

Book Review

## **“The Pedagogy of Witness. An Anthropological-Kreygmatic Perspective” by Zbigniew Marek SJ & Anna Walulik CSFN – the Reflective Challenge for Education**

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### **Introduction**

Among many concepts and trends appearing in the research on pedagogy such as critical, personalistic, natural, social, creative, innovative one, etc., the pedagogy of witness that formulates new dimensions of approaches to the educational subjects responsible for the effectiveness of upbringing, teaching and learning, appears very crucial. It is rooted in the personalistic anthropology, Christian philosophy and humanistic psychology. The pedagogy of witness requires not only the theoretical setting but the true examples to follow, the true examples of persons whose inner and outer activity can be the target for making research. Their lives can be treated as the torch enlightening the ways that many people, especially, young ones go or will go. What is more, the realization of their life's calling can be seen in the qualitative, narrative research such as the biographical one. This kind of research sets a challenge for the research participants and those who are curious about the research results. These subjects of research and education should be prepared for a mature cognition of the issues discussed in the personalistic, integral and holistic perspective. They also should be ready to field the reflective inquiry concerning the truth of metaphysical existence of human beings in the erratic space of modern philosophical mainstream of relativity seducing the new generations with building an attractive, elusive goals of lives. In this light, the book *“The Pedagogy of Witness. An Anthropological-Kreygmatic Perspective”* by Zbigniew Marek SJ & Anna Walulik CSFN can make the Reader stop for a while and reflect upon the true sense of life, also from the research point of view. The book is presented in this review as its contents are aimed at exposing the meaning of the direct method of the upbringing exemplary to follow shown in the perspective of the qualitative research as far as the biographical method is concerned in the original concept of the authors. What is more, it is to emphasize the value of spirituality treated as one of the most powerful factors inspiring for human development. Peter L. Benson, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain & Stacy P. Rude in the aspect of spirituality state that *“the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which self is embedded in something greater, even than that which is sacred. It is the developmental “engine” that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs and practices”* (2003: 205-206). Regarding spirituality as a motor that awakens the hidden potential of inspirations, leading to human integral development covering all the human developmental structures such as biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual-religious ones, the book appears crucial particularly nowadays in the epoch full of postmodernistic approaches to educational sciences. The book contents enlightening the approach to life of Bishop Antony Długosz prove that the engine of religious spirituality is really a very valid determiner conditioning the results of religious education that needs witnesses of true faith in God. Religion treated in terms of crucial educational circumstances that foster the complex, entire, integral perception of a person and society can help solving many problems of the world which seems no to manage in building the civilization of love and peace. Mastering the religious approach to life requires facing many obstacles and hardships often connected with suffering and sacrifice, which take place in life of the Bishop -Antony Długosz. It is also crucial to explicate the positive, very transparent examples of clergy in

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the period of showing many dark examples of morality within this social group. The darkness cannot cover up many remarkable examples to follow, such as John Paul II, Polish Cardinal Stephan Wyszyński, who was named the Prymas of Millennium, and others. Considering the fact that religious education is not rarely seen in the connection with those who represent it in practice, the biographical method growing from the anthropological-kerygmatic perspective turns up to be useful in the case of showing the life of Bishop Antony Długosz presented by the authors of the book, who accent the meaning of being the witness of religion against the strong relative current of the world.

### Review

Hence, discussing the focal matters of the book needs to deal with the theoretical, practical, and methodological aspects crucial for the scientific research process. Hence, in this context it is worth drawing out the structural layout of the book. The structure of this book consists of six chapters.

The first one describes the fundamentals of the research process that is called "*From the story of life to the pedagogical theory*", where the story of life is regarded as a source of the pedagogical knowledge. Here, the authors present the life story of the Bishop Antoni Długosz. The sources used in the biographical method cover the memories, reflections and film fragments of events entitled. To serve documented in the video made by Michał Tkaczyński, the narrative interview "river" conducted by Priest Stanisław Jasionek, and the music story sung by the Bishop on the 50th anniversary of his priesthood. Bishop Antoni Długosz was born in 1941, and has always been not only the true active priest who has promoted the culture inspired by the Gospel, but also the scientist with the habilitated doctor grade, who is the author of many scientific publications and publications popularizing the Biblical knowledge and priest help given to those who need it. What is more, he is a great patriot deeply understanding the roots of the Christian Polish culture tightly merged with the Christian European culture. Having considered all the aspects of the Bishop's life, the authors of the book decided that he can be a true exemplary of witness of the faith who is followed by others. According to them, the intimate discovery of his life and experience benefited in an attempt to reflect scientifically upon the core of the witness and its transfer into pedagogical space. The value of such reflection is rooted in the Latin statement: *verba docent, exempla trahunt*. Therefore, the title of the book "*The Pedagogy of Witness. An Anthropological - Kerygmatic Perspective*" (Z. Marek & Walulik, 2019) appears justified. The research on this biography has been conveyed in the perspective of the subjective-participatory paradigm (Szymańska, 2018). This paradigm exposes the personalistic concept of revealing a person in his/her act of doing, which can lead to the implication that a moral person is revealed in the moral activity that enables the human experience morality in alignment with spirituality. The Reader can find here the assumptions and acknowledgements of the categorial analysis implementation for the research. This analysis uses the categories such as: "actors" (of the main plan and backward ones) – persons being in different relationships, among whom Bishop plays the main role as a witness; places enabling to see the connections between actors and their relationships with other persons and the environment; time counted subjectively, objectively and in situations; moral values, norms, and assessments. The material gathered by the authors who analyzed it, according to these categories, leads to the pedagogical implications seen as the presumptions for constructing the theory of the pedagogy of witness. Therefore, this chapter has great significance for building the fundamentals, enabling explicit understanding. The contents of the book laid out in a logical, methodological structure allow the Reader to enrich both scientific and spiritual knowledge in the light of faith, hope, and love built on truth.

