

Ks. Piotr Kulbacki

Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II
Wydział Teologii

FAMILY CATECHUMENATE IN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

The theology of the Domestic Church has become a significant premise for undertaking reflection on marriage and the family. After many centuries of ignoring it, the Council Fathers have returned to the definition of the family as the Domestic Church and „evangelizing community”¹. In this way the Biblical roots have been returned to that are revealed in St Paul’s Letters and in the patristic tradition particularly in the writings by St John Chrysostom, who defined the family as a „small Church” – *ecclesiola*, and by St Augustine who even compared the role of fathers of the family to that of the bishop². However, in the Council’s teaching the phrase „Domestic Church” very cautiously used – *velut ecclesia domestica* (LG 11), *tamquam domesticum sanctuarium Ecclesiae* (AA 11). The term was explicitly used in the postconciliar period by Paul VI³. The postconciliar studies on the subject of the „Domestic Church” lead to the encyclopedic definition which says that „it is a married couple and a family that put into effect the Christian mission resulting from the sacrament of matrimony, signifying and realizing the Church”⁴.

¹ S. Dziekoński, *Formacja chrześcijańska dziecka w rodzinie w nauczaniu Kościoła (Christian Formation of the Child in the Family in the Church’s Teaching)*, Warszawa 2006, p. 182.

² E. i M. Marczewscy, „*Kościół domowy*”. *Ocena pojęcia („The Domestic Church”). Appraisal of the Idea*, in: *Małżeństwo i rodzina w świetle nauki Kościoła i współczesnej teologii (Marriage and the Family in the Light of the Church’s Teaching and of Contemporary Theology)*, ed. A.L. Szafranski, Lublin 1985, p. 242, 243.

³ S. Dziekoński, *Formacja chrześcijańska dziecka...*, p. 190, 191.

⁴ *Domowy Kościół (The Domestic Church)*, in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, t. 4 (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4), ed. R. Łukaszyk, L. Bienkowski, F. Gryglewicz. Lublin 1985, p. 104; in the first centuries the name *ecclesia domestica* was also ascribed to the place of the liturgical cult, *ibid*.

The Council has repeatedly referred to matrimony and to the family however, it has not issued a separate document to this subject. A significant role with respect to this problem was played by the Synod of Bishops (26 IX–25 X 1980). It was the first Synod of Bishops convened during John Paul II's pontificate. The apostolic exhortation on the tasks of the Christian family in the contemporary world *Familiaris consortio*⁵, published by John Paul II, summed up the work of the Synod. It is in this exhortation that the Church's postconciliar teaching on the Christian family defined in the perspective of its tasks in the contemporary world, along with a full assimilation of the term Domestic Church, found its place. The results of the Synod's work found its reflection in the Catechism of the Catholic Church⁶. This article is meant to analyse the role of the Domestic Church as presented in the exhortation and in the light of Christian initiation defined in the postconciliar Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

In the exhortation *Familiaris consortio* John Paul II claims that marital communion is the foundation of the family's participation in the Church's life and mission; the communion has its sources „in the natural complementarity that exists between man and woman, and is nourished through the personal willingness of the spouses to share their entire life-project, what they have and what they are: for this reason such communion is the fruit and the sign of a profoundly human need” (FC 19). At the same time this human need is confirmed, purified and elevated to the rank of the sacrament of matrimony (FC 19). The sacramental celebration becomes the event in which the Holy Spirit is given to the spouses⁷; in this way the couple receives the gift of a new communion of love that is the image of love and unity of Christ – the Head, and His Mystical Body – the Church (FC 19).

The Christian family is called the Domestic Church, since bestowed with the Holy Spirit's gifts it reveals ecclesial communion (FC 21). In the family the educational exchange between parents and children is realized, and parents should exercise their parental authority in the spirit of „ministry”. This means that family communion can only be preserved and perfected through the attitude of sacrifice: a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to

⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (FC), 22 XI 1981.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), Città del Vaticano 1993, No. 1655–1658.

⁷ The community gathered in the cenacle revealed itself as the Church after the descent of the Holy Spirit; analogously, the Byzantine rite has a special epiclesis before the crowning that is a significant rite during the ceremony of marriage. Cf. W. Danielski, *Liturgia w życiu rodziny* (*Liturgy in the Life of the Family*), in: *Rytuał religijny w rodzinie* (*Religious Rite in the Family*), ed. W. Piwowarski, W. Zdaniewicz, Warszawa–Poznań 1988, p. 141.

pardon, to reconciliation⁸. The family is called to renew its experience of „reconciliation”, which finds its special fulfilment in receiving grace in the sacrament of Reconciliation on one hand, and unity in the Eucharist on the other (FC 21).

