

**Marzena Rachwalska\***

Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław (Poland)

## ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF KAROL WOJTYŁA

**Summary:** The Wojtyła family is a special family which, in God's plan, is an example of heroic faith, hope and love. The Pope's parents were his role model and the perfect foundation for his journey to holiness. Prayer and the sacraments were a means of union with God. They fulfilled God's will by living in the spirit of the Gospel and total devotion to Mary – Totus Tuus. Following the life and pontificate of John Paul II, the above article shows and illustrates the influence of parents on Karol, the future pope. Therefore, it is a great inspiration for families, educators, and caregivers who are nowadays looking for original, charismatic authorities that will inspire and lead them to the right path.

In 2020, when the 100th anniversary of St. John Paul II's birth was celebrated, on May 7, the Episcopate consented to the commencement of the beatification process of Karol and Emilia Wojtyła by the Archdiocese of Krakow. Thus, the Holy See was asked to start the process at the diocesan level.

The initiation of the beatification process of Pope Wojtyła's elder brother Edmund remains an open issue. He died in 1932, taking care of his sick patients at the hospital in Bielsko. Edmund received the title of Doctor of Medicine at the Jagiellonian University on March 29, 1930. The beatification committee was established in 1997.

Karol Wojtyła's family did not differ from the average Catholic family of that time. What distinguishes this family today is Love and Faithfulness to God and people. Devotion, service and humility. Holiness is a gift that the baptized receive with the first sacrament. As such, this gift should be nurtured and developed in the Catholic Church community through sacramental life and a life of prayer. The Wojtyła family is an example of fulfilling God's will in everyday life. It abided with God and continues to do so.

**Keywords:** Karol Wojtyła, Emilia and Karol Wojtyła, spiritual formation, spirituality, holiness, prayer.

The Wadowice homeland of Karol Wojtyła reminds us of the childhood of the future Pope St. John Paul II. It was in this town that the family of Emilia and

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\*Adres/Address: Marzena Rachwalska, ORCID: 0000-0001-9557-8080; e-mail: marzenarachwalska@wp.pl

Karol Wojtyła settled. Today, there is the family house,<sup>1</sup> the church<sup>2</sup> that became a place of spiritual maturation through the sacramental life, as well as the school<sup>3</sup> where young Karol was educated. The history of the Wojtyła family is an example for many families today. Not deprived of difficult and painful experiences, it introduces us to a healthy Catholic spirituality, which became the foundation of John Paul II's Christian maturity. The main emphasis in the child's formation falls on the parents. No one can fulfill this duty as diligently as the father and the mother, provided that they are fully aware and conscious of the responsibility bestowed upon them. On the other hand, "By means of love, respect and obedience towards their parents, children offer their specific and irreplaceable contribution to the construction of an authentically human and Christian family." (John Paul II, 1981a, no. 21) Parents should be vividly aware of the gift that a child is and support them in achieving true responsible freedom and maturity (Cf. John Paul II, 1981a, no. 22). Mr. and Mrs. Wojtyła fulfilled their vocation to family life in accordance with God's plan contained in the Gospel. It is as if the sacrament of marriage had consecrated their bond so that they could grow in faith, hope and love in the spirit of Christ.

This article is an analysis of Karol Wojtyła's childhood and a theological take on the role played by his parents in the spiritual formation of the future Pope. The positive method (Bartnik, 2007, pp. 165–173) will be used here. The main source for this work is the testimony of Karol Wojtyła's life and his teachings. The documents of the Church, John Paul II's encyclicals and articles on the topic will be of great value in the presentation of the Wojtyła family. Milena Kindziuk's work – *Emilia and Karol Wojtyła. St. John Paul II's Parents* will be an important auxiliary source. „It is based on archival research and previously unpublished documents.” (See: Kindziuk, 2020, p. 1) The Wojtyła family will become the subject of theological and pastoral considerations for us,

