ARTYKUŁY

Andrzej Adamski*
University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów (Poland)

Tomasz Bierzyński**
The Sub-Carpathian Teacher Education Center in Rzeszów (Poland)

Barbara Przywara***
University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów (Poland)

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEDIA EDUCATION OF CHILDREN: TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS IN THE PASTORAL REFLECTION OF THE CHURCH'S MAGISTERIUM

Summary: The article analyses the Catholic Church's teaching on media education, with particular emphasis on the responsibility of parents to prepare children and youth for conscious and critical media use. The goal of the study is to systematize systematise this teaching, identify dominant trends, and highlight existing research gaps.

The study employs the method of analysing official Church statements, as found in publicly available documents, including encyclicals, exhortations, and papal messages. The authors compiled a database of official Church statements. The research procedure involved selecting 104 excerpts from the Magisterium's statements, followed by their categorisation based on tone (positive, negative, or neutral) and type (calls to action or descriptive statements).

The findings indicate that the emphases in the discussed Church teaching are unevenly distributed. The most frequent themes include calling parents to screen media content, fostering critical thinking in children, and collaborating with secular institutions to promote responsible media use. The Pope who placed the greatest emphasis on parents' roles in children's media education was John Paul II.

This study offers scientific value by systematically presenting the Church's documents on media education in the context of parental responsibility and highlights the need for further interdisciplinary research combining media theology, family studies, and media studies.

Keywords: children and youth, family, social communication and media, media and communication theology, family studies.

* Address: dr. habil. Andrzej Adamski; aadamski@wsiz.edu.pl; ORCID: 0000-0002-4075-4224.
** Address: dr. Tomasz Bierzyński; tbierzynski@pzpw.pl; ORCID: 0000-0002-8153-0833.
*** Address: dr. Barbara Przywara; bprzywara@wsiz.edu.pl; ORCID: 0000-0003-0674-1080.

Introduction

The current teaching of the Catholic Church on media education derives from the complex relationship between successive technological innovations and their societal impact, alongside the gradual crystallization of Catholic media doctrine as a specific form of social responsibility doctrine (Bierzyński, 2023, p. 89–95). Katarzyna Pokorna-Ignatowicz (2002, p. 9–13) notes that over nearly two millennia, the Catholic Church's approach to media has evolved from the pre-mass-media period through a defensive stage to a gradual affirmation and active use of social communication tools as a means of evangelization and communication. In other words, from a cautious and defensive stance towards new technologies to full affirmation of their potential as tools for evangelization and dialogue.

This is particularly important in view of the fact that the media promote certain behaviours, models of communities and relationships, including family relationships, and popularises social patterns and attitudes (Wedziuk, 2013). Numerous studies show that children learn behaviour and form their value systems under the influence of this media (Villiani, 2001, p. 392–401). Nowadays, with the development of digital media, the risk of excessive use of electronic media is increasing, which in turn has many health, psychological and social consequences (Wojtkowska et al., 2023).

Before the invention of the printing press, the Church relied on the spoken and handwritten word (*CCC*, n. 76)[1]. The Word of God was transmitted orally and later written down by the apostles and early disciples of Jesus (*CCC*, n. 81). After antiquity, the medieval Church emphasized education and spiritual formation by establishing schools and universities. This preserved and developed the cultural heritage of antiquity in many ways, especially in terms of new forms of communication like manuscripts and rhetoric. The Church became a patron of science and art, viewing them as tools to deepen understanding of the world, which was defined as God's creation ex nihilo (Thomas Aquinas, 1978, p. 10–11). A key aspect of religious communication was the belief that *faith comes from hearing* (Rom 10:10), underscoring the importance of the spoken word as the primary medium of communication.

The introduction of the printing press in 15th-century Europe caused concern within the Church due to the increased possibility of uncontrolled dissemination of content hostile to Catholicism. The Church's acquisition of large-scale printing capabilities allowed for the distribution of the Bible and other religious works. However, it also saw the proliferation of texts contrary to Catholic doctrine. Consequently, the Church implemented strict censorship and created the

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[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church (Polish edition)*, 2002, Pallotinum, Poznań [= *CCC*].