The ministry of life that is undertaken in the Christian family today, contrary to the pressure of the modern world that rejects the concept of man based on his dignity, needs strengthening in the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation (FC 33). Married people’s moral life in the domain of love, faithfulness and sexuality requires sacrifice and unceasing progress; this is why „sacrifice cannot be removed from family life, but must in fact be wholeheartedly accepted if the love between husband and wife is to be deepened and to become a source of intimate joy” (FC 34). Only the ability to make sacrifices becomes a moral premise for giving birth to children and raising them in faith.

The right and at the same time a duty to educate their offspring is a significant element connected with the ministry of life (FC 36, 37). It has a special character in the life of Christian parents who in the sacrament of Matrimony are consecrated to educate their children in a really Christian spirit. The sacrament of Matrimony confers on the parents’ educational tasks the character of vocation that becomes „really and truly a «ministry» of the Church at the service of the building up of her members” (FC 38). This mission of the Church undertaken by parents for their children is the reason why „baptized people, the family, called together by word and sacrament as the Church of the Home, is both teacher and mother, the same as the worldwide Church” (FC 38).

SHARING IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The Council constitution *Lumen gentium* stresses the significant role that the family plays in the mystery of the Church by saying that Christian spouses and parents „in their state and way of life have their own special gift among the People of God” (LG 11). This means that, on one hand, by receiving Christ’s love they become a „saved” community, and on the other, by communicating this gift to their brethren they become a „saving” community (FC 49). In this way „the Christian family is a fruit and sign of the supernatural fecundity of the Church, it stands also as a symbol, witness and participant of the Church’s motherhood” (FC 49, cf. LG 41). Its share in the triple dimension of the Church community’s life issues from the mission of Jesus Christ – the Prophet, Priest and King⁹. The Church that is a community united in the Holy Spirit – *koinonia* – is performing Her role in the dimension defined by the terms *martyria*, *leiturgia*, *diakonia*¹⁰.

⁸ Ibid, p. 145, 146.

⁹ Cf. E. i M. Marczewscy, „*Kościół domowy*”. *Ocena...*, p. 249.

¹⁰ Cf. W. Przygoda, *Istota i posłannictwo Kościoła (The Church’s Essence and Mission)*, in: *Teologia pastoralna*, t. 1 (*Pastoral Theology*, vol. 1), ed. R. Kamiński, Lublin 2000, p. 132–134.

Pointing to the prophetic dimension of the family's life John Paul II stresses that „the Christian family fulfills its prophetic role by welcoming and announcing the word of God” (FC 51). Making the word of God one of the foundations of the family allows its members to grow in faith and makes the family the subject of evangelization. The reception of God's word is constantly opening the spouses for the mystery of marriage and the family as „a sign and meeting place of the loving covenant between God and man, between Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church” (FC 51).

This process of growth in faith goes on starting with preparation for Christian marriage. It should happen in the perspective of faith confirmed in Baptism and developing in the young people's further life, as the spouses' Christian vocation is determined by the baptismal vocation (cf. FC 51).

The liturgical rite of the sacramental marriage is the act of proclaiming Good News on the conjugal love, that is „the word of God which «reveals» and «fulfills» wise and loving plan of God for the married couple, giving them a mysterious and real share in the very love with which God Himself loves humanity” (FC 51). This proclamation has an evangelizing dimension both for the newly married and for other believers strengthening their faith, as well as it is the Church's testimony of faith for all those who in different ways participate in the celebration. This is because the Domestic Church, like the whole Church, constantly needs evangelization. All believers are called to „self-evangelization”, since only those can evangelize the world in a credible and efficient way who first of all evangelize themselves¹¹. The community of the family becomes the subject of evangelization, especially with respect to its own children (cf. CCC 1656). This service is a share in the Church's mission, so it should remain in the inner communion and harmony with all other evangelizing and catechetical activities present and at work in the ecclesial community on the diocesan and parochial levels (cf. FC 53). The family community, enlivened with faith, becomes a sign for other people, and especially for other families searching for ways of following the Lord (cf. CCC 1658). The Bible testifies (cf. Acts 18: 1. 26; Rom 16: 3) to the evangelizing service undertaken by the spouses (cf. FC 54).