The second chapter is called "*I-you-they-we. In agreement with oneself and others*". Here, the aspects of perception of oneself and others aligned with the participation in humanity and another person is strongly exposed by the authors in the biographical perspective of the Bishop's life with scientific reflections and digressions referred to anyone who stops for a while to understand the life itself and its sense, also in the community with God. So, life can be perceived here, as a teacher, and evokes question field by the authors: Who educates whom? The net of "actors" engaged in building the biography of Bishop Antoni indicates the relationships with: God, Jesus Christ, Bible, Church, human being, and culture. Analysis of these relationships reveals the core levels (dimensions) of religious upbringing. The first one elicits awakening the capacities for religious existence in the world, sensitivity to sacrum, person's religious needs and experiences, the level of building respect attitude for religious dimension of human existence; the level of learning how to understand cultures through their religious roots, seeking cultural expression for personal faith, choice and creating the forms of that personal life in faith. This level or dimension can be named, upbringing to religiosity. It requires the religious education understood in the personalistic meaning. The second dimension of religious upbringing

points at the upbringing naturally drawn from the truth about the human being and the world that form the faithfulness to the disclosed truth. It awakes the responsibility for its transmission. In this dimension the religious upbringing becomes the Christian upbringing, which focal point is the evangelization, catechesis, ripening conscious motivation for the Christian faith formation. Here, the upbringing in faith emerges from this explanation (Marek & Walulik, 2019:93). Analysis of these dimensions are reflected in the narration of Bishop Antony Długosz, where one can see that upbringing supported by religion does not constrain the human being in his/her development but helps him/her develop both in the physical and spiritual areas.

In response to the third chapter: *“Yesterday-today-tomorrow. Chronos and Kairos of every-day life”*, the Reader can find analysis of the category of time and reflection upon it. Time when we do bring up others and ourselves looking at the temporal and strand temporal anchors embedded in Christianity is unique for everyone. Appropriate perception of the actors taking part in person’s life, can supply a transparent, objective view on life. The examples of being a true witness of the evangelical message of New Hope, supported by life events, make happenings become the precious sources for religious upbringing. In the light of the events taking place in Bishop’s life the Reader can find the metaphysical and existential answers to questions posed to self. Narration conducted by Bishop and those who have accompanied him in many situations happening in different periods of time confirm that his life witnesses of his authenticity, and peculiarity of building own identity coming from the choice and decision about giving the answer to vocation in an appropriate time. It also exposes the meaning of formation raising a new need for own integral development, what is connected with openness to transcendence –God. Fulfillment of his own vocation appoints the necessity of deepening an own self-conscience throughout the whole life. This is seen in the biographical narration conveyed by actors participating in Bishop’s life including the main subject of the narrative, categorial analysis. So, it’s crucial to build the objective approach to understanding own life story that happens in concrete time periods and places.