Index of Forbidden Books (Lenard, 2008, p. 51–63). Books without Church permission were burned, and individuals involved in their creation or distribution faced severe penalties, including excommunication (Sobczak, 2017, p. 284). In the 19th century, with the development of the press, the Church's approach began to shift. The idea of the *"good press"* emerged, supporting the development of Catholic media (Pius IX, 1849, n. 15). Examples include publications such as *La Civiltà Cattolica* and *L'Osservatore Romano*. Pope Leo XIII (1882, n. 17–18) introduced a more balanced approach, recognizing that properly prepared and educated believers could independently choose media content.

Innovations such as radio and television prompted the Church to reflect on their potential. Pius XI opened Vatican Radio in 1931 and actively supported Catholic media organizations like the Catholic International Film Office. Encyclicals such as *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929) and *Vigilanti cura* (1936) emphasized the need to shape young audiences in a Christian spirit. Pius XII, an advocate of television, highlighted its possibilities in education, apologetics, and evangelization while promoting ethical standards in communication (Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 1992, p. 75–87). During this period, the Church deepened its reflection on the media and media education, analysing their impact on society and culture.

The Second Vatican Council marked a turning point in the Church's teaching on media. The decree *Inter mirifica* recognised media as a significant tool for proclaiming the Gospel. The document emphasized the necessity of responsible media use by both creators and audiences (Bierzyński, 2012, p. 69–72). The 1971 instruction *Communio et progressio* elaborated on these ideas, stressing the importance of ethical values in mass communication (Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2000, p. 159–171).

Post-Vatican II, the Church moved towards full affirmation of media as a tool for evangelization. Paul VI introduced the World Communications Day in 1967, and his 1975 exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (n. 45) described media as the "modern pulpit". John Paul II, known as the "media Pope", used new technologies to spread the Good News (Lewek, 2010, p. 16). He emphasized protecting families from negative media influences and promoted media education. Benedict XVI, often referred to as the "theologian of digital communication", emphasized the role of media in globalization and the creation of culture (Adamski, 2016, p. 143–155). He highlighted the moral dimension of communication and expanded the reflection on the digital reality. Pope Francis, in turn, promoted "merciful communication" and recognized the need for the Church's presence on the peripheries, including digital ones (Nęcek, 2019, p. 143–155).

This suggests that the contemporary approach of the Church institution to the digital reality reflects not only a historically challenging path towards accepting social communication tools but also a multidimensional reflection on

the world of media, which, on one hand, appear to be helpful in spreading Catholic doctrine, but on the other, they pose challenges related to ethics, culture, and social impact. One of these challenges is media education, understood as the upbringing for conscious and responsible media use. This theme is strongly present in the official teaching of the Catholic Church, with the dominant concept being responsibility (Bierzyński, 2023). The Church's position on this matter aligns with the stance of international organizations, such as UNESCO and the European Union (Gosek, Adamski, 2023). Nevertheless, the number of official statements from the Church on topics related to communication and media education leaves a wide area of research gaps. There is a lack of cross-sectional studies analysing not only the content but also the formal and quantitative aspects of the issue. The authors of this article aim to answer the following research questions:

1. Which Magisterium documents contain the most references to the connection between children, youth, and family with the use of media?
2. Which popes have most frequently addressed the family as a place for educating children and youth to use media? What are the current trends in papal teaching on this matter?
3. What actions does the Magisterium of the Church most frequently call for from parents regarding their children's media use, and what solutions does it propose?

The scope of the research sits at the intersection of theological sciences, communication and media studies, and family sciences. It can be attributed to media theology and communication, which combine the areas of theology and media studies (Adamski, Łęcicki, 2016), also referred to as the theology of social communication tools. This field is defined as interdisciplinary reflection on the influence of media and fits both within the paradigm of "social communication and media sciences" and theological sciences (Hofman, 2018, p. 196–197). It also falls within the scope of the "family studies" paradigm.

Methodology

To conduct the research, a database of statements from the Magisterium of the Church (popes and institutions of the Roman Curia) on media education in the context of children and highlighting the family as a place for media education (the duties of parents in educating their children in the field of media) was created. The base for this database was the website *Chiesa et Comunicazione* (https://www.chiesaecomunicazione.com). This is an online digital library dedicated to Magisterium documents concerning communication. It contains se-

lected excerpts from 1,300 documents, ranging from the first to the twenty-first century, with multilingual translations. Its "patron" is the Jesuit, Father Enrico Baragli, recognized as a pioneer in research on social communication tools in the Italian Church.