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<sup>1</sup> „Z początkiem XX w. do jednego z mieszkań na piętrze w kamienicy obok kościoła wprowadzili się Emilia i Karol Wojtyłowicze wraz z synem Edmundem. Rok później, 18 maja 1920 r., urodził się tutaj Karol Józef Wojtyła, późniejszy papież i święty Jan Paweł II. Obecnie w kamienicy mieści się nowoczesne biograficzne Muzeum *Dom Rodzinny Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*” (Wadowice Urząd Miejski, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> „Kościół parafialny Ofiarowania Najświętszej Marii Panny. W tym kościele przy chrzcielnicy w kaplicy Świętej Rodziny, 20 czerwca 1920 r., przyszedł Święty otrzymał imiona Karol Józef. W tym kościele (obecnie Bazylika Mniejsza) przystąpił do pierwszej Komunii Świętej i do bierzmowania. Pełnił tutaj także posługę ministranta. W 2011 r., w sześć lat po śmierci Jana Pawła II, w kaplicy Jemu poświęconej złożono Jego relikwie.” (Wadowice Urząd Miejski, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> „Naukę, w Szkole Powszechnej Męskiej im. Marcina Wadowity, Karol Wojtyła rozpoczął 15 września 1926 r. Szkoła mieściła się w budynku magistratu przy wadowickim rynku. Parter obiektu zajmowały biura urzędu miasta, restauracja i cukiernia *Oaza* Jana Hylki, a na piętrach znajdowała się szkoła. Obecnie budynek jest siedzibą Urzędu Miejskiego.” (Wadowice Urząd Miejski, 2021)

and this will allow us to prove the prosaic holiness that is possible in the ordinary everyday life of every true Catholic family.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Emilia and Karol Wojtyła

Spiritual formation pertains to the faith of a specific person. Thus, the very concept of religious formation is defined as a system of education based on subordinating educational activity to the assumptions of a religion. (Cf. Dziewiecki, 2007) These are specific actions that parents – as the basic educational unit – take. The initiated steps are aimed at shaping a lifestyle based on a man's bond with God. Everyday life is intertwined between the rhythm of duties and the rhythm of religious practices, which include: personal prayer, prayer in the family and prayer in the community of believers. In addition, deepening the knowledge of the Bible, catechism, history of saints and also knowledge of the history of religion and the history of tradition. The essence is to direct an adolescent to developing the right attitudes, values and habits, and, as a consequence, integral emotional and spiritual maturity. The result of religious formation should be awareness of religious identity, awareness of the purpose and meaning of life in relation to God, and love for God and people.

Karol Wojtyła (1920–2005) was brought up in a Catholic family, where the center of life was God and a living faith in Him as well as sacramental life. The parents were the authority in faith. Mrs. Emilia née Kaczorowski (1884–1929) was a woman thoroughly educated in a school run by the Sisters of God's Love. She was a practicing Catholic, faithful to tradition and prayer. A brave woman struggling with poor health. She related all events in her life to God. (Cf. Kindziuk, 2020, p. 125) She gave birth to three children: the eldest son Edmund, who became a doctor; Olga, who died not long after being born as a result of choking with amniotic fluid (born and died on July 7, 1916) and Karol, the youngest son, whose birth was not certain only from a doctors' perspective. Even though she was very ill, Mrs. Emilia was deeply religious enough to make the heroic decision during her threatened pregnancy to give birth to Karol. Her strong faith was able to break the wall of all doubts.

Mrs. Emilia took particular care of the religious upbringing of her children: she taught prayers, the sign of the holy cross, dipping the hand in a stoup and catechism, and she carefully prepared little Karol for the First Holy Communion. Together with their mother, the children were kneeling in the room in front of the painting of Our Lady of Szentsztat. (Cf. Kindziuk, 2020, p. 259) It was

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<sup>4</sup> See the articles related to the topic of Wojtyła, family and the role of formation: Zechenter, b.r.; Roubo, 2017; Waleszczuk, 2015; Kindziuk, 2020a.

a healthy piety, authentic, with real depth. Emilia Wojtyła often repeated with conviction: ‘You will see, my Lolek will be a great man one day.’<sup>5</sup> Certainly, these words express the awareness that the birth of her son was a miracle, therefore a special gift and chosen by God. Mrs. Emilia died in April 1929 as a result of a serious illness which she had endured heroically. In a poem written in 1939, Karol expresses his longing and helplessness in the face of suffering associated with the loss of his mother. However, it shows confidence that death is not the end but rather the beginning of eternal life.