It is not surprising that in the forth chapter the authors of the book concentrate also on analyzing the places of childhood as a source of biography with some references to the horizons of its understanding what demands exposing the significant places in Bishop’s life, and in the context of analyzed events, posing the question *“Where do we bring up ourselves?”*. The authors of the book underline the meaning of family home seen as “Church home”, the sanctuary – The Light Mount in Częstochowa, Higher seminar for Priests, parish fostering Bishop’s religious development. They claim that the atmosphere of place can reinforce or weaken the positive qualities in forming the personal identity. The places, in which Bishop grew up were noticeable for gaining his identity as a Christian who becomes a witness to follow by others. Analysis placed in this chapter bears the conviction of necessity for eliciting the meaning of the educative atmosphere in human integral development. This aspect can be seen as a challenge for educators whose activity should be not only transparent but filled in with love rising in the appropriate atmosphere. Such an atmosphere fosters personal openness to values, the perception of their hierarchy, norms regulating the harmony of social life, what emerges from the narrative categorial analysis made by the authors of the book.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the relation that takes place between finding and disclosing the meaning of happy life with the hope and achievement of life goal as it is seen in the narrative analysis of biography of Bishop’s life. The authors of the book make assumptions that narration as the fundamental and natural form of cognitive representation of reality lets the human construct identity on the bases of new way of understanding the world, which is experienced by him/her enables to discover the sense of person’s life. The identification of values and expectations can be justified in analyzing and interpreting them in the light of Bishop’s biography. The pyramids of values indicated the upper horizontal relation between. God, Jesus Christ, narrator, culture and the Bible that determine pillars of everyday life and happiness, show its connection with vertical dimension. It runs to conclusion that both dimensions of relation merge with each other in reciprocal way. Furthermore, they elicit the meaning of sources of religious upbringing. It is proved in the case of Bishop Antony Długosz's life, where the Reader can disclose his passions, intellectual, scientific and spiritual growth enabling him overcoming stages of shaping his identity in personal, cultural, and social dimension representing his way in the pedagogy of servitude accented by the authors of the book.

The last chapter deals with the relationship between the pedagogy of servitude and pedagogy of witness. Serving others with joy reveals the realization of mission in fulfillment. Bishop Antony Długosz consequently and permanently mastered this wonderful quality being with others in concrete places and time, with the consciousness that without others he could not do what he did. The authors expose the meaning of servitude understood from the kerygmatic-anthropological perspective that needs the conjunction of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the space of experience and values, although on the other hand, it creates the space in which the required competences are obtained. The acknowledgement of servitude with joy bases on the existential axioms

which demand the integrity between this, what we think, feel, and how we act. This reveals the person in action. The activity reveals the qualities that build the portrait of the person who is (or not) the true witness of beliefs, approaches etc.

Analyses and interpretation of the contents of the book: *The Pedagogy of Witness. An Anthropological - Kerygmatic Perspective* by Zbigniew Marek SJ & Anna Walulik CSFN, indicates the connection between the sources of the research, paradigm perspective taken for depicting scientific matters, and categorial analysis shaping the layout of the research material. This analysis helps giving the reply to the research questions aligned with its categories such as the actors, time, place, objects, settings and the results coming from it. Furthermore, this analysis fosters the necessity to take the perspective of being the true witness by anyone who goes through many issues set in the book. It also helps exploring own domains of inner life as challenge to develop socially, morally, culturally, and spiritually. This requires the courage to face up own barriers, limitations, and potential developmental possibility to reach a joyous and happy life, as it is exposed in the sixth chapter of the book.

In summary of the book, the last implications, made by the authors, cited below can provoke further reflective discussions upon the meaning of the theory of the pedagogy of witness for the educative purposes:

Our theory of the pedagogy of witness performs all three functions characteristic of the pedagogical theories: diagnostic, evaluative and prognostic one. The diagnostic function is performed by the pedagogy of witness through the appreciation of the man's spiritual dimension. Its evaluative function makes the man more sensitive to the world of values through the reflection upon the ways of their interiorization and externalization in accordance with the individual developmental potential. Furthermore, the prognostic function is reflected in discovering the meaning of "the ultimate care" for the integrity of a person. From the anthropological perspective, these functions emerge from the principles of personalism, and from the kerygmatic perspective – they emerge from understanding the meaning of religion for education for life full of love, i.e. happy life (p.302).

### Conclusions

*The Pedagogy of Witness. An Anthropological -Kerygmatic Perspective* by Zbigniew Marek SJ & Anna Walulik CSFN appears very crucial nowadays, because of both the educational matters discussed in it, and its own originally deployed categorial analysis being the shackle of the contents leading to the theory of the pedagogy of witness, as well. Finally, educative and scientific aspects set in the book can become the source of reflection upon the necessity of building the creative approach to life embedded in the evangelical truths shaping human happiness. The book is worth recommending as it exemplifies the narrative research conducted with the use of its own concept of the biographical method that can provoke the Reader to make his/ her own overarching points of view on different matters. The categorial analysis of actors, places, time, values and expectations can be used in many areas of activity. It also elicits the meaning of spirituality in human development. Moreover, the authors exposed the aspects of realizing the goals of religious education to faith and religious upbringing based on true faith that reveals the person in activity (action), and activity that reveals the person. If these relationships stay in harmony, the goals of pedagogy of witness can be achieved, as it takes place in case of the life of Bishop Antony Długosz. The quality of such kind of relationship could be the object of care in education at all, in which the religious education can not be marginalized, because spirituality understood as the main "engine" fostering human development demands to be elicited. The authors of the book wonderfully exposed this aspect encouraging the Reader for further discussion and research taken in more wider space, regardless of his, her nationality. The issues undertaken in the book have universal meaning, and the concept of the analysis proposed and applied in research by the authors of the book demand dissemination in different areas of activity.

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