

Paweł Mąkosa

Catholic sacramental formation for polish children and young people in England and Wales

Studia Ełckie 17/1, 73-90

2015

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach
dozwolonego użytku.

KS. PAWEŁ MAKOSA *

**CATHOLIC SACRAMENTAL FORMATION
FOR POLISH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration, though it affects other nations too, is much prevalent among Poles. Due to the stormy history, marked with wars and poverty, for many years Poles have been emigrating to all continents in search of freedom and work. Poland's accession to the European Union on 1 May 2004 triggered yet another wave of emigration. It has been 10 years and now is the right time to make some summaries and also to determine the outlooks on future. In recent years emigration from Poland has slightly decreased compared to the first years after Poland's accession to the EU, yet the most recent data reveal that the number of Poles living abroad is still growing. Since 2004 Great Britain has remained a popular destination for Polish migrants. Based on a detailed report of the Central Statistical Office concerning the dynamics of emigration from Poland to European countries in the period 2004-2010¹, and data on current migration, one can assume that approximately 600 thousand Polish emigrants live at present in Great Britain².

Polish emigration, also to Great Britain, has been the topic of numerous papers and books in many languages, which analysed various aspects of that

* Ks. dr hab. Paweł Mąkosa, prof. KUL – assistant professor at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland) and the chief of the Chair of Psychological and Pedagogical Catechetics.

¹ Główny Urząd Statystyczny [Central Statistical Office], Departament Badań Demograficznych [Department for Demographic Research], *Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach emigracji z Polski w latach 2004-2010 [Information about sizes and directions of Polish emigration in the years 2004-2010]*, Warszawa 2011, http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/lud_infor_o_rozm_i_kierunk_emigra_z_polski_w_latach_2004_2010.pdf, dostęp: 11.04.2015.

² Home Office, UK Border Agency, *Accession monitoring report*, May 2004 – March 2009, London 2009, p. 8; Główny Urząd Statystyczny [Central Statistical Office], p. 3.

phenomenon³. However, it seems that among the research areas pertaining to Polish emigration after 2004, religious life has received the least attention. Although there have been a few studies focussing on the religiousness of Polish migrants, in particular on their participation in religious practices⁴, their religious education and formation have not been studied in more detail. This paper is meant to fill the gap and discuss the organisational framework, topics and methods of Catholic Sacramental formation of the children of Polish migrants to England and Wales. This formation is provided first of all in parishes belonging to Polish Catholic Missions. For that reason, to obtain reliable data, unique empirical research has been conducted among Polish priests working in these establishments.

Methodology

In the context of the debate on the religious education and formation of Polish emigrants it seemed necessary to conduct empirical research among Polish priests working with emigrants. In England and Wales this was made possible by the well-organised network of the Christian ministry of the Polish diaspora coordinated by an organisation called the Polish Catholic Mission. Currently there are 69 Polish missions in England and Wales, which are personal parishes, and to join them one must submit a special declaration. In total, 99 priests from Poland work in these establishments, and Catholic services are held in 207 locations. In many of them there is a Mass every weekend, sometimes once a fortnight, and in some only once a month⁵.

To obtain as reliable results as possible on the sacramental education and formation of Polish migrants in England and Wales, doctoral students of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland carried out empirical research among Polish clergymen working in Polish Catholic missions in that area. The survey was conducted in London in autumn 2012, during an annual

³ B. Babczyńska, R. Cheda, *Szkolnictwo Polonijne w Wielkiej Brytanii*, In: T. Lewowicki, J. Nikitorowicz, R. Bojakowski, *Złote gody polskiej szkoły sobotniej*, In: *50 lat Polskiej Szkoły Sobotniej im. Marii Konopnickiej w Londynie*, Londyn 2003; A. D'Angelo, L. Ryan, *Sites of socialisation – Polish parents and children in London schools*, „Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny”, 2011, p. 237-258; R. Dzwonkowski, *Najnowsza emigracja polska - problemy duszpasterskie*. „Zeszyty Społeczne KIK” 15: 2007, p. 151-162; J. Eade, Drinkwater, M.P. Garapich, *Polscy migranci w Londynie- klasa społeczna i etniczność*, Surrey 2006; J. Fomina, *Światy równoległe – wizerunek własny Polaków w Wielkiej Brytanii*, Warszawa 2009; J. Krotofil, *Religia w procesie kształtowania tożsamości wśród polskich migrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii*, Kraków 2013; M. Krywult-Albańska, *Profil demograficzny polskich imigrantów poakcesyjnych w Wielkiej Brytanii*, „Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Sociologica”, IV (2012), vol. 2, p. 72-80.

⁴ Polska Misja Katolicka w Anglii i Walii [Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales]), Londyn 2014, www.pcmew.org, dostęp: 11.04.2015; J. Fomina, *Światy równoległe – wizerunek własny Polaków w Wielkiej Brytanii [Parallel Worlds – self-image of Poles in Great Britain]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 17.