*‘For Emilia – my Mother*

Over your white grave  
the flowers of life in white –  
Oh, how many years have passed by  
without you – winged spirit.  
Over your white grave,  
already closed for so many years,  
tranquility circulates with a strange force,  
with strength, like death – incomprehensible.  
Over your white grave  
the silence is radiant,  
as if something were rising,  
as if it strengthened hope.  
Over your white grave  
I knelt down with my sadness –  
oh, how long ago it was –  
it seems so tiny today.  
Over your white grave  
oh Mother – faded Love –  
my lips were whispering helplessly:  
– Give her eternal peace.’<sup>6</sup>

In the book *Dar i Tajemnica*, John Paul II, referring to his deepest and most personal experiences (cf. John Paul II 1996, p. 4), writes that he was aware of his mother’s contribution to his religious upbringing and that it was certainly very significant. (Cf. Kindziuk, 2020, p. 22)

<sup>5</sup> Original text: „Zobaczycie, mój Lolek będzie kiedyś wielkim człowiekiem.” (*Dzieciństwo Jana Pawła II*, no data)

<sup>6</sup> Original text: *Emilii – Matce mojej*: Nad Twoją białą mogiłą / białe kwitną życia kwiaty – / O, ileż lat to już było / bez Ciebie – duchu skrzydlaty. / Nad Twoją białą mogiłą, / od lat tylu już zamkniętą, / spokój krąży z dziwną siłą, / z siłą, jak śmierć – niepojętą. / Nad Twoją białą mogiłą / cisza jasna promienieje, / jakby w górę coś wznosiło, / jakby krzepiło nadzieję. / Nad Twoją białą mogiłą / klęknąłem ze swoim smutkiem – / o, jak to dawno już było – / jak się dziś zdaje malutkim. / Nad Twoją białą mogiłą / o Matko – zgasłe Kochanie – me usta szeptały bezsiłą: / – Daj wieczne odpoczywanie. (Wojtyła Karol, 1939)

Senior Karol Wojtyła (1879–1941) was a valued lieutenant. From 1900 he served in the Austrian army, incl. in Wadowice, Lviv and Krakow. He was an extremely diligent, hard-working, gentle and modest man. (Cf. Kindziuk 2020, p. 76) After the death of his wife Emilia – April 13, 1929, and three years later the eldest son Edmund (who was a doctor and contracted scarlet fever) he remained alone with Karol in deep mourning. He turned his suffering heart to God. Karol saw his father bear witness to his roots in prayer many times. He often saw him in the evening or at night praying on his knees. (Cf. John Paul II, 1996, p. 22) The Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary were sung in the house every day, they went to church to the vespers service, and prayed the Rosary.

Mr. Wojtyła senior was characterized by impeccable morality and honesty in the duties he performed, he took care of the education of his sons including religious education. In the Wojtyła family, the regular points of the day were: morning prayer, daily Holy Mass at 7:00 am in Latin in the Wadowice church, and prayers in the evening. Sacramental life, worship, work, household chores, walk, evening prayer. (Cf. Kindziuk 2020, p. 229) The future pope was brought up in a very religious atmosphere, the Bible was read together at home, pilgrimages were made to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska or to Częstochowa. Senior Wojtyła initiated a cult to Our Lady of Perpetual Help in his parish. Young Karol accepted the Carmelite scapular and served as an altar boy during the Holy Mass. He received from his father a prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to which he was faithful until the end of his life. (Cf. Poniewierski, 2017, p. 14)

