

Article

Promoting Peace through Christian Education in the Family

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Abstract: Peace has always been a topic of great importance and the origins of thinking about peace and education for peace can be traced back to ancient philosophy. In the 21st century, the presence of peace has been desired by all nations, societies and people of goodwill, especially due to so many international conflicts and wars (the dramatic situation in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Ukraine). Historical and socio-cultural developments concerning peace and violence urge pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists and theologians to seek the foundations of education that promote peace. Taking into consideration the given context and importance of peace, this article will reflect on the issue of Christian education for peace, especially in the family environment. Educators dealing with the issue of peace education refer to various inspirations and sources of knowledge. As this article is written from the perspective of the Christian understanding of peace, the authors will first refer to the teaching of Pope John Paul II as a strong promotor of peace. Papal documents and speeches consequently present that peace has its roots in the upbringing of human beings; therefore, in the next part of this article, Christianity serving the good of the family, the assumptions of Christian education towards peace in the family and practical indications will be shown.

Keywords: Christianity; peace; education; the family



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1. Introduction

The origins of thinking about peace and education for peace can be traced back to ancient philosophy and Christian theology, which undertook studies on the causes of international conflicts and wars, and the conditions that must be met in order for the world to become a peaceful place. In the present society, there exists a strong contrast between a “desire” for peace and an offered vision to ensure that peace can be given through various theoretical and practical means. These efforts for peace prove to be rather ineffective because the methods used are counterproductive or irrelevant. Obviously, the need for peace should be emphasised, but with the indication for efficient and responsible actions in order to acquire peace. Unfortunately, some concepts of peace are the source of confusion and mystification.

In this light, a proper understanding of peace is of great importance, as well as an ability to encourage a dialogue for peace and indicate principles upon which peace can be created. These are some fundamental ideas that, if not taken seriously, can jeopardise the promotion and maintenance of peace. This also depends upon the readiness and openness of the educational setting to undertake not only the actions but also the long-standing process of building peace. The purpose of this article is to promote peace through Christian education in the family and present the specificity of education towards peace within the family based on discovering the truth about a human being as a worthy, free and responsible being, in need of an upbringing. An attempt to answer the following questions will help in achieving the assumed goals: What is the essence of John Paul’s teaching on peace? What makes peace contradict itself and what does its falsification lead to? Do ongoing conflicts and wars pose a challenge to Christian and especially to Catholic educators? Has Catholic

family education genuinely contributed to global peace promotion? What conditions must be taken into account for family education in order to promote peace? What assumptions of education for peace are given by experts from Central and Eastern Europe? Taking into consideration the given context and the importance of peace, this article will reflect upon the issue of education for peace, especially within the family environment. Educators dealing with the issue of peace education refer to various inspirations and sources of knowledge. As this article is written from the perspective of the Catholic understanding of peace, the authors will first refer to the teaching of Pope John Paul II as a strong promotor of peace. This point of departure emphasises the legitimacy of treating peace as an issue that goes beyond immediate political, economic and social solutions and obliges one to seek ways of consolidating and wisely promoting peace, including through education and upbringing. The theoretical exploration of education for peace in the family requires theological, psychological and pedagogical analyses. The authors will use the method of critical source analysis to answer the research questions.

2. The Essence of Peace in the Teaching of John Paul II

In Central and Eastern Europe, many families, schools, educational organisations and parishes still try to offer a setting that nurtures children and young people to acquire a deeper and stronger understanding of peace and promote a peaceful culture together in strong connection with other values. The education for peace begins in the family—in the choices the family makes, in the way it responds to challenges, to conflicts, to joys and sorrows, and in the way it lives everyday life. For parents to adequately teach their children how to avoid conflicts, violence and aggression it is necessary to make them aware of all that denies and compromises peace (Osewska et al. 2019). On the contrary, as supporters of peace, they ought to take upon themselves the task of being “peacemakers”, raising their children to peaceful coexistence with other people, starting from family members and neighbours, then moving out to broader communities, promoting attitudes of dialogue, love and peace.