The priestly role of the family is closely connected with the essence of the sacrament of marriage. „The Christian family can and ought to exercise [it] in [the] intimate communion with the whole Church, through the daily realities of conjugal and family life. In this way the Christian family is called to be sanctified and to sanctify the ecclesial community and the world” (FC 55). The spouses do not receive the sacramental gift once only – in the liturgy establishing their marriage – but they are supported by it throughout their life. Hence their self-sacrificing and active conjugal and family life by becoming a ceaseless spiritual sacrifice makes

¹¹ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8 XII 1975, No. 15.

the Christian marriage, like all the sacraments whose aim is to sanctify man, to build Christ's Mystical Body, and finally to worship God (cf. SC 59) to be in itself an act of liturgical adoration of God in Jesus Christ and in the Church. By entering this sacrament the Christian spouses confess their gratitude to God for the lofty gift presented to them, which is the fact that in their conjugal and family life they may experience God's love for people and Lord Jesus' love for the Church, His bride (cf. FC 56).

Hence there is a close connection between the Eucharist and marriage, as it is the Eucharistic sacrifice that represents Christ's covenant of love with the Church. Having share in it they renew and enliven the conjugal covenant, and also it becomes a never-ending source of missionary and apostolic dynamism (cf. FC 57)¹².

The Catechism of the Catholic Church stresses that in the Domestic Church „the baptismal priesthood” of the children's parents and of all the members of the family community is practiced (cf. CCC 1657). Realizing the baptismal vocation requires constant conversion, in order to remain faithful to „the newness” of Baptism that makes people „holy” (FC 58). This is why „the celebration of this sacrament acquires a special significance for family life. While they discover in faith that sin contradicts not only the covenant with God, but also the covenant between husband and wife and the communion of the family, the married couple and the other members of the family are led to an encounter with God, who is «rich in mercy» (Eph 2, 4), and who, bestows on them His love which is more powerful than sin (cf. DM 13), and who reconstructs and brings to perfect the marriage covenant and the family communion” (FC 58)¹³.

At the same time it should be stressed that conjugal and family life requires to be anchored not only in liturgy but also in the communion of prayer of the Domestic Church, as it is both the consequence and the requirement of communion bestowed through the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. In this communion all the circumstances of family life are reflected: its joys, hopes, sorrows and disappointments (cf. FC 59). This is why one of the parents' fundamental duties is teaching prayer by their own example (FC 60). This prayer of the Domestic Church as well as one's own prayer (cf. SC 11, 12) constitute a preparation for participation in liturgy celebrated in the parish, especially on Sundays and feast days, and also in the liturgy of sacraments. In this way the prayers of the Domestic Church create a natural space in which one gets accommodated to the liturgical prayer of the whole Church¹⁴. The exhortation *Familiaris consortio* stresses that apart from other groups also Christian families are invited to participate in the reformed Liturgy of the Hours (cf. IGLH 27). Proper celebration of seasons within

¹² Cf. W. Nowak, *Zarys liturgii Kościoła domowego (An Outline of the Liturgy of the Domestic Church)*, Olsztyn 2000, p. 27; cf. W. Danielski, *Liturgia w życiu...*, p. 143.

¹³ Cf. W. Nowak, *Zarys liturgii...*, p. 29.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 55–57.

the liturgical year at home is a significant element of liturgical formation in the family catechumenate. However, also other forms of practicing popular piety favor the formation of Christian life in the family (cf. FC 61), which, if it is based on prayer, makes its mission in the contemporary world fruitful (cf. FC 62).

The exhortation *Familiaris consortio* also points to the diaconal dimension of the Domestic Church. Since „the Church, a prophetic, priestly and kingly people, is endowed with the mission of bringing all human beings to accept the word of God in faith, to celebrate and profess it in the sacraments and in prayer, and to give expression to it in the concrete realities of life in accordance with the gift and new commandment of love” (FC 63), it is also on the strength of baptismal and conjugal vocation that the family is called to perform the „service” of love to God and to people. The Holy Spirit in the hearts of the spouses and the other members of the family community sends them to perform different kinds of service to their fellow men, which is stressed by the Council in *Lumen gentium*:

Now Christ has communicated this royal power to His disciples that they might be constituted in royal freedom and that by true penance and a holy life they might conquer the reign of sin in themselves (cf. Rom 6:12). Further, He has shared this power so that serving Christ in their fellow men they might by humility and patience lead their brethren to that King for whom to serve is to reign (no. 36).