***‘Prayer to the Holy Spirit***

Holy Spirit, I am asking you for the gift of Wisdom  
to better know You and Your divine perfections,  
for the gift of Understanding to clearly discern  
the spirit of the mysteries of the holy faith,  
for the gift of Counsel that I may live  
according to the principles of this faith,  
for a gift of Knowledge that I may look for  
counsel in You and that I may always find it in You,  
for the gift of Fortitude that no fear or earthly preoccupations  
would ever separate me from You,  
for the gift of Piety that I may always serve  
Your Majesty with a filial love,  
for the gift of the Fear of the Lord that I may dread sin,  
which offends You, oh my God.  
Amen.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Original text: *Modlitwa do Ducha Świętego*: Duchu Święty, proszę Cię o dar mądrości / do lepszego poznawania Ciebie i Twoich doskonałości Bożych, / o dar rozumu do lepszego zrozumienia / ducha tajemnic wiary świętej, / o dar umiejętności, abym w życiu / kierował się zasadami tejsze wiary, / o dar

Sundays, holidays and celebrations were solemnised in accordance with the Christian tradition. The occasions for celebration in the Catholic family are the sacraments – from baptism, through First Communion, confirmation and then marriage or priesthood. The Christian family celebrates the received sacrament in a familial and solemn way, and then celebrates it with a festive dinner and dessert. Souvenirs given on the occasion of the ceremony are an addition. This used to be the case in the past, today these rites have been commercialized. The accent is placed more on the material aspects and, in consequence, the rite is not experienced in a fully conscious way. It becomes an external act only, devoid of spiritual depth.

The main holidays in a traditional Catholic family include the celebration of Sunday – a joint participation in the Eucharist and a festive dinner and walk. At that time, the Wojtyła would talk about literature, Polish history and patriotism. The most important holidays in the Catholic Church are: the Solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection and the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord.

Mr and Mrs Wojtyła as a community of faith read God's design with regard to their family in the right way. As a married couple, through their love for God, they raised their children in deep faith. Both Edmund and Karol were inspired and directed towards human dignity, the sense of self-identity, the ability to meet and hold dialogue, a disinterested readiness to serve, large-hearted service and deep solidarity – this wisdom is communicated by John Paul II. (Cf. John Paul II, 1981a, no. 43) Sacramental life and prayer were the main source of spiritual growth which leads to holiness. The Wojtyła family cherished the gift of each family member's call to holiness exhibiting mutual care.

## **2. The Wojtyła family and the teaching of John Paul II about the family**

From the very beginning, Karol Wojtyła had the right image of God, who is a good, loving Father. He understood perfectly the Catholic faith that his parents had taught him. Years later, he wrote: 'When I look back, I can see how – through the local environment, through the parish, through my family – my life path leads me to one place: the baptismal font in the parish church in Wadowice. At this baptismal font, I was accepted into the grace of God's sonship

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rady, abym we wszystkim u Ciebie szukał / rady i u Ciebie ją zawsze znajdował, / o dar męstwa, aby żadna bojaźń ani względy ziemskie / nie mogły mnie od Ciebie oderwać, / o dar pobożności, abym zawsze służył / Twojemu Majestatowi z synowską miłością, / o dar bojaźni Bożej, abym lękał się grzechu, / który Ciebie, o Boże, obraża. / Amen. (*Modlitwa do Ducha Świętego*, no data)

and the faith of my Redeemer, into the community of His Church on June 20, 1920. I solemnly kissed this baptismal font in the year of the millennium of Poland's baptism as the then Archbishop of Krakow. Then I did it a second time, as the prelate reminded me, for the 50th anniversary of my baptism as a cardinal, and today I have kissed this baptismal font for the third time, coming from Rome as the successor of St. Peter.<sup>8</sup>

Both Mr. Wojtyła and Mrs. Emilia were 'masters' in faith for the young Karol. Their healthy love was the foundation for intra-family relationships. The senior Wojtyła ensured a sense of security for the family, being inseparable from Christ through both the sacraments and prayer. Mrs. Emilia was the heart of the family, educator, depository of the Catholic faith, she invested her relatives with love and respect. The parents were a gift of themselves to their children. They knew the value of upbringing and regarded it as paramount. They highly valued love, truth and identity. An extremely patriotic family, rich in spiritual values and familiar with the history of Poland.

Today, prosperity has become the overriding value. Everything else is subject to possessing as much as possible. Moral and ethical values have been marginalized, which has caused general chaos and the degradation of social rules. You can see the poisoning of basic concepts such as love, truth, honesty, tradition, religion.