Since his election in 1978, the Pope from Krakow has been a strong supporter of peace and education for peace. His reflection on peace, based first of all on the dignity of the human person, can be found in his actions, which started in Krakow during the Second World War and during communism imposed on Poland (e.g., the Krakow Memorial prepared together with lay experts), and later in his teaching based on this experience, but especially in annual messages for World Day of Peace. The Pope’s commitment to the process of creating peace strongly affected the matters of the nations and peoples, especially the faithful from the Roman Catholic Church. Transcendental and earthly aspects of the value of peace make the Slavic Pope a strong opponent of wars and conflicts in every form, even conflicts between married couples. Both major military conflicts and wars, but also minor acts of violence solve nothing; on the contrary, they render everything even more difficult. Christian, and in particular Catholic families still refer to his teaching. Papal encyclicals, exhortation letters, messages, catechesis and homilies were intended to present the response to problems to which postmodernity gives rise, identifying and explaining the presumptions on which peace should be built. The Pontiff, possessing the talent for interpersonal communication, used some exhortations, speeches and homilies to encourage all people to understand better and to commit themselves to supporting peace as the proper foundation for a truly human society. Understanding the great importance of peace, the Pope developed the idea launched in 1967 by Paul VI of a World Day of Peace, assigning to every year an important motto. Some examples are 1979—To Reach Peace, Teach Peace; 1983—Dialogue for Peace, A Challenge for Our Time; 1988—Religious Freedom: Condition for Peace; 1994—The Family Creates the Peace of the Human Family; 1998—From the Justice of Each Comes Peace for All; 1999—Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace; 2001—Dialogue Between Cultures for a Civilisation of Love and Peace; 2004—An Ever Timely Commitment: Teaching Peace (John Paul II 1979–2005).

In this short article, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive presentation of the foundations of peace, but rather the aim is to highlight certain features of the Slavic Pope's thinking about peace. His existential, philosophical and theological realism leads to the affirmation of human dignity. Consequently, he deeply believed that the human ability and willingness to respond to peace was not enough. Peace is strongly linked to the formation of a human being and a human society. A person is responsible for any value that appears and demands the performance of an act as a recognised and chosen good. Thus, the most important presupposition is the human person as the fundamental structural principle for peace, and not as a subordinate part of social life. In that context, the cornerstone for long-lasting peace should be a genuine respect for a human being and proper reintegration of the human person in contemporary society. It can be introduced not only through legal declarations but rather through real psychological, ideological, juridical, political and socio-cultural exercises of the rights and obligations. For the Pope, correct anthropology is the basis of the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to peace between people (Coughlin 2003). The Slavic Pope underlines:

“Peace is not essentially about structures but about *people*. Certain structures and mechanisms of peace—juridical, political, economic—are of course necessary and do exist, but they have been derived from nothing other than the accumulated wisdom and experience of *innumerable gestures of peace* made by men and women throughout history who have kept hope and have not given in to discouragement. *Gestures of peace* spring from the lives of people who *foster peace first of all in their own hearts*. They are the work of the heart and of reason in those who are peacemakers (cf. Mt 5:9). *Gestures of peace* are possible when people *appreciate fully the community dimension of their lives*, so that they grasp the meaning and consequences of events in their own communities and in the world. *Gestures of peace* create a tradition and a culture of peace. *Religion has a vital role in fostering gestures of peace and in consolidating conditions for peace*. It exercises this role all the more effectively if it concentrates on what is proper to it: attention to God, the fostering of universal brotherhood and the spreading of a culture of human solidarity”. (John Paul II 2003, no. 9)

From a theological perspective, the Pope perceives the human being as created in the image of God, redeemed by the love of Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, but still conflicted as a consequence of the freedom to choose between good and evil. Therefore, the human being needs support in order to choose good. At the same time, in the light of the teaching of John Paul II, it can be said that every human being, by virtue of having reason and free will, is responsible for their development and education. Undoubtedly, for the Polish Pope, education for peace is an extremely relevant issue.

In order to achieve peace, there must be a clear and conscious acknowledgement that no form of violence is acceptable and that it never solves problems.

“Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings. What is needed is *a great effort to form consciences* and to educate the younger generation to goodness by upholding that *integral and fraternal humanism* which the Church proclaims and promotes. This is the foundation for a social, economic and political order respectful of the dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of each person”. (John Paul II 2005, no. 4)

The Pope from Krakow knows very well, from his own experiences of totalitarian regimes (Nazism, communism), that at the deepest level, evil coming from the human heart is a dramatic rejection of love. Taking into account the contemporary context of the lack of education for peace and freedom manifested by the screaming crisis of education, subjectivity and the tragic lack of respect for the dignity of a person, John Paul II was consistently making permanent appeals to refrain from using various means of destructions and peacebuilding through education (Lewandowski 2014). The Pope reminds us:

“Finally, we are unable to overlook another phenomenon that is quite evident in present-day humanity: perhaps as never before in history, humanity is daily buffeted by *conflict*. This is a phenomenon which has many forms, displayed in a legitimate plurality of mentalities and initiatives, but manifested in the fatal opposition of persons, groups, categories, nations and blocks of nations. This opposition takes the form of violence, of terrorism, and of war. . . The human family is thus in itself dramatically convulsed and wounded. On the other hand, totally unsurpassable is that human longing experienced by individuals and whole peoples for the inestimable good of *peace* in justice. The Gospel beatitude: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ (Mt 5:9) finds in the people of our time a new and significant resonance: entire populations today live, suffer and labour to bring about peace and justice. The *participation* by so many persons and groups in the life of society is increasingly pursued today as the way to make a desired peace become a reality”. (John Paul II 1988, no. 6)

According to Pope John Paul II, in order to build peace, the will to respect other humans and their dignity is essential. There are two kinds of peace: the peace that people can build with their own strength, that is, with their own weapons. It is fragile and uncertain. But peace, which is a gift from God, based on a balance of power, born in the human heart, is lasting and strong, based on justice, respect, solidarity and love, and penetrates deeply into human hearts, a gift that God gives to people who follow Him (Borutka et al. 2004).

The Pope highlights that the Catholic Church has always taught and continues to proclaim the axiom: peace is possible. “Peace must be built on the four pillars given by Pope John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: truth, justice, love and freedom. A duty is thus imposed upon all those who love peace: that of *teaching these ideals to new generations*, in order to prepare a better future for all mankind” (John Paul II 2004). Virtues highlighted by John XXIII create a credo for the education for peace. It is not enough to speak about values, it is necessary to recognise them and to discover, name and act according to them. The four virtues truth, justice, love and freedom, must be recognised as the most important for humanity. The foundation is truth, followed by love and justice. Recognising that these values are common to different religions because they are rooted in the nature of the human being is also very important (John Paul II 2004). Peace is not simply the absence of conflicts and oppression but is strongly connected with human acts. The Slavic Pope emphasised that peace is born from the human heart, so peace cannot be achieved without educating every person on peace from an early age. The paradox is obvious. People want to live securely by establishing the law, but they forget that true peace requires proper education. Peace will always be uncertain, weak and short-lived when there is no deep change in the person (John Paul II 1987, no. 38). According to John Paul II:

“The establishment of true peace in the world, *justice must find its fulfilment in charity*. Certainly law is the first road leading to peace, and people need to be taught to respect that law. Yet one does not arrive at the end of this road unless justice is complemented by love. Justice and love sometimes appear to be *opposing forces*. In fact they are but *two faces of a single reality*, two dimensions of human life needing to be mutually integrated. Historical experience shows this to be true. It shows how justice is frequently unable to free itself from rancour, hatred and even cruelty. *By itself, justice is not enough*. Indeed, it can even betray itself, unless it is open to that deeper power which is love”. (John Paul II 2004)

There are so many challenges and preventions of peace in the 21st century, yet carefully studying the encyclicals, exhortation letters, homilies, catechesis and various messages, it becomes clear that for the Slavic Pope, peace, based on the fundament of human dignity, has been a great challenge. The sources of abuses of power, conflicts, aggressiveness, controversy, antagonism and violent confrontation lie in the heart of every human being (Lewandowski 2014), in the face of so many world conflicts and divisions on every social level, even within families and between couples. Christian families must refuse to give in to

helplessness and discouragement but remember that the present difficulties are a simple test of humanity. Lasting peace is very fragile but awakens dreams and renews humans; peace linked with hope is liberating the best of the human mind and heart (John Paul II 1983).