After analysing the excerpts contained in the *Chiesa et Comunicazione* database, the fragments referring to children and youth were selected, but only in the context of media and media education. A total of 104 excerpts were found containing these references. They were analysed and categorized from a formal perspective. The first category was the tone of the statement regarding the role of media and their impact on children and youth. Four subcategories were adopted:

a. Excerpts containing a clearly positive evaluation of media and their impact on children and families;
b. Excerpts containing a clearly negative evaluation of media and their impact on children and families;
c. Excerpts containing a neutral evaluation or no evaluation;
d. Excerpts containing both positive and negative evaluations of media and their impact on children and families.

The next category concerned the nature of the statements, with a division into three groups:

a. a. Calls to action aimed at protecting children and youth from the harmful effects of media, addressed to various entities (parents, the Church, media broadcasters, associations, institutions);
b. b. Descriptive fragments or general statements that do not contain a call to take any action;
c. c. Calls encouraging children and youth to take self-educational actions in the area of media education (i.e., empowering children and youth in this regard).

Table 1. Documents of the Magisterium of the Church Addressing Children/Youth in the Context of Media Education

Pope	Number of mentions				Type of excerpt		
	Clearly positive evaluation of media	Clearly negative evaluation of media	Neutral evaluation of media or no evaluation	Both positive and negative evaluations of media	Calls to action aimed at protecting children	Descriptive fragments or general statements	Calls to children and youth to take self-educational actions in the area of media education
Leo XIII	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Pius XI	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Pius XII	4	9	5	1	7	12	0
John XXIII	0	2	2	1	3	2	0
Paul VI	0	3	8	4	12	3	2
John Paul II	2	11	14	17	29	13	4
Benedict XVI	0	0	4	5	6	2	1
Francis	2	1	2	4	3	6	0

Source: Own study[2]

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[2] List of documents that formed the basis for this table (without including in bibliography) – Leo XIII: speech *Nobili e generosi* (1885), Letter from the Secretariat of State to the director of children's magazine "Il corrierino" (1923); Pius XII: Message *En couronnant* (1948); Exhortation *I rapidi progressi* to Italian bishops on television, [AAS 46, (1954)]; Speech *Votre visite* (1956), encyclical *Miranda prorsus* (1957), Letter from the Secretariat of State to Jean Bernard, president OCIC (1956); John XXIII: First Roman Synod (1960), speech *Il nous est bien* (1961); Second Vatican Council: decree *Inter mirifica* (1963); Paul VI: Message *To the 10th session of the international film market* (1964), Message to directors, officials and technicians of Italian radio and television (1964), Messages for World Communication Days (1967, 1969, 1978), Letter from the Secretariat of State to Manzini, president UCSI (1968); John Paul II: Messages for World Communication Days (1979–1982; 1994, 1997, 2004), exhortation Familiaris consortio (1979), speech to media people in Madrid (1982); Television in the service of truth and human good (on the 30th anniversary of Italian Television) (1984); Social communications in the service of the family – International symposium dedicated to the family (1993); Jubilee Year 2000 speech to journalists (2000), Message to the International Catholic Organization for Audiovisual Media (SIGNIS) (2001), To the Catholic Union of the Italian Press (2002), Before the *Angelus* prayer (May 23, 2004); Benedict XVI:

As seen in the table above, the first reference of this kind appears during the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII in the speech *Nobili e generosi*, delivered on 6 January, 1885, to representatives of the Association of Italian Catholic Youth (Leo XIII, 1885). A somewhat larger number of statements of interest appear during the pontificate of Pius XII. Although the fragments containing criticism of the media dominate, it is noteworthy that among the statements of this pope, four fragments can be identified that express an unequivocally positive assessment of the media's influence. Other popes were relatively reserved in presenting an unequivocally positive impact on the media regarding children and youth. Their teachings predominantly exhibit a balanced approach – containing either statements of a neutral tone or simultaneously showing both positive and negative aspects of the media's influence on children and youth. Pope Benedict XVI seems to show the greatest restraint in this regard. He clearly distances himself from explicitly positive or explicitly negative assessments of the role of the media and its influence on children. His statements are either purely neutral in nature or combine affirmation and criticism of the media. In this sense, the Church's teaching can be described as realistic – acknowledging the benefits of the presence of media in the world as well as the dangers it brings (Adamski, 2012).