Karol Wojtyła, later as the Pontiff, dealt extensively with the topic of the family. In the Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* he writes: "The future of humanity passes by way of the family. It is therefore indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavor to save and foster the values and requirements of the family." (John Paul II, 1981, no. 86) Today, much depends on the Christian family, shaped by the Gospel. Such a family becomes an authority for others, carrying the cross of the modern world without succumbing to the trends of worthless modernization and the new concept of a man without a soul.

The Pope saw clearly on his own example that the family plays a fundamental role in upbringing and education. In the Catholic family, a special emphasis is put on spiritual and moral formation, the formation of virtues, attitudes and values. During his pontificate, he pointed to taking specific pastoral actions at

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<sup>8</sup> Original text: „Kiedy patrzę wstecz, widzę, jak droga mojego życia poprzez środowisko tutejsze, poprzez parafię, poprzez moją rodzinę, prowadzi mnie do jednego miejsca, do chrzcielnicy w wadowickim kościele parafialnym. Przy tej chrzcielnicy zostałem przyjęty do łaski Bożego synostwa i wiary Odkupiciela mojego, do wspólnoty Jego Kościoła w dniu 20 czerwca 1920 roku. Chrzcielnicę tę już raz uroczyście ucałowałem w roku tysiąclecia chrztu Polski jako ówczesny arcybiskup krakowski. Potem uczyniłem to po raz drugi, jak przypomniał ksiądz prałat, na 50 rocznicę mojego chrztu, jako kardynał, a dzisiaj po raz trzeci ucałowałem tę chrzcielnicę, przybywając z Rzymu jako następcą św. Piotra.” (*Dzieciństwo Jana Pawła II*, no data)



the threshold of the 21st century to strengthen the family, which is being deformed in the midst of contemporary threats. (Cf. Stala, 2015 p. 155–174)

In the book *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Wojtyła writes, that the family is an educational institution within which the new man shapes his personality. It is very important for the proper formation of this personality that he should not be alone, but in a natural community. It is sometimes said that ‘it is easier to raise a few than an only child’, and it is also said that ‘two are not yet a community, they are two only children.’ Parents assume a managerial role in education, but under this leadership children grow up on their own, especially because they develop within the framework of the children’s community – in a group of siblings. (Cf. Wojtyła 1960, p. 166)

The conclusion is that it is the family that constitutes the elementary bonds that branch out into social and civic bonds, etc. All kinds of appropriate mental attitudes that take place in social life and are associated with responsibility come from the family home. The family is a community of experiences that influences the interaction of wider communities: school, work, universities, social and national cooperation. Order, order and harmony should flow from the family unit to society, and all this will be possible only on the basis of the Gospel. The Word of God is the foundation of strong faith, well-founded love and responsibility, because it has the power of the Creator Himself. In His eternal intention, the family serves the next generations and has a significant impact on their proper development.

Families with many children are a great gift for humanity. They fulfill the calling to motherhood by resigning from self-realization and by upbringing and shaping the life entrusted to them. In 1997 Ludźmierz, the Pope addressed these words to large families: ‘In today’s world you are witnesses of this happiness that comes from sharing love, even at the cost of many sacrifices. Do not be afraid to bear this witness! The world may not understand you, the world may ask why you did not take the easier path, but the world needs your witness – the world needs your love, your peace and your happiness.’<sup>9</sup> These words very strongly emphasize the task posed by the present reality to bear witness to life with total courage and love, the witness of the true Catholic family.

When we carefully analyze the attitudes of Mr. Wojtyła, we see a very responsible father who raised and prepared Karol for the role of the future pope. This example shows where the strength of the family is when there is no mother. The father showed on his knees during prayer that a person becomes truly great

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<sup>9</sup> Original text: „W dzisiejszym świecie jesteście świadkami tego szczęścia, które wypływa z dzielenia miłości, nawet za cenę wielu wyrzeczeń. Nie bójcie się dawać tego świadectwa! Świat może was nie rozumieć, świat może pytać, dlaczego nie poszliście łatwiejszą drogą, ale świat potrzebuje waszego świadectwa – świat potrzebuje waszej miłości, waszego pokoju i waszego szczęścia.” (Jan Paweł II, 1997)



and strong with God's power. He was the first teacher, educator, and the first initiator of the deep spiritual life of his sons. Mr. Wojtyła spent a lot of time with his children, thus showing them interest and fatherly love and acceptance.