⁵ Ibid.

retreat programme for Polish priests. It covered 72 Polish Roman Catholic clergymen currently working in England and Wales. Thus, the respondents made up nearly 73% of all Polish clergymen in that area. The size of the sample certainly ensures high reliability for the survey conducted. All respondents were administered a questionnaire developed by academics from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. The survey tool comprised in total 62 questions, of which only 5 were open questions, providing for descriptive answers. The other were closed ones, where the respondent had to choose one answer from among a few suggested options.

The whole questionnaire was divided into the following parts: general information; formation for the First Confession and Holy Communion; preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation; preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage; parents' formation preparing them for their child's baptism, and conclusions and postulates in respect of all the aforementioned types of education and formation. The Catholic Church distinguishes seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The questionnaire was limited to the first five out of the seven Sacraments because only for these do Polish parishes organise regular preparations. For obvious reasons, no preparations for the Holy Orders are held in parishes. Specific preparation for the Extreme Unction is non-existent either, as the Sacrament is usually administered in emergency situations. Wherever possible, such preparations are held on an individual basis.

Respondents were asked questions in respect of each Sacrament concerning the number of persons who are preparing themselves for a given Sacrament and their age. The next question concerned the place where Sacramental formation is organised whether it is the parish or the school, or both those environments. There were also questions about the frequency of formational meetings, their topics and forms, and also the formal requirements the candidates must fulfil to be admitted to particular Sacraments. The inclusion of such questions in the questionnaire was preceded by an analysis of Sacramental formation in Poland, as one could presume that Polish priests working among Polish emigrants would want to organise the formation similarly to how they did in Poland.

This paper analyses the results obtained from the survey concerning only the Sacramental formation of children and young people, as analysing the entire survey exceeds the scope of a single paper. Children are prepared for their first Confession and Holy Communion, while young people are educated towards the Sacrament of Confirmation. Most of the results presented will be discussed in the body of the paper, while the topics and methods will be additionally presented in tables.

Formation of children for the First Confession and Holy Communion

The Eucharist is the central point and the peak of the entire life of the Catholic Church – it is the most important Sacrament⁶. According to the centuries-long tradition of the Catholic Church, the Sacrament is received for the first time by children who are able to understand its meaning. Depending on local circumstances, it is received for the first time by children aged from 6 to 10. In the Catholic Church, the first Holy Communion is preceded by Confession, which is intended to free penitents of their sins and prepare them for receiving the Eucharist in a worthy manner.

The first question asked of Polish priests working in England and Wales concerning the formation towards the First Confession and Holy Communion was about the number of children preparing themselves for receiving these Sacraments. However, the respondents were not asked to provide the exact number but rather an interval, which impacts on the forms and methods of work. Among the surveyed clergymen, less than 3% stated that the number of children preparing themselves for these Sacraments in their parish did not exceed 5 persons, 33% answered that the number of children ranged between 6 and 20 persons, while the majority – 63% – answered that over 20 children were being prepared by them. In the last group, 6 priests (8.2%) stated that their establishments were preparing more than 100 persons for Confession and the First Holy Communion. So it transpires that in parishes and other Polish pastoral establishments in England and Wales large groups of children are being prepared for these Sacraments. Few parishes in Poland, usually only those located in big cities, report such high numbers. This confirms that Polish emigrants in Great Britain are very young and also that more children are born to Polish emigrants than to Poles who live in that country⁷. The reasons for this are undoubtedly much better living conditions and the social benefits granted by the British Government. Presented below are the basic factors influencing the quality of children's formation for the Sacraments. They include first of all the organisational framework, topics and methods of catechesis.

Organisational framework

The first aspect of Sacramental catechesis for Polish children in England and Wales that must be explained is its organisational framework pertaining to the educational environment, the frequency of meetings and the formal requirements. With regard to the environment in which Polish children are being prepared for Confession and Holy Communion, the priests surveyed had three options to choose from: only in the parish, only at school, and both in the parish and at school. Such questions might seem strange for most readers outside

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vatican 1992, n. 1324.

⁷ L. Waller, A. Berrington, J. Raymer, *Understanding recent migrant fertility in the United Kingdom*, Centre for Population Change, Working Paper 2012, p. 13-20.

of Poland. This is because in many countries it goes without saying that preparations for Sacraments are always held within a religious community. In Poland, however, teaching religion at school, also at state-run schools, constitutes a form of catechesis aimed at deepening children's faith and Sacramental life, although officially it is the parish that serves as the place of direct preparation for receiving the Sacraments⁸.

It might be assumed that Poles who have emigrated to Great Britain will also organise, wherever possible, Sacramental catechesis at schools. Yet this is not possible at state-run schools, where the aim of RE is to study and understand not only Christianity, but also other religions present in British society⁹. British Catholic schools provide slightly better opportunities for learning religion, as the RE there is similar to that of Polish schools. However, most Polish children preparing themselves for their First Holy Communion attend Saturday Polish schools. These are establishments charging low fees, attended on Saturdays by the children of Polish emigrants who are learning the Polish language, the history and geography of Poland, and often also religion, as well as singing and folk dances¹⁰.