The spouses’ service has a special character, typical for the laity, by whose mediation the Lord „wishes to spread His kingdom, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. In this kingdom, creation itself will be delivered out of its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God (cf. Rom 8:21; LG 36)” (FC 63). This is because each human being belongs to the Christian family, which following the model of the Domestic Church should take on a more human and fraternal style of relationships (cf. FC 64).

The share the family has in the mission of the Church, which has been presented above, finds its special expression in the „family catechumenate”.

THE INITIATORY FUNCTION OF THE FAMILY

The Second Vatican Council decided that the institution of catechumenate should be restored; the institution that played a great, irreplaceable role in the first centuries of the Church’s existence. It started to disappear in the first centuries of the Middle Ages – so as soon as it entered the golden age of its development and started fulfilling, fairly efficiently, its initiatory function in the communities that only began to discover Christianity, the institution of the catechumenate started to decline, as result of general Christianization. In early Middle Ages in the countries that were the inheritors of the Roman Empire Christianity became common, along with the generally practiced baptism of infants. Since they were brought up in Chri-

stian families, the initiatory role was justly ascribed to the baptized parents. This model should bear fruit of profound Christianity in the next generations. However, this catechumenate has become only a ritual¹⁵. Any reluctance to the rules of life according to the principles of the faith, or even questioning Christianity in general, especially visible in the modern epoch, appeared, apart from other reasons, due to basic simplification of the idea of formation in the family home, namely, by underestimating the personal decision to believe in the process of Christian formation¹⁶. In ancient times such a personal decision was a condition for being accepted in the community of the Church, which was preceded by the catechumenate.

When coming into contact with the secularized world, with a de-Christianized family unable to accustom children to Christian life, as well as in the face of the first evangelization in the third world countries gaining independence, it turned out that the fundamental pedagogy of Christian initiation, that is the ancient institution of catechumenate, is of a great need¹⁷. In response to the postulates formulated by the Council a pattern edition (*editio typica*) of *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum* (OICA) was published in 1972¹⁸. This liturgical book contains a program of formation for adult catechumens and the accompanying rites that are based on the Church tradition.

Obviously this does not mean that the practice of baptizing infants or accompanying initiation harmonized with the development of the child should be given up in Christian families. This is why the Council's reference to the ancient Christian definition of the family as the Domestic Church became an important incentive that has stimulated further theological reflection on the sacramental marriage and the family and their connection to the Christian initiation. Soon it turned out that the idea of *ecclesia domestica* indicated in the teaching of Vaticanum II may prove extremely fruitful in the Church's pastoral-liturgical practice, especially in the area of initiation.

In the history of the Church of the first centuries we come across two basic forms of introducing new members into the Christian community. The first one is the catechumenate of adults who personally, consciously accepted the Gospel. This is a process aiming at initiating them into Christian life stage by stage (cf. OICA 4), and leading to receive the sacraments of initiation along with the mystagogy by accompanying them. The other form is initiating children who were baptized in infancy into Christian life. This happens parallel to their biological, social, psychological and spiritual development. This process also happens gradually as a natural element of educating children in a Christian family, and it can be called

¹⁵ C. Krakowiak, *Katechumenat chrzcielny doroslych w Kościele posoborowym (The Baptismal Catechumenate of Adults in the postconciliar Church)*, Lublin 2003, p. 92, 93.

¹⁶ F. Blachnicki, *Rodzinny katechumenat (Family Catechumenate)* in: idem, *Sympatycy czy chrześcijanie (Sympathizers or Christians)*, Kraków 2003, p. 79, 80.

¹⁷ C. Krakowiak, *Katechumenat chrzcielny doroslych...*, p. 152.

¹⁸ Cf. *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*, Minnesota 1988.

„family catechumenate”. Obviously this role may be played only by a family that lives with faith and follows the way of the Domestic Church, which, fulfilling the above described functions – prophetic, priestly and ancillary, – constitutes a proper environment for Christian initiation.

Such a method and the aims of Christian education in the family coincide with the pedagogy of the catechumenate defined in the *Rite of christian initiation for adults*. The renewed rites of the catechumenate say that

the initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. Together with the catechumens, the faithful reflect upon the value of the paschal mystery, renew their own conversion, and by their example lead the catechumens to obey the Holy Spirit more generously (OICA 4).