As we know, Mr. Wojtyła was a military man by profession, so how did Karol's love of literature, theater, sports and, in the future, his choice of a priestly vocation come about? Mr. Wojtyła was a tool in the hands of God, who worked in such a way that accepting the election as Pope would be courageously and consciously realized. Therefore, this example shows the potential for holiness that lies within the Catholic family, even if it is incomplete. The example of Mr. Wojtyła indicates how much effort needs to be made to offer a child the love and education that he deserves, the fruit of which is not only his salvation but the salvation of many other people. Today, the testimony of Mr. Wojtyła is a signpost for children's perfecting so that not only God's goodness and love, but most of all holiness, can be revealed in their lives.

### **3. The influence of family formation on John Paul II's pontificate as reflected in his teaching**

In the previous part of this article, we presented facts from the family life of Karol Wojtyła, which shaped his spirituality and contributed to the path and development of his pontificate. Wojtyła became the head of the Catholic Church as Pope John Paul II – the Holy Father, and he truly fulfilled this ministry as a pastor of many nations. His parents, Emilia and Karol Wojtyła, shaped their children in such a way that, having reached human maturity, they also matured spiritually and were ready for the mission assigned to them by God. This is evidenced by the life testimony of both Charles and Edmund.

Karol Wojtyła's appointment flourished at the right moment. Wojtyła senior was an instrument in the hand of God who polished and prepared young Karol for a very serious vocation in the Church. In this way, we can look at many facts from the life of John Paul II. Military education became the foundation for the fulfillment of daily duties, combined with the rhythm of prayer and many meetings. The Pope was always guided by the good of others and strove in his teaching to make everyone know Christ and live His gospel. We want to draw attention to what was revealed in his papal life that had been brought out of the family home, starting with the basic virtues, showing the father's influence on his later pontificate and teaching.

First of all, it should be noted that the basis of everything was prayer, because the Pope began everything with prayer. Secondly, the poverty and humility of the home. Modesty in attitude, balanced against rich intellectual

knowledge. High personal and intellectual culture. Peace of mind in the midst of adversities that gave rise to a sense of security and hope. The Pope was similar to his father. He followed him as his role model, and then became a Father himself, just as he had been taught. He had great respect and love for every human being. Thirdly, the courage to make the Wojtyła home church a reality in the world arena. That is, sharing the spiritual and intellectual heritage through numerous pilgrimages, speeches, homilies and publications in which the missionary spirit was revealed. Father taught young Wojtyła to commune with literature and mountains and forests. Love for the homeland and patriotism were of utmost importance. Knowledge of the history of the world and the history of Poland was the foundation. All journeys and pilgrimages were the source of John Paul II's openness to pilgrimages all over the world and the will for dialogue.

The first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* shows us that God's most precious gift to man is His Son – the Redeemer of man, but what man? It is about man in all his truth, to the full extent. It is not about an abstract man, but a real man, a concrete, historical man. It is about everyman. For everyone is caught up in the mystery of the Redemption, with each one has Christ united Himself in this mystery once and for all. (Cf. John Paul II, 1979a, no. 13) The Pope shows a specific direction in finding the truth about oneself. He explains that man finds in Christ proper greatness, dignity and the value of his humanity. The human being must, "enter into him with all his own self, he must "appropriate" and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deep wonder at himself." (John Paul II, 1979a, no. 10). The senior Wojtyła, in bringing up his sons, devoted time to making them know their dignity, value, identity and belonging to Christ, and how deep and unique the relationship with Christ is. As a military man, he prepared his son Karol very well for spiritual warfare and achieving his goals. Prayer is a meeting place, a place of transformation, a place of experiencing unconditional, pure and perfect love. As an adolescent boy, Karol Wojtyła saw his praying father, who in this very place experienced the presence of God as a friend.