A fairly large percentage of the statements include an appeal or call to action to protect children and youth from the harmful effects of the media. These appeals are directed at various entities: parents, Church shepherds, secular institutions, media broadcasters, people of goodwill, and associations. However, it is noteworthy that appeals addressed directly to children or youth themselves appear infrequently. Significantly, the first such statement is included in the decree *Inter mirifica* of the Second Vatican Council: "Those who make use of the media of communications, especially the young, should take steps to accustom themselves to [sic!] moderation and self-control in their regard. They should, moreover, endeavour to deepen their understanding of what they see, hear or read. They should discuss these matters with their teachers and experts, and learn to pass sound judgements on them" (Second Vatican Council, 1963, 10). In total, only seven such statements were identified. Besides the already mentioned conciliar document, an appeal to young people appears in the first message of Pope Paul VI for World Communication Days. This appeal is part of

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Messages for World Communication Days (2006, 2007), Speeches to participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (2006, 2007); Francis: Message for World Communication Days (2015, 2019), exhortations *Amoris laetitia* (2016) and *Christus vivit* (2019), Journey to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families – Speech at Dublin's Croke Park stadium (2018); Documents of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications: Communio et Progressio (1971), Pornography and violence in communications media: a pastoral response (1989), 100 years of cinema (1995), Ethics in Communications (2000), Ethics in the Internet (2002), Church and the Internet (2002). The article reflects the state as of the end of 2024.

a series of calls directed at other social groups and is oriented towards coopera-
tion in the responsible use of media (Paul VI, 1967). In his 1985 message, Pope
John Paul II directly addresses young people, emphasizing that their critical
abilities will determine, "...whether these instruments are going to serve your
human and Christian formation, whether, on the contrary, they are going to be
turned against you, suffocating your liberty and putting an end to your thirst
for authenticity" (John Paul II, 1985). Particularly noteworthy are two appeals
directed at young people, focused on the use of digital media. One is found
in the 2002 document by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications,
The Church and the Internet, which calls for responsible and good use of the
internet. From a moral standpoint, this is described as a duty towards oneself,
parents, teachers, and ultimately towards God (Pontifical Council, 2002, 11).

More frequently, documents contain calls addressed to various entities,
aimed at protecting children and youth from inappropriate content and edu-
cating the younger generation to use media responsibly. Besides parents, these
calls are directed at broadcasters (journalists and media owners), associations,
secular authorities, schools, and finally all media consumers (Paul VI, 1969;
Benedict XVI, 2007).

Frequency of Magisterium Statements on Media and Family
– General Trends

The next aspect of the analysis focuses on the frequency of Magisterium
statements related to media education within the family. The quantitative sum-
mary is presented in Table 2, which includes popes from Pius X to Francis. Giv-
en the varying lengths of the pontificates of different popes, the authors deemed
it appropriate to calculate a frequency coefficient. This coefficient represents the
number of relevant statements in documents issued during a pope's pontificate,
divided by the number of full years of the pontificate. The coefficient was cal-
culated based on the number of mentions (or excerpts) addressing the topic of
interest. It was assumed that a single document could contain multiple mentions
or excerpts.

Table 2. Documents of the Magisterium of the Church Addressing Media Education in the Family and the Responsibilities of Parents Towards Children

Pope	Number of mentions	Length of pontificate (full years)	Rate	Number of documents (pope/dicasteries/total)		
Pius X	1	11	0,09	1	0	1
Benedict XV	0	7	0	0	0	0
Pius XI	4	17	0,23	2	2	4
Pius XII	17	19	0,89	8	3	11
John XXIII	9	4	2,25	5	1	6
Paul VI	21	15	1,4	5	4*	9
John Paul I	0	0	0	0	0	0
John Paul II	66	26	2,54	25	8	33
Benedict XVI	7	7	1	4	0	4
Francis	15	11	1,36	8	1	9
TOTAL	140					

* including the Second Vatican Council's decree *Inter mirifica*. Source: Own study[3]

The summary reveals that the topic of the role of parents and families in media education for children and youth was most frequently addressed by John Paul II and John XXIII. In contrast, Benedict XVI and Francis have discussed this subject less frequently. A cursory analysis of Pope Francis' documents suggests the hypothesis that he places slightly greater emphasis on institutional efforts in the field of media education for children and youth, relying on collab-