It is not surprising then that a high proportion of Polish clergymen – 41% – replied that the preparation of children for their First Confession and Holy Communion took place both in the parish and at school, while 8.2% indicated that school was the only environment where children were being prepared for the Sacraments of Christian initiation. At the same time, the largest percentage of clergymen (47%) stated that the parish was the only place where preparations for these Sacraments were held.

Another issue addressed in the survey was the frequency of meetings aimed at preparing children for receiving the Sacraments. Over 71% of Polish priests stated that such meetings were held once a week, whereas 22% organised such meetings once a fortnight. The others did it less frequently. It is worth mentioning here that the preparation for receiving the Sacraments as a rule lasts one school year, which in practice amounts to 9 months, although in some cases preparations take two years. This time is even shorter when holidays and summer/winter breaks are not counted. So, the total number of meetings does not exceed 20-25¹¹. In most cases (74%) meetings are hosted only by priests, as religion teachers and secular facilitators are rarely invited.

⁸ Polish Bishops' Conference, *Podstawa programowa katechezy [The Core Curriculum of Catechesis]*, Kraków, p. 36.

⁹ R. Jackson, K. O'Grady, *Religions and education in England: social plurality, civil religion and religious education pedagogy*, University of Warwick 2007, p. 222, <http://www.waxmann.com/?id=20&cHash=1&buchnr=1765>, dostęp: 11.04.2015.

¹⁰ Polonia UK, *Education in the UK and Polish schools in the UK*, London 2008, www.poloniauk.co.uk/node/177, dostęp: 11.04.2015.

¹¹ Parafia Rzymskokatolicka Matki Bożej Miłosierdzia w Londynie [Roman Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Mercy in London], London 2014, <http://www.jezuici.vel.pl/katecheza.html>, dostęp: 11.04.2015.

In most parishes in Poland priests require the candidates preparing themselves for the Sacraments to fulfil numerous formal requirements. Apart from acquiring the relevant knowledge, they include confirming – by way of specifically-prepared credit books – that they had participated in Sunday Masses and Masses held on other Catholic holidays. The reason for such a procedure is, according to the priests, the necessity to make sure that each candidate has been adequately prepared for receiving the Sacraments, which is to be confirmed by their regular participation in religious practices. Opponents of such methods, however, point to the danger of formalism, which might shape among children and parents the conviction that the Church hardly differs from other social institutions¹². Yet nearly half the surveyed Polish priests in England and Wales (49.3%) stated that children preparing themselves for Holy Communion had to keep such credit books. Even though the percentage is lower than in Poland, it is still substantial.

It is important to add that in the great majority of Polish parishes, meetings for the parents of the children preparing themselves for the First Holy Communion are organised as well. They are held with varying frequency, as decided by the parson. Over 16.4% of priests organise such meetings once a week, presumably on the same day as meetings with the children, 9.6% do so once a fortnight, 32.9% once a month and 39.7% less frequently than once a month.

The interpretation of the results obtained from the survey leads to the conclusion that the organisational framework of Sacramental catechesis for Polish children in England and Wales strictly follow the patterns used in Poland, where catechesis generally takes place in the parish, with the participation of the school, wherever possible. However, this pattern does not apply to the pastoral establishments of 8.2% of the surveyed priests, where the entire preparations for First Confession and Holy Communion were limited to the school. In such circumstances, it is necessary to make an appeal to organise Sacramental preparations first of all within the community of believers. School, even if it is a Catholic school or a Saturday Polish school, should never be the only place for Sacramental catechesis. This is because such catechesis requires, in principle, personal experience of faith and engagement in the community of believers.

Topics of catechesis preparing candidates for the First Confession and Holy Communion

The topic of meetings preparing candidates for their First Confession and Holy Communion is an important aspect of Sacramental formation. Questions

¹² P. Mąkosa, *Katecheza młodzieży gimnazjalnej w Polsce. Stan aktualny i perspektywy rozwoju [Catechesis of junior high school students in Poland. Current status and development perspectives]*, Lublin 2009, p. 371-372.

on this subject asked of Polish priests were supplemented with several possible answers, with the information that more than one can be chosen, and even all of them. The results obtained are presented in the table below.

Table 1. The topics of formation for the First Confession and Holy Communion.

No.	Topics of meetings	N (number of answers)	% (percentage of surveyed priests)*
1.	Sacraments	66	93%
2.	Prayers	62	87.3%
3.	Truths of the faith	59	83.1%
4.	Religious practices	42	59.1%
5.	Other	9	12.5%

* The percentage of respondents does not add up to 100, since each person could choose more than one answer.