A person who knows the suffering resulting from various experiences is wounded by sin, overwhelmed by the senselessness of existence, and looks for hope anew. In the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, the light of the true face of the merciful God the Father will shine before him. (Cf. John Paul II, 1980, no. 1) The Pope perfectly understood the needs and concerns of every human being. As a child, after his mother died, he grieved the loss of a loved one. His father, sensitive to the pain of his children, leaned over in prayer, asking Mary to help

raise and educate his sons. With even greater love and commitment, he wanted to direct their spirituality towards the Holy Trinity portrayed in the Gospel. On pilgrimages to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, they celebrated the Way of the Cross there, contemplating one by one the stations picturing Merciful Love. This mystery was extremely close to Wojtyła until the end of his days, through the prayer in the sanctuary where the body of St. Faustina had been lain, up until his death on the eve of the Sunday of Divine Mercy – 2 April, 2005.

In another encyclical *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II takes up the topic of work. He was no stranger to hard work since his youth. Senior Wojtyła was an authority on diligence, responsibility and conscientiousness for his son. Thus, the 20-year-old Wojtyła was shaped and ready enough to courageously take up physical work during the German occupation at the *Solvay* Chemical Factory in Krakow. This experience allowed him, as the future pope, to understand in depth the essence of the Creator's intention, who had made work a universal virtue of diligence was of great importance to the Pope. In the book *Dar i Tajemnica*, he writes, that every day he met hard-working people, and got to know their environment, their families, their interests, their human value and dignity. (Cf. Jan Paweł II, 1996, p. 23) Certainly, this time was so enriching that it contributed to the creation of the abovementioned encyclical on the 90th anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*. The spirituality of work has a significant impact on human development and thus brings people closer to God. (Cf. John Paul II, 1981b, no. 24) In this way, a person can not only get to know God's plan, but also fulfill His will and experience His blessing and protection.

The testimony of John Paul II's life shows us his authentic bond with the Holy Spirit. As a child, he received a prayer from for the gifts of the Holy Spirit from his father, which introduced him into a close bond with the Holy Spirit and became a strong foundation for his pontifical journey. In the encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem* he writes: "The breath of the divine life, the Holy Spirit, in its simplest and most common manner, expresses itself and makes itself felt in prayer. It is a beautiful and salutary thought that, wherever people are praying in the world, there the Holy Spirit is, the living breath of prayer." (John Paul II, 1986, no. 65) Remaining in the presence of God was a permanent element of life in the Wojtyła family. The experience of the Person of the Holy Spirit bore much fruit in the spiritual development of the adolescent Karol, who later notes that upbringing at home and hard work in the quarries were the first seminars that shaped his future life. The pontificate shows very strongly how deeply he was rooted in prayer and wanted his power to bring a new rebirth to the world. From the depths of his heart he called out these beautiful words: "Let your Spirit descend. and renew the face of the earth, the face of this land!" (John Paul II, 1979b)

The Marian spirituality of the Wojtyła family was nurtured in a special way. The very life of Karol Wojtyła was a miracle, prayed for through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After the death of Mrs. Emilia, Senior Wojtyła indicated Mary to his sons as their mother: *Here is your mother* (Jn 19:27). From that time on, Karol's life took on a Marian dimension. As a young man, he systematically participated in parish prayers devoted to Marian cult: Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Loreto litany and the rosary service. He also adopted the Carmelite scapular and dedicated his life to the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. His whole life and pontificate bear a testimony to a deep bond with Mary, crowned with the words *Totus Tuus*. Today, in retrospect, we can say with certainty that John Paul II was under special protection of Mary.

In the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, he writes that the blessing reaches its full meaning when Mary stands at the cross of her Son (Jn 19:25). Thus Mary kept faithfully her union with her Son up to the Cross. "It is a union through faith- the same faith with which she had received the angel's revelation at the Annunciation." (John Paul II, 1987, no. 18). Mary was a great gift for the Pope. Just as John received Mary as his mother at the cross, so did Karol receive Mary as his mother after the death of Lady Emilia.