It should be noted here that pedagogy of the post-baptismal catechumenate described in Chapter Four of the *Rite of christian initiation* is concerned with adolescents and youths as well as adults who have not been properly introduced into Christian life. Most often such a situation results from the family’s inability to fulfill the catechumenal function because of the parents’ insufficient involvement in the life of faith. Those parents, having not experienced fully their family as the Domestic Church were not able to play their role properly as ones who lead family catechumenate (cf. OICA 295–305). However, there are no obstacles to use the inspirations from Chapter Four of the *Rite* in permanent formation making the baptismal spirituality more profound.

Although the exhortation *Familiaris consortio* does not use the term „family catechumenate”, it repeatedly stresses the role of the Domestic Church in initiating into Christian life understood in this way. This is why it points to „the educational mission of the Christian family as a true ministry through which the Gospel is transmitted and radiated, so that family life itself becomes an itinerary of faith and in some way a Christian initiation and a school of following Christ” (FC 39). This itinerary of faith has its root in the permanent mutual evangelization in the family (FC 39; cf. EN 71).

The exhortation refers here to the teaching of the Council Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum educationis* (GE):

Such an education does not merely strive to foster maturity [...] in the human person. Rather, its principal aims are these: that as baptized persons are gradually introduced into a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, they may daily grow more conscious of the gift of faith which they have received; that they may learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth (cf. 1 John 4:23), especially through liturgical worship; that they may be trained to conduct their personal life in true righteousness and holiness, according to their new nature (Eph. 4:22-24), and thus grow to maturity, to the stature of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13), and devote themselves to the upbuilding of the Mystical Body. Moreover, aware of their calling, they should grow accustomed to bearing witness to the hope that is in them (cf. 1 Pt. 3:15), and to promoting the Christian transformation of the world (FC 39; cf. GE 2).

CATECHUMENATE AND FORMATION IN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH FOR THE FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The analysis of the catechumenate in the Church on the basis of its contemporary rites poses the question, whether the stages, steps or gateways (cf. OICA 6) and the periods for making inquiry and maturing that are actually connected with them (cf. OICA 7) actually find their reflection in the above described religious formation of children in the Christian family, called *per analogiam* „family catechumenate”. How does the reality of formation and rites described in the Church’s liturgical book relate to the process of preparation for the first holy communion taking place in the Domestic Church? It should be stressed in advance that the rites of the catechumenate do not need to have strict equivalents, as in the „family catechumenate” we are dealing with a post-baptismal catechumenate; and in the reality of the Western Church not all sacraments of initiation are celebrated in infancy. This means that children are baptized, but they participate in a certain stage of the initiation process preparing them for the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation¹⁹. This initiation process is accompanied by a simultaneous preparation for the sacrament of penance and reconciliation applied before the first full participation in the Holy Mass. OICA mentions the following elements connected with formation of adult catechumens:

- the period connected with the search undertaken by the candidate, to which on the side of the Church a period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate corresponds. The candidates constitute a group called „sympathizers” and being accepted to this group they are not accompanied by any liturgical rites; perhaps only simple, cordial invitation to the community of believers (cf. OICA 9–13)
- from the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, after the members of the local Church give a guarantee, the candidates become „members of Christ’s household” and receive special assistance throughout even several years’ formation in the form of the liturgy of the word, blessings and exorcism (cf. OICA 14–20)
- usually during the Lent time along with the rite of „election” a period of „purification and enlightenment” begins, that is the time immediately preceding the sacraments of initiation. The period is implemented by scrutinies and the rites of the „presentation” by which the Church hands on to the elect its ancient form of professing faith and prayer – the Symbol of faith and the Lord’s Prayer (cf. OICA 21–26)

¹⁹ Cf. Cz. Krakowiak, *Wykorzystanie metody katechumenalnej w przygotowaniu do sakramentów (Application of the Catechumenal Method to Preparation for the Sacraments)*, in: *Słowo–liturgia–wspólnota. Dynamika współczesnej parafii (Word–Liturgy–Community. The Dynamics of the Contemporary Parish)*, ed. Cz. Krakowiak, P. Kulbacki, Kraków–Lublin 2006, p. 66–72.