The most popular topics of catechesis for children were issues regarding Sacraments, their identity, meaning and how they are administered. Nearly 93% of the surveyed priests confirmed that these matters were discussed as part of the preparations for the First Holy Communion. The second most frequently discussed topic was prayer, its essence and types (87.3%). Slightly less frequent (83.1%) was the topic of the truths of the faith included in the catechism. These included mainly the fundamental dogmas of the Catholic Church regarding God, Jesus Christ and the salvation of man. Often – in more than a half the cases (59.1%) – catechesis for children featured discussion on religious practices, including in particular participation in the Sunday Eucharist. Special emphasis was placed on the obligation to participate in the liturgy. Some priests (12.5%) indicated also other issues discussed with children as part of their preparation for the First Confession and Holy Communion. These included, first of all, moral issues, such as the Commandments or other Catholic norms of conduct.

Forms and methods of work with children

Among the various forms of meetings organised by Polish Catholic missions in England and Wales as part of the preparations for the First Holy Communion, the great majority (63%) are meetings where all candidates are simultaneously present. Such a form of meeting is obviously easy to organise, though undoubtedly not the most effective, especially when the group is large, as is the case in as many as 63% of Polish parishes. Only 4.1% of Polish priests hold meetings in small groups. This is a problem because it is in a small group that participants have the chance to know each other better and establish per-

sonal relations¹³. Small groups also facilitate more effective passing of knowledge and undoubtedly better introduce participants to the community of believers. It is reassuring however that 17.8% of respondents stated that they used various forms of Sacramental catechesis, including both meetings of all participants and meetings in small groups.

Another formal issue that the respondents were asked about was the type of methods they applied during meetings preparing candidates for receiving Sacraments. The obtained responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Methods applied during formation meetings for the First Confession and Holy Communion.

No.	Methods	N (number of answers)	% (percentage of surveyed priests)*
1.	Lectures	57	79.2%
2.	Songs	45	62.5%
3.	Prayers	43	59.7%
4.	Multimedia methods	27	37.5%
5.	Written works and drawings	26	36.1%
6.	Discussions	24	33.3%
7.	Study of the Bible	21	29.2%
8.	Work in groups	5	6.9%

* The percentage of respondents does not add up to 100, since each person could choose more than one answer.

One of the most frequent methods used in catechesis for children is the lecture. It is used by nearly 72% of Polish priests in England and Wales. Though short explanations of discussed topics are desirable and sometimes necessary, longer monologues by the lecturer is not an appropriate method for teaching children. Research has proven that children are not able to concentrate on a person speaking longer than several minutes, as a result of which the perception of the topic is scant. Furthermore, a lecture in general does not activate children emotionally, and this is crucial for their engagement in the catechesis and in consequence the effectiveness of the catechesis. Therefore, teachers and developmental psychologists postulate that classes with children should be active¹⁴. The second most popular group of methods used in catechesis for Polish children might be an antidote for that. It comprises singing songs, which undoubtedly bring with them valuable meanings, but at the same time impact on children's emotional sphere, enabling them to express joy and energy. Such

¹³ H. Wrońska, *Katecheza a male grupy szkolne i parafialne [Catechesis and small groups in school and parish]*, Lublin 2007.

¹⁴ S. Vosniadou, *How children learn*, Bellegarde 2001.

methods were applied by 62.5% of the surveyed priests. Prayers said together with the children were found to constitute the third most popular method. There is no doubt that prayers have an important role in children's religious formation, as they teach them to establish personal relations with God¹⁵.

What is interesting is that more than 1/3 of respondents (37.5%) used multimedia methods, of which the most popular were films, videos, computer presentations and interactive methods of working with the computer. The availability of such tools is increasing. But the surveyed priests first of all used teaching aids purchased in Poland. The Polish market of multimedia aids for teaching religion and catechesis is also rapidly growing, offering the increasingly popular software for interactive tables, although its availability is somehow limited. Nevertheless, the use of such methods is undoubtedly attractive to children, increasing their motivation and improving the effectiveness of the whole educational process¹⁶.

About one third of Polish priests in England and Wales also use traditional teaching methods such as written works and drawings (36.1%), discussion (33.3%) and study of the Bible (29.2%). These methods also seem valuable in contemporary teaching. However it is worth mentioning the methods applied in parish catechesis. The principle methodological postulate is that parish catechesis should not "focus on the provision of knowledge but on such forms (Masses, celebrations, Bible courses, prayer schools) that will deeply move the participants and encourage them to reflect on what has already happened to them during the initiation. A special role in this respect is that of the individual experience of the catechesis participants, which provides the basis for exploring Christian mysteries, especially the mystery of becoming part of the community of believers in Christ"¹⁷. The basic objective of parish catechesis is the introduction of methods that do not concentrate on providing intellectual content, but help the participants deepen their faith and express it through prayer and participation in liturgy. Therefore, it is often recommended that celebrations be organised that allow personal experience of faith¹⁸.

¹⁵ I. Headrick, *The Catechism in Song: The Benefits of Using Hymnody in Teaching Catechism*. A thesis submitted to the Faculty in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Degree of Master of Divinity, Mequon, Wisconsin 2013.

¹⁶ P. Mąkosa, *Advantages and disadvantages of digital education*, „Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej”, 2(2013), p. 21-31.