An extremely heroic testimony is presented to us by Mrs. Emilia Wojtyła, who faced the choice of the abortion of little Karol. Her faith shaped on the ground of the Catholic Church did not allow her to make this decision. Wojtyła gave birth listening to the singing of the litany in honor of the Mother of God. As if Someone upstairs had helped her in this delivery. When the midwife placed the newborn on the mother's breasts, she saw tears running down Emilia's cheeks and a smile on her face. The mother showed emotion, but also joy and happiness that a miracle had happened because both the child and she were alive. Moreover, instead of the announced sick, weak child, she gave birth to a healthy, strong boy. The impossible became possible. (Cf. Kindziuk 2020, p. 211) That is why today she is an example of heroic faith, hope and love. She chose life.

John Paul II in the encyclical *Evangelium vitae* deals with the value and inviolability of human life. The Pope's great awareness of the threat to human life became the reason for taking up such an important topic as the defense of life from conception to natural death. "Abortion and euthanasia are thus crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize." (John Paul II, 1995, no. 73) Therefore, John Paul II strongly encourages to defend and promote life through the service of love. Personal testimony, various forms of volunteering, social activities and political commitment to promote the culture of life are of the utmost importance. Mary is the model of the one who accepted 'Life' on behalf of all of us. Mrs. Emilia Wojtyła believed in Mary, trusted God and gave birth to a healthy son, John Paul II.

John Paul II's pontificate is one of the most fruitful pontificates of all time. His numerous encyclicals, in which he makes it very clear that the greatest happiness of man is to strive for holiness in accordance with the Creator's intention, deserve special recognition. Raised in a truly Catholic family with healthy Christian roots, he has become a guide for the Catholic Church, paving the way *per Mariam ad Jesum*. The teachings of John Paul II and his testimony of life are an excellent example today in defending Christian values and a source of hope for future generations.

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## Rola rodziny w duchowej formacji Karola Wojtyły

**Streszczenie:** Rodzina Wojtyłów to rodzina szczególna, która w planie Bożym jest przykładem heroicznej wiary, nadziei i miłości. Rodzice Papieża byli dla niego wzorem do naśladowania i doskonałym fundamentem jego drogi do świętości. Modlitwa i sakramenty były środkami zjednoczenia z Bogiem. Rodzice spełniali wolę Bożą, żyjąc w duchu Ewangelii, całkowitym oddaniu Maryi – Totus Tuus. Artykuł, nawiązujący do życia i pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II, ukazuje wpływ rodziców na przyszłość Karola, który został papieżem. Jest więc wielką inspiracją dla rodzin, wychowawców i opiekunów, którzy w dzisiejszych czasach poszukują oryginalnych, charyzmatycznych autorytetów, inspirujących oraz poprowadzących po właściwej życiowej drodze.

W 2020 r., gdy obchodzono setną rocznicę urodzin św. Jana Pawła II, 7 maja Episkopat Polski wyraził zgodę na rozpoczęcie przez Archidiecezję Krakowską procesu beatyfikacyjnego Karola i Emilii Wojtyły. Dlatego Stolica Apostolska została poproszona o rozpoczęcie tego procesu na szczeblu diecezjalnym.

Otwartą kwestią pozostaje rozpoczęcie procesu beatyfikacyjnego starszego brata Papieża Wojtyły, Edmunda. Zmarł on w 1932 r., opiekując się chorymi w szpitalu w Bielsku. Edmund uzyskał tytuł doktora nauk medycznych na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim 29 marca 1930 r. Komisja beatyfikacyjna powstała w 1997 r.

Rodzina Karola Wojtyły nie różniła się od przeciętnej ówczesnej rodziny katolickiej. Tym, co dziś wyróżnia tę rodzinę, jest miłość i wierność Bogu, i ludziom, oddanie, służba i pokora. Świętość jest darem, który ochrzczeni otrzymują wraz z pierwszym sakramentem. Jako taki, dar ten powinien być pielęgnowany i rozwijany we wspólnocie Kościoła katolickiego poprzez życie sakramentalne i życie modlitwy. Rodzina Wojtyłów jest przykładem wypełniania woli Bożej w życiu codziennym, trwania przy Bogu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Karol Wojtyła, Emilia i Karol Wojtyła, formacja duchowa, duchowość, świętość, modlitwa.