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[3] The table includes, in addition to the documents already mentioned in footnote 1, the following – Pius X: Letter *Quod hierarchia* (1911); Pius XI: encyclical *Divini illus magistri* (1929), encyclical *Vigilanti cura* (1936); Pius XII: speeches *Sommamente gradita* (1942), *E uno spettacolo* (1942), *Il santo tempo quadragesimale* (1949), *En vous souhaitant* (1955), to *Jeunesse Indépendante Catholique Féminine* (1955); John XXIII: speeches *Siamo particolarmente* (1959), *Con profonda gioia* (1959), to journalists (1959), Allocution *Bene ominata* (1962); Paul VI: *Regina coeli* (18.05.1969); John Paul II: Speeches – to artists and journalists (1980), to the Italian Association of Radio Listeners and Television Viewers (1982), Helping families in fruitful use of social communications (1987), to participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (1994, 1996), to Polish bishops who came *ad limina* (1998), On the 35th anniversary of the Catholic Union of Cinema Workers, May 24, 1984; Francis: speech to participants in the congress *The dignity of the child in the digital world* (2019), General Audience November 11, 2015, Greeting to representatives of ACEC-SDC on the occasion of 70 years of community (Dec. 7, 2019), Interview *Cinema: a look at memory and contemplation* (2021). Letters from the Secretariat of State to: Abel Brohée, president OCIC (1947); Jean Bernard, president OCIC (1955, 1960); Charles Flory, president of the Social Weeks of France (1955), Dalla Zuanna, president ACEC (1969), Messages for World Communication Days (1970, 1984, 1985, 1993, 1996); documents of the Dicastery for Communication: *Towards Full Presence. A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media* (2023); Congregation for Catholic Education *Guidelines for the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (1986), *Charter of the Rights of the Family* (1983).

oration with broadcasters, secular authorities, and other institutions. However, this hypothesis requires thorough verification.

In the last three columns, the table compares the number of documents issued by each pope, dividing them into documents directly signed by the pope and those issued by dicasteries of the Roman Curia. This raises the question: which Magisterium documents contain the highest number of references to media education for children and youth within the family? A detailed comparison can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Leading Documents on the Role of the Family in Educating Children and Youth in Media Use

The Author	Document	Number of mentions
John Paul II	38th World Communications Day Message, 2004 – *The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness*	8
Pius XII	Encyclical letter "*Miranda prorsus*", 1957	6
Pontifical Council for Social Communications (Paul VI)	Pastoral instruction "*Communio et progressio*" on the means of social communication (1971)	6
John Paul II	28th World Communications Day Message, 1994 – *Television and Family: Guidelines for Good Viewing*	6
Paul VI	3rd World Communications Day Message, 1969, *Social Communications and the Family*	5
John Paul II	adhortation *Familiaris consortio* (22listopada 1979)	4
Pontifical Council for Social Communications (John Paul II)	*Pornography and violence in the communications media: a pastoral response* (1989)	4
Benedict XVI	41st World Communications Day, 2007 – *Children and the Media: A Challenge for Education*	4
John XXIII	Primo Sinodo Romano (The First Roman Synod)	3
John Paul II	14th World Communications Day Message, 1980 – *Social Communications and Family*	3
John Paul II	19th World Communications Day Message, 1985 – *Social Communications for a Christian Promotion of Youth*	3
John Paul II	To the participants in the conference on The Rights of the Family and the Means of Social Communication (June 4, 1993)	3
Pontifical Council for Social Communications (John Paul II)	*Ethics in Communications* (2000)	3
Pontifical Council for Social Communications (John Paul II)	*The Church and Internet* (2002)	3
Francis	XLIX World Communications Day, 2015 – *Communicating the Family: A Privileged Place of Encounter with the Gift of Love*	3
Francis	"*Amoris laetitia*": Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family (19 March 2016)	3

Source: Own study

As can be seen, the table illustrates the predominance of papal messages for the World Communications Day among the documents analysed. Papal messages are considered lower-ranking documents, typically composed in modern languages, unlike higher-ranking documents (encyclicals, apostolic constitutions, decrees, bulls, apostolic letters, motu proprio), which are originally written in Latin and later translated into modern languages (Gacia, 2022, p. 440). The creation of messages is often associated with religious feasts and celebrations observed by the Church or various occasions deemed significant enough by the Pope to present the Church's perspective on a particular issue (Pamuła, 1988, p. 481). Such messages usually serve a pastoral purpose, focusing on illuminating a specific issue and calling the faithful to adopt particular actions, attitudes, or behaviours. However, they should not be equated with ex cathedra teachings; they lack the characteristics of papal infallibility. Instead, they offer pastoral guidance to communities, clergy, or individuals seeking support or inspiration from the Church's voice (Gaweł et al., 2021).