¹⁷ The Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference, *Program nauczania religii [The Religious Education Curriculum]*, Kraków 2001, n. 139; The Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference, *Program nauczania religii [The Religious Education Curriculum]*, Kraków 2010, n. 30.

¹⁸ The Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference, The Family Affairs Council of the Polish Bishops' Conference, *Program katechezy parafialnej dla młodzieży szkół ponadgimnazjalnych [The Curriculum of Parish Catechesis for Upper-Secondary Students]*, Kraków 2004 p. 18; D. Dudoit Raiche, *Liturgical Catechesis as an Essential Dimension of Initiatory Catechesis in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Adapted for Children*,

When summing up the research on the preparations of the children of Polish migrants in England and Wales for their First Confession and Holy Communion, one can conclude that in the majority of Polish parishes this is done identically to the solutions predominant in Poland. However, it seems that the variety of options, depending on the parish, is even greater, since almost everything is decided by the parson, whereas in Poland there are the guidelines of the Polish Episcopal Conference and also those issued by individual bishops – and these must be followed. In England and Wales Sacramental catechesis of children is usually organised within the parish community, although in many cases some part of the education and formation takes place at school. The topics discussed are dominated by the Sacraments, prayer, the truths of faith and religious practices. As far as methods are concerned, the most popular are lectures, songs, prayers, multimedia methods, written works, drawings, discussions and study of the Bible. Meetings preparing children to receive the Sacraments are usually held once a week or less frequently, and in most cases they are hosted only by priests. The majority of Polish parishes additionally organise meetings with parents, but much less frequently than meetings with children.

Formation of young people for Confirmation

The survey on the preparations of Polish young people living in England and Wales to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation was conducted similarly to the one involving children preparing themselves for Confession and Holy Communion. The results obtained prove that in the establishments of the Polish Catholic Mission a substantial number of young Polish immigrants are preparing themselves for receiving this Sacrament. Most often a group of candidates for Confirmation consists of 20 to 100 persons, as declared by 46.6% of the priests surveyed. 39.7% of the respondents stated that the number of candidates for Confirmation was in the range from 6 to 20 persons. Young people over the age of 14 can become candidates for Confirmation, but the research shows that the majority of candidates were aged from 16 to 18 and in most cases they were born in Poland. This means that a great many Poles decided to emigrate with their whole families and they meant to stay in Great Britain for longer¹⁹. It is, however, important to add that the number of candidates for Confirmation is

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Religious Studies of The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 2011.

¹⁹ K. Iglicka, *Kontrasty migracyjne Polski. Wymiar transatlantycki [Contrasts of Polish migration. Transatlantic dimension]*, Warszawa 2008; S. Drinkwater, M.P. Garapich, *Migration Plans and Strategies of Recent Polish Migrants to England and Wales: Do They Have Any and How Do They Change?*, “Norface Migration”, Discussion Paper No. 2013-23, Swansea University 2013, http://www.norface-migration.org/publ_uploads/NDP_23_13.pdf, dostep: 11.04.2015.

lower than that of children preparing themselves for the First Holy Communion, among whom a great many were born in Great Britain²⁰.

Organisational assumptions of catechesis preparing candidates for Confirmation

The primary environment where young people prepare themselves for Confirmation is the parish. This is confirmed by 82.2% of the Polish priests surveyed, 13.7% of whom also stated that preparations were additionally held at school, while 4.1% indicated that school was the only environment for such preparation. Compared to the First Holy Communion, preparations for Confirmation are much more often limited to the parish community. This is due not only to the specific nature of the religious formation itself, but first of all to the fact that young people rarely attend Polish Saturday schools, which in many cases are a supplementary, and sometimes even the primary, environment for preparations to first Holy Communion. The parish is definitely a better environment for formation for receiving all Sacraments, as it facilitates personal experience of faith through prayer and participation in the liturgy, and allows participants to get to know and join the community of believers.

There are some differences between the preparations for the First Holy Communion and for Confirmation, which is also seen in the frequency of the meetings. Among the priests surveyed, 53.4% organised preparatory meetings for Confirmation once a week, 20.5% once a fortnight and exactly the same percentage (20.5%) once a month. Only one priest (1.4%) stated that meetings were held less frequently than once a month. The results show that the frequency of the formation meetings was lower than in the case of preparations for Holy Communion, their number usually ranging from 10 to 15²¹. It is probably due to the organisational capabilities of young people, who have more school and other duties than children. Nevertheless, it seems that at this stage of life, when the outlook on life and the hierarchy of values are being shaped, more intensive Christian education and formation would be desirable.

Some explanation of this situation is provided by the answers to the next question from the questionnaire, pertaining to persons conducting the meetings. Like in the previous situation, the majority (87.7%) were clergymen, while religion teachers and animators were involved in such meetings very rarely. For organisational reasons, or even lack of time, it would be extremely difficult to intensify the preparation for Confirmation. This is because of the fact that one

²⁰ M. Krywult-Albańska Małgorzata, *Profil demograficzny polskich imigrantów poakcesyjnych w Wielkiej Brytanii [Demographic profile of the post-accession Polish migrants in the UK]*, „Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Sociologica”, IV (2012), vol. 2, p. 72-80.