- the Paschal Vigil along with the baptismal rites that precede it, becomes the time of celebrating the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and finally the Eucharist (cf. OICA 27–36)
- in the period of mystagogy the neophytes grow in perceiving more deeply the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives (cf. OICA 37–40).

In the family catechumenate formative elements connected with particular periods and stages are subjected to a different order resulting from pedagogy of the age of childhood and adolescence, as well as from the spiritual situation – the sacramental belonging to Christ from the moment one was baptized in infancy.

The Church constantly stresses that evangelization *ad intra* is Her unceasing ministry; and especially the family is the place of permanent evangelization. Indeed, a growing child has to learn to discern his or her living situation and to look at the world in the light of the Gospel in a greater degree than an adult. Entering new life situations or experiencing new circumstances that may arise in the usual rhythm of Christian life means the necessity to approve of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior who has included all the spheres of man's life into His salutary work. This means constant return for deepening the decision taking during the evangelization process. This is why evangelization accompanies family formation all the time.

The second period that begins with the candidate being accepted to the catechumenate and then with a fairly long catechumenal formation, finds its equivalent in the family catechumenate in several years' preparation for receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation. The liturgies of the word, blessings and sacramentals that accompany this period, are connected with the received baptism. The child together with his parents, with the help of the parish catechists, learns listening to the word of God and responding to it in his life. Although it seems that this stage is accompanied by fewer special liturgical rites than in the catechumenate itself, however it is a period that is profoundly formative for the child – by the everyday testimony of his parents' life, of the other members of the family and other members of the Christian community. In this way formation for the first Holy Communion is not connected with an event that happens once only, but it is growing maturity for life in the Spirit, for life based on the principle of love²⁰.

In the same way that there is no stage in the „family catechumenate” that closes the evangelization period, since evangelization continues permanently, there is no strict equivalent of the rite of „election”, as the basic decision was made earlier, at the moment of the baptism. This is why in the family formation the periods corresponding to the longer catechumenate and to the period of purification and enlightenment are intertwined with each other. The gradual intensification of the liturgy and of the rites that play the role of initiation is matched by the degree of

²⁰ F. Blachnicki, *Pierwsza Komunia święta w rodzinie (The First Holy Communion in the Family)*, in: *Domowy Kościół. Listy do wspólnot rodzinnych*, t. 1 (*The Domestic Church. Letters to Family Communities*, vol. 1), Kraków 2003, p. 207.

personal maturity and by the perspective of receiving sacraments. In the case of the first Holy Communion the perspective is first of all determined by the age of the child and meeting even the minimum formation requirements. This principle should have a limited application for the Confirmation, which concerns adolescents, able to make their own decisions²¹. It is not only the age, but also the spiritual disposition that should be decisive here.

The several years when parents and children are preparing for the first Holy Communion assumes the character of a more intensive stage of catechumenate – it is accompanied by special liturgies, catecheses and introduction into prayer and the world of Christian symbols. During this period various signs are given that exceed the basic catechumenal symbolism, but ones that may complement it, e.g. the Marian holy medal – the Immaculate as a model of the new man. The status should be raised of the role that the liturgical „presentation” of the Symbol of faith and of the Lord’s Prayer plays, as now it is reduced to an „examination” (cf. OICA 302). Since children do not fully participate in the Eucharist, the liturgy of the word during the Holy Mass plays for them the role that is analogous to that of the so-called „catechumens’ Mass” (cf. OICA 301).

The Sundays of the Paschal period, that are usually the time for celebration of the first Holy Communion, refer to the celebrations of Resurrection and its Vigil, that is the basic time of celebrating the sacraments of initiation to adults. The so-called „white week” that accompanies them is an equivalent of the liturgical White Week (the octave of the Passover) referring to mystagogy, and it is also catechesis proper for that period (cf. OICA 235, 236). Just like mystagogy should accompany a Christian throughout all his life, a child who has received the first Holy Communion participates in the further formation at home and in the parish. It is suggested that adults should liturgically celebrate the anniversary of their baptism, and in the same way in the family catechumenate the anniversary of the first Holy Communion is solemnly celebrated (cf. OICA 238). Learning about the liturgical year and gradual accustoming to its pedagogy introduces a child into the experience of the baptismal foundation of Christianity and into the renewal of the Covenant of the Paschal Vigil liturgy.