Some messages refer to the family, children, and youth even in their titles:
− 1969 – Paul VI – Social Communications and the Family
− 1970 – Paul VI – Social Communications and Youth
− 1979 – John Paul II – Social Communications for the Development of the Child
− 1980 – John Paul II – Social Communications and Family
− 1985 – John Paul II – Social Communications for a Christian Promotion of Youth
− 1994 – John Paul II – Television and Family: Guidelines for Good Viewing
− 2004 – John Paul II – The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness
− 2007 – Benedict XVI – Children and the Media: A Challenge for Education
− 2015 – Francis – Communicating the Family: A Privileged Place of Encounter with the Gift of Love.

In addition, the topic of media and family is addressed in other documents and occasional papal statements. Notably, the encyclical *Miranda prorsus* by Pius XII and the pastoral instruction *Communio et progressio* from 1971 by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications are of particular importance.

Miranda prorsus is the first encyclical-level document that extensively and systematically addresses the Church's stance on media. Regarding statements about the family and media, six excerpts contain relevant reflections. According to the encyclical, modern technologies in education offer new opportunities but must respect the rights of both the Church and the family. Television, while bringing the family together, can strengthen bonds, but only if it avoids content contrary to love and fidelity. Parents are therefore urged to use television prudently and

vigilantly, selecting programs suitable for their children's age and avoiding less modest ones. Effective upbringing demands significant sacrifices from parents, including refraining from watching appealing programs for the benefit of their children. Similarly, radio listeners are encouraged to carefully choose broadcasts that promote truth, goodness, and social responsibility, ensuring they do not harm children and young people (Pius XII, 1957, 49, 125, 156-157, 164-165).

The instruction *Communio et progressio* emphasizes that parents should prepare young people to distinguish and select appropriate media content while retaining the right to make the final decision. If their judgment differs from their children's opinions, parents are encouraged to clearly articulate and explain their stance. The instruction also highlights the psychological differences between children and adults, suggesting that programs deemed uninteresting or unnecessary by parents might be highly suitable for the young (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1971, n. 67). Additionally, the instruction advises parents to familiarize themselves with the media content that most interests their children and young people. This familiarity allows for discussions that help develop critical thinking skills (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1971, n. 68). To achieve this, parents must be capable of properly evaluating media, even if they harbour some distrust towards it (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1971, n. 70).

It is worth noting the inclusion of two post-synodal exhortations dedicated to the family: *Familiaris consortio* by John Paul II and *Amoris laetitia* by Pope Francis.

The analysis of the above documents allowed for the identification of six key issues that define the parents' duties regarding children in the context of media education:

1. Media consumption as a help/opportunity in building family unity (12 documents).
2. The duty of educating children in critical media consumption (27 documents).
3. Education through good example of responsibility in using media (self-discipline of parents) – (11 documents).
4. Shared reading/watching of good, positive content (5 documents, 3 of which were issued by Pius XII and refer to watching television programs together. The next document is the *Communio et progressio* instruction, and then Benedict XVI returns to this proposal in 2007).
5. Influence on one's family/children in abstaining from bad publications/content (30 documents). This is one of the most frequently cited ways by the Magisterium of the Church for practically realizing the responsibility of

parents in educating their children to consume media. These sections usually include criticism of the media and the content they transmit.

6. Appeals to civil authorities/cooperation with secular institutions in media education (21 documents) – this is also a frequently repeated and current proposal. The first fragment comes from the teaching of Pius XII, and the most recent from a speech by the pope to participants of the congress *Dignity of the child in the digital world* (November 14, 2019).