²¹ Parafia Rzymskokatolicka Matki Kościoła na Ealingu w Londynie [Roman Catholic Parish of the Mother Church in London-Ealing], London 2014, http://www.parafiaealing.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=94, dostęp: 11.04.2015.

or two priests working in a parish are responsible not only for the pastoral ministry, but also personally organise all formation meetings preparing candidates for receiving the Sacraments, and also meetings with various associations active in the parish, so they neither have the time nor the energy to become more engaged in preparations for Confirmation. The postulate arising out of such situations concerns the availability of the appropriate number of religion teachers and secular facilitators. It seems that the Polish Catholic Mission should organise catechetical-teaching for such persons who would be able to take up work as religion teachers in Polish parishes. Additionally, meetings with the parents of the young people have been arranged as part of the preparation for Confession, although they are held rather sporadically. 56% of the priests responded that these meetings were organised less frequently than once a month, while 19.2% of the priests did not organise such meetings at all. In other cases such meetings were held at least once a month.

Topics of catechesis preparing candidates for Confirmation

The topics discussed during the preparations for the Sacrament of Confirmation constitute an important research area. Based on the surveys conducted among Polish clergymen working in England and Wales, a summary was made, presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Topics in formation for Confirmation.

Topics of meeting	N (number of answers)	% (percentage of surveyed priests)*
Truths of the faith	51	70.8%
Sacraments	51	70.8%
Gifts of the Holy Spirit	42	58.3%
The Bible	41	56.9%
Religious practices	27	37.5%
The Church	24	33.3%
Moral principles	22	30.5%
Problems of young people	21	29.2%
Discovery of one's life's calling	11	15.3%
Religious movements and associations for young people	2	2.8%
Other	2	2.8%

* The percentage of respondents does not add up to 100, since each person could choose more than one answer.

When analysing the above results, first it should be noted that the majority of priests responsible for the Catholic formation of young people for Confirmation use religion textbooks published in Poland. 69.86% of the respondents declared this. The others claimed that they did not use any textbooks. Yet usually it is textbooks that serve as the basic source of information on the topics discussed during the meetings, and they provide the teaching patterns.

The most popular topics include the truths of faith, including first of all the dogmas of the Catholic Church. During the preparations for Confirmation, over 70% of the priests discuss them with young people. It is understandable, as everyone who considers themselves a believer should know the subject of their faith. Catholic Sacraments are discussed equally frequently, including usually such topics as the biblical genesis of each of the Sacraments, their theological meaning, their manner of celebration and the existential consequences of the act of receiving Sacraments. For obvious reasons, the most discussed is the Sacrament of Confirmation, with additional emphasis on the practical preparations of young people for receiving it.

Catholic theology teaches that Confirmation results in receiving the Holy Ghost and His Gifts. That is why 58.3% of Polish priests in England and Wales discussed these gifts as part of preparations for this Sacrament. The great majority of the priests surveyed (56.9%) stated that for catechesis in their parishes they used the Bible and discussed topics connected with it. It is surprising, however, that more than 40% priests did not indicate the Bible as a subject of catechetical meetings before Confirmation. More than one third of the respondents (37.5%) claimed that they also discussed the issue of religious practices, including first of all prayer, participation in Sunday Mass and confession. These practices are considered the basis of Catholic experience and the deepening of faith. Therefore it might seem strange that such topics are discussed by a minority of Polish priests. Perhaps it is due to the fact that only the strongest believers, those who practise their faith and are engaged in the life of their parish community, participate in preparations for Confirmation, so there is no need to discuss such issues.

Exactly one third of those surveyed (33.3%) suggested young people reflect on the Church. The textbooks that priests use focus mostly on showing the Church's role in the salvation of man, and stress the responsibility of each believer for the development of the community. Another group among the most frequently discussed topics (30.5%) as part of parish preparations of young people for the Sacrament of Confirmation are Catholic moral principles. These include first of all the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes and the Commandments of the Church. Apart from the above, many detailed moral norms are also discussed, e.g. the necessity of sexual abstinence until marriage. Quite a high percentage of the surveyed priests (29.2%), apart from religious topics, also discussed young people's problems such as the meaning of life, the search for happiness, building interpersonal relationships, issues related to falling in

love, the choice of career and also addiction to drugs, alcohol, smoking, the Internet, etc. As far as the developmental problems of young people are concerned, of particular importance is the discovery of one's calling, pertaining first of all to the social role young people feel called to by God and to which they are predisposed. Such topics were discussed by 15.3% of the priests surveyed. Only a small percentage (2.8%) told young people about the possibility of joining movements and associations that are of high didactic value. This is first of all evidence that there is a lack of such organisations that young Polish immigrants living in England and Wales could join.