These presented issues seem to be very complicated on the international and national level but hope for peace and justice reflects everyone's needs. The efforts for peace in society depend upon many factors, but above all on educational environments like families, schools, youth associations and clubs. Recognising the value of peace, teachers, pedagogues, educational leaders, but also grandparents, parents and relatives, need to help children and youth to build love, peace and harmony. Families have to become active agents for peace, through the virtues they express and transmit and through a real conversion of hearts. In order to educate toward peace, the family has a right to decide consciously, intentionally and responsibly, on the basis of their ethical and religious convictions when to have a child, and how to educate that child in accordance with those convictions (John Paul II 1994).

3. Christianity Serves the Common Good of Family

Christianity often identifies the family as the critical nexus: the first and the most important setting where the future of religion in society is guaranteed or destroyed. As the present family is shifting in many regards in contemporary society, the educational processes within the family are also shaken. The well-established socialisation, formation and education practices of the past no longer lead to the expected results (Lombaerts and Osewska 2010). There is a lot of uncertainty about what then should be a valuable alternative. According to Thomas Luckmann, "religion is *not* a passing phase in the evolution of mankind but a universal aspect of the *conditio humana*. Appearing under different socio-structural conditions in various historical forms, it remains a constituent element of human life, bonding the individual human being, most particularly its experiences of transcendence, to a collective view of the good life" (Luckmann 2003, p. 276). In recent decades, a growing consensus has emerged among sociologists that religion serves the common good of the family (Mariański 2006). According to Lombaerts, the position and status of religion in a postmodern environment prompts Christian educators, parents and ecclesial communities to reflect upon the original features of Christianity and examine what may lead to a qualitative difference within the family in the present socio-cultural context (Lombaerts 1998). In the opinion of the Polish sociologist Piwowarski, Christianity with reference to the Gospel gives the family the strength to build unity and love despite various difficulties (Piwowarski 1996). According to Roman Catholic Church documents, the family is the natural setting for sharing Christian faith, values, norms and style of living. Within the informal style of living, unselfish love, a caring atmosphere, mutual respect and interpersonal communication, young generations assimilate and integrate Christian ideas, values, virtues, norms, vocabulary and rituals connected to sacred spaces, etc. This is the starting point for building their Christian identity and a decisive reference framework (Lombaerts and Osewska 2010). Within the Christian family, children share with their parents the same presuppositions and commitments, so if the European society is dreaming about peaceful living, Christianity lived in the family and the larger social circle will strengthen and deepen the value of peace that children experience with their family.

Today's ideological and socio-cultural situation is raising many questions but also may invite followers of Jesus Christ to withdraw from the threatening secularist society to the responsible faith community (Tománek 2015). Some European political leaders, due to present challenges, want to situate religion exclusively in the "private sphere", where people can live according to their convictions. The usual argument given is that religion should not play an active role in the public sphere of present society. But this indication does not take into consideration that the institutionalised religions have a legal status in society, and as such, also have a public responsibility (Lombaerts and Osewska 2010).

Polish family psychologist Maria Ryś highlights that strong and happy families function much better than unhappy ones in various everyday situations. Strong families do not react passively to difficult situations but introduce their own strategies to survive.

Coping well implies obtaining a balance between normal family functioning and the new challenges that are set for the family. The well-functioning coping strategies deal well with the results of the stress, anxiety, fear and various problems in everyday life. Contemporary psychologists use many concepts to explain family strengths and happiness. According to Ryś essential characteristics of strong and good functioning include marital strengths, communication, commitment, time, family coping strategies, marital and family satisfaction, but also spiritual or religious well-being. This spiritual well-being can be described in many ways, but most experts speak about a solid core of moral, ethical, spiritual or religious beliefs that translate into the idea that families who have strong religious beliefs that are connected with commitment, good interpersonal communication and time for themselves are stronger and happier (Wilk and Bieleń 2006; Mazan 2013; Simonič 2015). Thus, important family resources are religious beliefs and moral norms. If education for peace is not a passive acceptance of the ideas from the outside, but a personal and creative process strongly connected with family culture, then the family members need to draw from the spiritual wellbeing.

