragmentation of the person as unity, and complex equalizing of truth and lie. The manifestation of the AC of the 21st century could only have been revealed based on two worldviews, that is individualism and consumerism. The possible answer of the Church and CS to the manifestations of the AC (after first recognizing them) is new evangelization, missionary activities of the Church, spreading of Christian values through the Internet and social media, and reviving the sense of community of separate individuals. In a CS, after recognizing the manifestations of the AC of the 21st century and knowing the answer of the Church, which becomes the answer of the Catholic school, the role of the Religious Educator is in carrying the message of the Church, conditioning the integration of *community spirituality* into the process of education, which then forms the triple role of the Religious Educator.

⁵¹ A. Vasiliauskaite, *Integrating community spirituality into religious education: a school educator's role*, in: M.T. Buchanan, Adrian-Mario Gellel (Eds.), *Global perspectives on Catholic religious education in schools, Vol. 2: Learning? Learning and leading in a pluralist world*, Singapore: Springer Nature Ltd. 2019, pp. 453–454.

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