To summarise this part of the survey, it would be worthwhile adding that the topics discussed in the meetings are later the subject of an examination admitting candidates for Confirmation. 78.1% of the Polish priests in England and Wales surveyed confirmed that such an exam was held. Such a practice is widespread in Poland and has been transferred by the priests to the British Isles. However, in Poland there have been more and more claims that such an exam, focussing only on religious knowledge, which is usually too abstract for young people, does not prepare them appropriately for Confirmation²². Of course, no one questions the necessity for gaining basic insights into the faith, Sacraments and morality, but increasing emphasis has recently been placed on personal experience of faith. It would be, therefore, worth re-evaluating the appropriateness of such an exam and concentrating on establishing personal relations with God.

Forms and methods of work with young people during their preparation for Confirmation

The effectiveness of preparations for Confirmation also depends on their organisational forms, including the size of the formation group, and on the methods applied. The survey has shown that like in the case of preparation for the First Holy Communion, the most frequent are meetings in large groups of participants. Such a form of work was mentioned by 65.3% of the Polish priests surveyed. 6.9% of the respondents always worked in small groups, and 9.7% sometimes did so. It is a fact that meetings in small groups are more effective. It is especially important at the stage of adolescence, when young people need to feel safe and have the possibility to ask questions about issues that bother them. Even with the good intentions of those responsible for the formation, meetings in large groups do not offer such an opportunity.

An important element in Christian education and formation is their methodological aspect. The preferences of Polish priests as to the methods of catechetical meetings are presented in Table 4.

²² P. Makośa, *Katecheza młodzieży gimnazjalnej w Polsce. Stan aktualny i perspektywy rozwoju [Catechesis of junior high school students in Poland. Current status and development perspectives]*, p. 371.

Table 4. Methods used during formation meetings for Confirmation.

Methods	N (number of answers)	% (percentage of surveyed priests)*
Lectures	67	93.0%
Discussions	46	63.9%
Study of the Bible	22	30.5%
Prayers and mediations	14	19.4%
Songs	8	11.1%
Masses	11	15.3%
Work in groups	11	15.3%
Written work	10	13.9%
Other	3	4.2%

* The percentage of respondents does not add up to 100, since each person could choose more than one answer.

The lecture (93%) was found to be the most frequently applied method in Confirmation formation. However, it is not the best method of working with young people, who would benefit rather from problem-centred methods and searching for one's own solutions instead of authoritative enforcement²³. But the good news is that 63.9% of the priests surveyed held discussions with the young people. They are definitely more effective than monologues, as they provide the possibility to ask questions and express one's opinions. It is also interesting that only 30.5% of the priests surveyed decided to include study of the Bible. But this is due to the above-mentioned problems connected with underestimating the Bible as the basic topic of catechesis. A small percentage also applied methods involving personal experience such as prayers (19.4%), songs (11.1%) and Masses (15.3%). This confirms the above-mentioned problem of focussing first of all on passing on religious knowledge and not on internalising religious values and experiencing them in everyday life. It is hard not to draw the conclusion that the attitude of Polish priests towards catechesis is formalistic. Yet even in terms of passing on knowledge, lecture and discussion are methods of first choice. Work in groups was organised much more rarely (15.3%) as was the case with written works such as essays, exercises or tests (13.9%). Compared to the First Holy Communion preparation, emphasis is put mostly on expository methods, without sufficient engagement of the children.

As already described above, Polish catechetical guidelines in respect of the methods of parish catechesis indicate the necessity of avoiding methods charac-

²³ L.M. Marin, D.F. Halpern, *Pedagogy for developing critical thinking in adolescents: Explicit instruction produces greatest gains*, „Thinking Skills and Creativity”, 6(2011), vol. 1, p. 1-13.

teristic of school and the provision of knowledge realised there. Parish catechesis, especially catechesis preparing candidates for receiving the Sacraments should emphasise first of all personal experience of God and the Church community. Therefore the most beneficial would be methods involving study of the Bible and the liturgy²⁴.

The same survey has also proven that the majority of parishes do not organise either retreats or spiritual days, which are recommended in catechetic documents²⁵. Such formation was organised only by 15.1% of the priests. Pilgrimages were even rarer (4.1%). This is problematic, as these are very desirable forms of experience, bringing with them great potential for awakening and strengthening faith. For obvious reasons, it is faith that is the primary condition for being admitted to the Sacrament of Confirmation.

When summarising the survey on Confirmation-related formation, it can be concluded that Polish priests working in England and Wales try to carry with them Polish experiences and conduct this formationsimilarly to how they did it in Poland. So they use Polish textbooks, discuss the same topics and implement the same forms methods of teaching as in Poland. Yet often they disregard the fact that religion teaching and catechesis in Poland have developed considerably in recent years and today a range of new methods is applied.

Discussion

The first conclusion that comes to mind after the analysis of the conducted surveys is that Poles, contrary to what many might believe, do need Polish Christian ministry abroad. It is confirmed by the large number of children and young people who are preparing for receiving the Sacraments in the parishes of the Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales.