An important role of initiation in the family catechumenate and the use of the rites of the catechumenate in preparing for the first Holy Communion have been stressed by Rev. Stanisław Hartlieb, the parish priest of Konarzewo near Poznań, closely connected with the Lubelski Zespół Liturgistów at the Catholic University of Lublin. The handbook he published is a perfect example of creative adaptation of the rites of the catechumenate for adults²².

²¹ Cf. J. Kostkiewicz, *Wolność wyboru w wychowaniu chrześcijańskim (Freedom of Choice in Christian Education)*, in: *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie (Christian Education)*, ed. A. Rynio, Lublin 2007, p. 406–416.

²² S. Hartlieb, *Pierwsza Komunia Święta. Droga wtajemniczenia w Paschę Chrystusa (The First Holy Communion. The Way of Initiation in Christ’s Pascha)*, Kraków 1996.

Similarly, the stages of catechumenal formation should find their equivalents in the formation for Confirmation. It may assume a more intensive character and directly use the formation rites of the purification and enlightenment period during the Lent.

In this way of family catechumenate, parents, putting into effect their calling, by the example of their everyday life, become witnesses pronouncing the Good News, and

by praying with their children, by reading the word of God with them and by introducing them deeply through Christian initiation into the Body of Christ – both the Eucharistic and the ecclesial Body – they become full parents, in that they are begetters not only of bodily life but also of the life that through the Spirit's renewal flows from the Cross and Resurrection of Christ (FC 39).

FAMILY CATECHUMENATE IN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

Summary

In the present article the role of the „Church of the Home” in the exhortation *Familiaris consortio* is analysed in the aspect of Christian initiation defined in the post-Council Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (*Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*). The Christian initiation has a special character in the life of family, because Christian parents in the sacrament of Matrimony are consecrated to educate their children in a really Christian spirit. The Church that is a community united in the Holy Spirit – *koinonia* – is realized in the dimension defined by the terms *martyria*, *leiturgia*, *diakonia* and similar it is in the Church of Home.

In the history of the Church we find the two basic forms of introducing new members into the Christian community. The first one is the catechumenate of adults who personally, consciously accepted the Gospel. This is a process aiming at accustoming them to Christian life stage by stage (cf. OICA 4), and leading to receiving the sacraments of initiation along with the mystagogy accompanying them. The other form is accustoming children who were baptized in infancy to Christian life; this is done parallel to their biological, social, psychological and spiritual development. This process also happens gradually as a natural element of educating children in a Christian family, and it is called „family catechumenate”. Here is the place of preparation children for receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and the Confirmation.

KATECHUMENAT RODZINNY W KOŚCIELE DOMOWYM

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiona została rola ukazanego w adhortacji *Familiaris consortio* Kościoła domowego w aspekcie inicjacji chrześcijańskiej opisanej w posoborowych *Obrzędach chrześcijańskiego wtajemniczenia dorosłych* (*Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum* – OICA). Szczególny charakter chrześcijańskiej inicjacji w rodzinie wynika z powołania

rodziców, którzy w sakramencie małżeństwa otrzymują konsekrację do chrześcijańskiego wychowania dzieci. Kościół jako wspólnota zjednoczona w Duchu Świętym (*koinonia*) konstituuje się w wymiarze określonym przez pojęcia *martyria*, *leiturgia*, *diakonia* – analogicznie jest w Kościele domowym. W historii Kościoła spotykamy się z dwiema podstawowymi formami wprowadzania w życie wspólnoty chrześcijańskiej nowych członków. Pierwsza z nich to katechumenat dorosłych, którzy osobiście, świadomie przyjęli Ewangelię. Jest to proces mający na celu stopniowe wdrożenie ich w życie chrześcijańskie (por. OICA 4), a prowadzący do przyjęcia sakramentów inicjacji wraz z towarzyszącą im mistagogią. Druga forma to wdrażanie w życie chrześcijańskie ochrzczonych w niemowlęctwie dzieci, które dokonuje się wraz z ich rozwojem biologicznym, społecznym, psychicznym i duchowym. Proces ten, nazywany katechumenatem rodzinnym, postępuje stopniowo jako naturalny element wychowania dzieci w rodzinie chrześcijańskiej. Stanowi on przygotowanie do przyjęcia sakramentów Eucharystii i bierzmowania.

Keywords: catechumenate, children, Domestic Church, family, first holy communion, initiation, matrimony

Słowa kluczowe: katechumenat, dzieci, Kościół domowy, rodzina, pierwsza Komunia święta, inicjacja, małżeństwo