The importance of the Christian family in the process of shaping the offspring's personal, moral and religious growth has been underlined by John Paul II:

"The family has a decisive responsibility. This responsibility flows from its very nature as a community of life and love, founded upon marriage, and from its mission to guard, reveal and communicate love. Here it is a matter of God's own love, of which parents are co-workers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan. This is the love that becomes selflessness, receptiveness and gift. Within the family each member is accepted, respected and honoured precisely because he or she is a person; and if any family member is in greater need, the care which he or she receives is all the more intense and attentive. The family has a special role to play throughout the life of its members, from birth to death. It is truly *the sanctuary of life*: the place in which life-the gift of God-can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth". (John Paul II 1995, no. 92)

Consequently, the role of the family in forming children for a loving and peaceful existence and creating a culture of peace is significant and irreplaceable. The family prepares every family member for peaceful and open coexistence with others.

Christianity strongly binds family life and religion. Religion is connected with the physical, psychological and spiritual health of family members and their functioning in the family. From a psychological perspective, emotional healing and the development of persons are important results of religious growth and maturity. A survey of research completed on the relationship between mental health and religion (Worthington et al. 1996), discovered that individuals with strong religious beliefs report higher levels of life satisfaction, deeper personal happiness, better social support from friends, deeper empathy, higher levels of optimism, less depressive symptoms, a lower level of hostility and lower narcissism. Moreover, parents with high religious scores correlated with more favourable parenting practices; therefore, Christian beliefs and virtues provide solidity, integrity and coherence for families. In addition, Christian parents "take care" of virtues that are worthy of being handed down from generation to generation (Osewska and Stala 2003). Christianity also provides a framework of moral principles coming from the Bible and tradition that are necessary for strong families. Accepting that a healthy, strong and happy family is a fundament of human development, Christians acquire their response to existential questions regarding human beings, marriage, family, the meaning of life, suffering, death, etc., not only from natural reason but also from divine revelation. Therefore, in order to discover what is family, its purpose, objective, identity and mission, good Christian knowledge and morality are required (Adamski 2002), especially in a situation where so many different responses may lead to uncertainty, confusion and even chaos in regard to the family's identity and role in the postmodern society. However, it should be also noted

that religion in the family can be used to manipulate, control and even oppress family members. Consequently, instead of developing faith, love, respect, justice and peace, it can foster irrational guilt, fear or confusion (Griffith and Rotter 1999). Some adults have had negative childhood experiences with a strict religious approach. Strict principles justified by religious beliefs can be strongly counterproductive to the emotional, mental, relational, moral and religious growth of children (Bartkowski et al. 2008).

It is crucial for the family to create a positive atmosphere at home; this means presence, connectedness, respect, love, safety, warmth, care, protection, kindness and, at the same time, regularity and stability (Simonič 2015). Through emotional contacts, communication skills and ways of doing things, the young generation learns about Christianity by “osmosis”. Particularly, the assimilation and creative use of language are essential for the verbalisation of everyday life experiences. This is a basis of family education forming young generations towards living with others in love and peace (Lombaerts and Osewska 2010). For family life, authenticity is one of the most important factors. All events in a family should happen in a natural and usual way and by following an everyday routine. If children and youth are interested in religious matters, the actions in the family will need to appear more personalised. For every person, but especially infants, the feeling of being accepted and safe within a family circle is crucial; they need to feel that their needs and interests are being attended to, and they may present their approach to religious issues. It is not inconsistent for some children and youth to want to dismiss particular religious rules, while at the same time dreaming of being understood by their parents (Osewska and Stala 2003).

In recent decades, the family as an educational setting has been strongly affected by ideological, social and cultural changes (Adamski 2002); therefore, many parents are not able to secure the moral and religious future of their offspring. In this regard, the Roman Catholic Church takes up the challenge:

“The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfilment of their educational mission. She must always do this by helping them to appreciate their proper role and to realize that by their reception of the sacrament of marriage they become ministers of their children’s education. In educating them, they build up the Church, and in so doing, they accept a God-given vocation”. (Francis 2016, no. 85)

This cooperation is an opportunity for more personal and innovative pastoral activities of the Church. At the same time, love, respect, unity and openness may be taken as a great opportunity for family renewal. A mature and responsible parent conscious of building real relations with society is aware of the fact that as a human being, one needs to cooperate with institutions following the same values in order to strengthen the process of educating for peace.