The summary of the surveys conducted among Polish priests working in England and Wales concerning the organisation, topics and methods of Sacramental catechesis for children and young people suggests that the primary problem consists of the fact that catechesis is organised almost exactly the way it was organised in Poland a few years ago. Polish priests seem to think that the patterns they used while working in Poland, which they consider reliable, can be easily transferred. However, a double problem appears. First, Sacramental catechesis in Poland has been dynamically developing, first of all in respect of its methodology, the consequences of which are new solutions developed in the last few years and new teaching aids which slowly or hardly ever get to Polish priests in the UK. Second, the exact copying of Polish catechesis and transfer-

²⁴ The Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference, The Family Affairs Council of the Polish Bishops' Conference, *Program katechezy parafialnej dla młodzieży szkół ponadgimnazjalnych [The Curriculum of Parish Catechesis for Upper-Secondary Students]*, p. 18.

²⁵ The Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference, *Program nauczania religii [The Religious Education Curriculum]*, Kraków 2001, n 73.

ring it to the British reality does not seem to be a good idea. Children and young people, though bred in Polish families, live in a different cultural reality, attend English schools and have friends, of various Christian denominations, other religious backgrounds, or atheists. Such a cultural context on the one hand requires respect for people with different views, and on the other necessitates the deepening of Catholic identity. It is important that young people are well aware of why they are Catholic and internalise the values proposed by the Catholic Church, and on the other hand become acquainted with other denominations and religions, learning respect for all people.

Another issue that might breed problems is the proficiency level in Polish of children and young people from Polish families. While young people who were born in Poland and spent there the first few years of their lives know Polish quite well, many children are more fluent in English than Polish. They use their mother tongue usually when talking with their parents and grandparents, but they prefer to speak English with their siblings. It is understandable, given the fact that at the kindergarten and at school they use mainly English in conversations with their peers. Therefore, it would be worth considering by those responsible for the Christian ministry for Poles in Great Britain to prepare bilingual teaching aids for catechesis, the way it has been done for Polish immigrants living in Germany²⁶. Another argument in favour of having their own textbooks is also the fact that the textbooks in Poland are intended for about 50-60 lessons. In the case of emigrants it is absolutely not possible to organise so many lessons, so teaching aids should be adapted to actual possibilities.

A great, if not the greatest, challenge for Sacramental catechesis for Polish emigrants is the engagement of secular persons. The practice observed so far, where it is the priest who organises and personally manages the whole process, does not seem appropriate. On the one hand, priests are not able to engage themselves sufficiently in all activities in the parish, which results in the lower quality of their work. On the other hand, the consequence is the lack of engagement of secular persons and their weak connection with the community.

Conclusion

This paper presents the issue of Sacramental catechesis for Polish children and young people living in England and Wales. It was composed based on surveys conducted among Polish priests working in the parishes with local Polish Catholic Missions. It is worth recalling that such research, covering nearly 3/4 of all Polish priests, has been carried out for the first time. Therefore, the results might be considered pioneering and credible, and reliable conclusions can be drawn from them. At the same time it should be noted that the migration

²⁶ M. Zajac, S. Budyn, A. Kiciński, *Begegnung mit Jesus. Spotkanie z Jezusem. Katechizm polsko-niemiecki do I Komunii Świętej [Encounter with Jesus. Catechism of the Polish-German preparing for First Holy Communion]*, Hannover: Polska Misja Katolicka w Niemczech, 2006.

processes have not ended and the number of Polish immigrants is still increasing. Usually these are young people who are starting a family and have children there. Thus, it should be presumed that the number of Polish children and young people living in England and Wales will also be on the increase. By extension, further research is needed concerning the number and identity of Polish immigrants and also their religiousness and religious education and formation. It seems necessary to identify the challenges that the young generation of Polish emigrants faces and shape religious education and formation so that they addresses their actual needs as best as possible. With these reliable results at hand, one should work towards developing an original concept for Christian education and formation intended for Polish immigrants.

Summary

According to official data, currently there are over two million Polish emigrants. Several hundred thousand of them live in Great Britain. Many studies and publications have been devoted to Polish emigration, but there have been none focussing on their religious life or Christian education and formation. To fill the gap, for the first time, empirical research has been carried out among Polish priests working with Polish emigrants in England and Wales. The survey concerned preparations for receiving the Sacraments organised by parishes of the Polish Catholic Mission established in that area. The survey tool in the form of a questionnaire was developed by academics from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The results obtained facilitated the determination of the organisational framework, topics, forms and methods of Catholic sacramental formation for Polish emigrants. This paper presents and analyses the results of the survey concerning the preparations of Polish children for their first Confession and Holy Communion, and the preparations of young people for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Furthermore, an attempt has been made at determining the major challenges faced by religious education and formation for Polish emigrants living in England and Wales, and the areas requiring further investigation have been identified.

Key words: catechesis, religious education, Sacraments, Polish emigrants.