Conclusion

The Church maintains that the family plays an important role in educating children to receive and use media. Numerous Church documents indicate that the family is a space for shaping Christian conscience and values, especially in the context of protecting children from demoralizing content in the media (Pius X, 1911; Pius XII, 1954, n. 24; John XXIII, 1962). Catholic doctrine emphasizes the role of parents in educating children to assess media and protect them from its negative influence (John Paul II, 1981, n. 76). According to this, parents should develop a critical approach to media and teach children how to wisely choose content. This requires an active stance, selection of materials, and limiting screen time. Popes have repeatedly called for parental responsibility in this area (Pius XII, 1955; Paul VI, 1969; Benedict XVI, 2007, n. 2). The necessity of teaching children how to distinguish valuable content from harmful content is highlighted. The family should be the place where children acquire these skills (Francis, 2016, n. 274).

Media can be a tool for spreading the Gospel, and the family is encouraged to cooperate in this process through conscious and valuable use of media tools (John Paul II, 1985, n. 6). Documents emphasize the need for dialogue between parents and content producers, as well as their influence on legal regulations regarding media to protect morality and family values (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1992). The Catholic Church clearly emphasizes the role of the family as an educational environment where children learn to use media responsibly and valuably. Thus, the family, in light of the Church's teaching, is the guardian of values in the media context. It is within this structure that the ability of the younger generation to critically engage with and use media in accordance with Christian principles is shaped.

Limitations and future research:

This study has some limitations. First, Popes' statements on media and parental responsibility were made over many years. Media and communication technologies have undergone fundamental changes during this time: from print

media, radio and television, to digital media and artificial intelligence. This technological evolution has had an impact on the form and content of the Magisterium's statements.

Second, the current digital revolution brings completely new challenges in the field of media education. They were not present in the first decades of the Church's teachings on media. Today, new problems such as digital media addiction, cybercrime, privacy violations, and fake news require new responses. At the same time, we must note that many of the Church's recommendations on responsible media use are universal and remain relevant regardless of changing technologies—this is especially true for critical thinking, selective content choice, and an active role for parents in shaping their children's media habits.

Future research could focus on several important topics:
− Comparing the teachings of the Catholic Church with the perspectives of other religious communities;
− Comparing Church documents with recommendations from international media education organizations;
− Analysing the Church's teachings in the context of challenges associated with the development of artificial intelligence.

A key challenge for contemporary Christian media education is to find a balance between recognizing the potential of the media as tools for education and evangelization and awareness of the dangers associated with new technologies. The Church's teachings consistently emphasize the need to foster a responsible and critical attitude towards the media and respect for human dignity.

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Odpowiedzialność rodziców za edukację medialną dzieci: trendy i kierunki refleksji duszpasterskiej Magisterium Kościoła

Streszczenie: Artykuł analizuje nauczanie Kościoła katolickiego na temat edukacji medialnej, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem odpowiedzialności rodziców za przygotowanie dzieci i młodzieży do świadomego i krytycznego korzystania z mediów. Celem pracy jest usystematyzowanie tego nauczania, zidentyfikowanie dominujących trendów oraz wskazanie istniejących luk badawczych. W badaniu wykorzystano metodę analizy oficjalnych wypowiedzi kościelnych, które są zawarte w ogólnodostępnych dokumentach, w tym encyklik, adhortacji i orędzi papieskich. Autorzy sporządzili bazę oficjalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła. Procedura badawcza obejmowała selekcję 104 fragmentów wypowiedzi Magisterium, a następnie ich kategoryzację według wydźwięku (pozytywny, negatywny, neutralny) i rodzaju (wezwania do działania, stwierdzenia opisowe).

Wyniki badań wskazują, że akcenty w omawianym nauczaniu kościelnym rozkładają się nierównomiernie. Najczęściej obejmują wezwanie rodziców do selekcji treści medialnych, rozwijania krytycznego myślenia u dzieci oraz współpracy z instytucjami świeckimi na rzecz odpowiedzialnego korzystania z mediów. Papieżem, który przywiązywał największą wagę do roli rodziców w edukacji medialnej dzieci był Jan Paweł II. Opracowanie wnosi wartość naukową poprzez systematyczne przedstawienie dokumentów Kościoła dotyczących edukacji medialnej w zakresie odpowiedzialności rodziców oraz wskazuje na potrzebę dalszych badań w obszarze interdyscyplinarnym, łączącym teologię mediów, nauki o rodzinie i medioznawstwo.

Słowa kluczowe: dzieci i młodzież, rodzina, komunikacja społeczna i media, teologia mediów i komunikacji, nauki o rodzinie.