4. Important Assumptions of Child Education towards Peace

When contemporary adults feel discouraged, helpless and confused by moral anomy, pluralism and socio-cultural changes, they refuse to have children, or if they do, they try to delegate the responsibility for their children’s upbringing to institutions (kindergartens, schools, clubs, various organisations, etc.), but none of these social units is able to create bonds of love, intimate relationships, close community, and first of all the strong sense of security and the characteristic closeness of the family (Rynio 2019). It is within the family community that the person’s life begins and develops on all levels and this start of life, to a great extent, determines the child’s future (Osewska 2015).

A great influence on the process of upbringing within the family is the very character of the functioning of the domestic community. Every human family is special because the personal community makes the family from the very beginning a privileged and original setting of upbringing (Stala and Garmaz 2018). This result primarily comes from the fact that the mother and father, who have given life to their child and have welcomed it in an atmosphere of love and security, are endowed with educational abilities that no one else

possesses. Parents usually know their children in all their originality and the resources of their personal love. This is due, above all, to the bonds between the members of each family, which are impossible to recreate in any other living environment and are indispensable for the preservation of their mental, spiritual and physical health. None of the existing social bonds have, by their very nature, such basic and strong foundations as the family bond. The community system, which is specific only to the family because it has a natural character, is unique and cannot be replaced by any other. The entire inner strength of the family institution can survive and overcome a variety of difficulties, although this does not mean that it cannot be undermined or even completely destroyed by powerful external factors.

From a theological perspective, Jesus Christ identifies himself with those in need and those who are weak, “As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” ([The Holy Bible 2008](#)). The love of God and the love of neighbour have become one in every human being. That is why for Christians, the bonds between individual family members tend to be very personal, intimate and warm. Interpersonal bonds of the family members are also characterised by spontaneity and the pursuit of common goals, although this is not always fully expressed ([Rynio 2013](#)). The result of this close association within the family is the merging of certain individualities into a community, or even a unity, in such a way that the personality of each member of the family is the object of common experience for the whole family, and the growth of this personality constitutes its objective. In order to undertake an education promoting peace and love in the family, it is necessary to make some basic assumptions ([Osewska 2015](#)).

The human person cannot live without this love and respect. If the human being does not experience love, then he remains incomplete ([Ryś 2006](#)). For this reason, the first assumption for education towards peace and love is the caregiver’s presence in the child’s everyday life ([Tománek 2015](#)). This does not just mean a problem of rejecting or abandoning a child, but also in a sense, emotional loneliness of the child, despite the physical presence of adults in the family. Many infants, children and youngsters suffer because they do not experience strong emotional ties with their parents. Unfortunately, there is a growing group of parents who, due to so many obligations, do not share their children’s lives and do not offer them sufficient support, which results in the child’s insecurity, distrustfulness and loneliness ([Osewska 2015](#)).

Strongly tied to the first condition, is the second one—mutual love of the parents. The relationship between the husband and wife, as well as the process of bridging personality differences, shapes the psychological identity of each family, and its unity of feelings, thoughts and activities ([Ryś 2006](#)). The original structure of the family requires the recognition of the fundamental physical, psychological and also spiritual nature of the woman and man. The system of family relationships is built upon the basis of the natural originality and mutual love of the spouses ([Stala 2019](#)). This anthropological principle, which is revealed in family life, allows children to discover the importance of love for every human being ([John Paul II 1981](#)). Children discover love and learn to love by observing the mutual love of their parents, the father’s love for the mother manifested in words and gestures, comfort and support in everyday situations, as well as the mother’s love for the father presented by many simple means of sensitivity and responsibility ([Dudziak 2012](#)). Unfortunately, when the parents are not expressing their mutual love, their children are living in a state of distress and anxiety. Even if one of the parents does everything to express tenderness and love in the family, the situation will not improve dramatically, because children feel loved, recognised, respected, safe and precious only within the parameters of the mutual love of their parents ([Osewska 2015](#)).

The third presupposition is the recognition of the family as a community of love, where “complex of interpersonal relationships is set up—married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation and fraternity—through which each human person is introduced into the human family” ([John Paul II 1981](#), p. 15). Not only parents, but all the family members, (grandparents, sisters, brothers, relatives and caregivers) are important in the process of child formation. Parents not only give life to their child together with their genetic

make-up but also, especially in the initial stage of the infant's life, "create their space of development". Children rely on all the family relationships and bonds by participating in everyday situations; therefore, every person and every relationship in the family is liable to strengthen or destroy the family community (Osewska 2015). This condition is strongly connected with the personal and religious maturity of adults in the family. The parent, grandparent or educator is the person who is to be, in a way, a signpost for the child or young one; thus, above all, they should be an authentic person, aware and in need of growth and deepening of personal maturity, the realisation of which results from the responsibility for oneself and others. A mature person understands the importance of peaceful coexistence in the process of one's upbringing (Ryś 2006).

The next condition underlying the process of child education within the family towards peace is the recognition of the value and dignity of the child (Rynio 2013). For every child, remaining a unique human being is unique in a natural and spiritual sense. Christianity, following classical philosophy, perceives human beings as a dynamic and irreducible unity of body and spirit (John Paul II 1981). In this respect, education should be based on the assumption that all the education participants deserve respect and appreciation for their intelligence, free will, emotions, culture and spiritual awareness. This remarkable psychophysical and spiritual unity deserves to be appreciated and respected (Wilk and Bieleń 2006).

The fifth condition is the recognition of family culture, which is a unique space for presenting cultural factors like norms, values, language, cultural assets of the family (books, art, music), ways in which family members spend their free time, qualifications of parents and other family members for the upbringing of children, the parent's attitude to their children's schooling and their future profession, the attitude of family members to tradition and novelty. The parent gives life not only in the physical but also in a spiritual sense. Parents create a profound space to share everything that is important for the family (Wilk and Bieleń 2006).

Last but not least, the final assumption is building a civilisation of love. Already John Paul II warned of the battle between two civilisations: the civilisation of life and love and the civilisation of death. Building peace is closely connected with the civilisation of love, which is based on a foundation of values and norms, headed by love, truth, goodness, authentic beauty, solidarity, justice and respect for every human life. The civilisation of love—although it is based on evangelical values—is a universal idea, an idea to which all people of goodwill should commit themselves. It is a civilisation that is meant to be servile to all and can only become a reality if everyone is involved in its implementation, regardless of differences in worldview (Osewska and Simonič 2019). Polish families have presented a civilisation of love and peace in a very simple way by welcoming war refugees from Ukraine into their homes despite historical conflicts. A total of 18.6 million Ukrainians escaping from the armed conflict in Ukraine, mainly women and children, have arrived in Poland since its inception on 24 February 2022. However, some of them have already returned to their homeland or other countries. This is information obtained from the Border Guard. There were no refugee camps in Poland. The refugees were welcomed lovingly by families and local associations as a result of the Christian attitude of love. Polish families shared what they had: housing, meals, medicines, clothing, transport, conversation, entertainment and, above all, their time and love.

5. The Scientific Discussion on Education for Peace in the Family Environment

An interesting approach towards education for peace is presented by Polish pedagogues Stanisław Kawula, Alina Rynio and Katarzyna Olbrycht. Kawula points out that education for peace is the formation of attitudes conducive to the realisation of peace. These attitudes are shaped on three planes: intellectual, emotional and practical. The intellectual level is connected with passing on from the older to the younger generation knowledge about peace and war, armed conflicts and the various consequences of conflicts, but first of all about creating the possibility of properly orientating the fact that war and

peace are a reality. The second level—the emotional—encompasses the emotional attitude of the pupil towards wars or conflicts and peace and the correct valuing of phenomena associated with the state of war and peace. The third level—the practical level—consists of the specific actions of the young person, as well as the right valuing of phenomena related to the state of war and peace. Concrete actions of the young generation foster the acceptance of life under the conditions of eliminating prejudice against other people or nations ([Kawula 1981](#)).

Alina Rynio emphasises the importance of parents' pedagogical culture in the process of upbringing and peace education. The components of the content of the parents' pedagogical culture and their characteristics are interrelated and significantly influence the process of upbringing in the family. It is indicated that the higher the level reached by each of these components by parents and the more they are harmonised with each other, the higher the level of the pedagogical culture of parents. She presents the following components of the pedagogical culture of parents: the educational awareness connected with responsibility, the ability to establish an educational relationship and pedagogical knowledge, the synthesis of which are certain pedagogical principles and the ability to use methods and means of upbringing ([Rynio 2013](#)).

An important recommendation is given by Katarzyna Olbrycht, who applies the concept of "peaceful child development" from the perspective of Christian personalism. The author emphasises the value of the human person and the need to strengthen the sense of one's own dignity, reasonableness, free will and responsibility for recognised virtues, especially love. At the same time, love is understood in the Christian perspective as a full, complete and voluntary gift of oneself to the other person, to the community and to God. Love requires active involvement in the life of the community, starting with the peer and family community. Olbrycht advocates the creation of situations that will stimulate the child's personal development ([Olbrycht 2000](#)).

Taking all the above-mentioned conditions and indications of Polish pedagogues, it can be considered that every child in the family is gradually introduced into the family culture according to their age and ability. Parents' educational awareness is closely linked to their responsibility for the child's development, upbringing and future functioning in the world. Parents should show their children peace as one of the basic virtues ([Horowski 2020](#)). Acquiring that knowledge, children also learn to evaluate, choose what is valuable and reject what is worthless. The ability to establish a nurturing relationship that is inseparable from time spent with the child and proper communication is important. This ability fosters the formation of emotional bonds and the proper organisation of family life based on fixed rules, the creation of a proper family atmosphere, the recognition and satisfaction of needs and the creation of optimal developmental conditions. Parents' pedagogical knowledge helps them build a community of love, respect, kindness and goodness, which enables the child to reach full personal, social and axiological maturity. When the child discovers a virtue and its presence, they experience it emotively and then fully comprehend it. Parents' ability to use methods and proper means of upbringing helps them to achieve better results. Therefore, is important that the pedagogical method takes into account the child's capabilities, has a positive and liberating effect and is preventive ([Olbrycht 2000](#)). This process of child education, based on the relationship between the child and their parents as well as all the other relatives who constitute the family community, may start with simple everyday situations like overcoming misunderstandings and solving conflicts. Children need to learn how to deal with conflicts in a peaceful way ([Ryś 1998](#)). When the child is well prepared, conflict could serve as an opportunity to learn to trust and serve people and grow more responsible by confessing their wrongs and turning away from attitudes that promote conflict. It is wise to help family members step back from a conflict, simmer down a bit and search for proper solutions, so that in this way, the conflicts may be special opportunities to mature. A variety of family experiences can trigger a change in the personal approach towards conflicts, aggressions and violence. Christianity proclaims that

love and peace are not abstract concepts, but values that dwell in the heart of every person, so families are called to respect peace and act for peace (John Paul II 1994).

Peace belongs to the essentially human order; for this reason, in this article, the issue of peace education in the family has been undertaken from the Catholic perspective. Following the teaching of Pope John Paul II, especially given in his messages for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, the authors present the possibility of reaching peace through education within the family. The Roman Catholic Church highlights that lasting peace will not be ensured by international organisations or regulations alone, as peace between people begins with peace in the smallest communities. This presupposition is supported by Polish specialists in family studies, pedagogy and psychology. Therefore, the condition for peace is to undertake education for peace and love. Families filled with faith, love and hope and engaged in an education that promotes peace are the best setting for peace. Reaching peace is strongly connected with overcoming selfishness, egocentrism and individualism. Ongoing conflicts and wars, especially in Ukraine, pose a challenge to Catholic educators, who responded by reminding them that everything starts within human hearts. Polish families have demonstrated peace education in a simple way by welcoming refugees from Ukraine into their homes. Peace is not the simple absence of war, nor is it reduced to a state of equilibrium between opposing forces. It is a dynamic process that must take into account all the factors that favour or disturb it. It is an order of justice that respects the just rights of every person and every nation. In a personalistic vision of peace given by Pope John Paul II, peace is based on the dignity of the human being, which stems from the fact that humans have been created in the image of God. There is no peace without forgiveness, respecting the human being and supporting their growth. Christians see the commitment to educating ourselves towards peace as something at the core of this religion. Christianity proclaims the Gospel's call and supports every family to be "peacemakers". Consequently, education in the Christian family tries to raise people of peace who are able to identify the causes of conflicts, seek good solutions and lead a peaceful coexistence.

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