

Article

Faith at Every Crossroad: Restoring the Balance Between *Fides Qua* and *Fides Quae* in Our Contemporary Times

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Abstract

This paper addresses the contemporary challenge of religious disaffiliation and the “supermarket mentality” of liquid religion by proposing a prophetic paradigm shift in evangelisation and catechesis. Utilising Richard Osmer’s practical theological framework as a structure, the study identifies a historical shift from the lived apostolic kerygma (*fides qua*) toward an over-reliance on formal conciliar definitions and Magisterial formulae (*fides quae*). This diachronic analysis suggests that the current “apparent failure” of institutional engagement is rooted in a linguistic and methodological disconnect. Drawing on the visionary models of St Augustine and St Benedict, and grounded in Karl Rahner’s transcendental theology, the paper proposes a normative way forward: an inductive pedagogy of the heart. This model prioritises the art of accompaniment and the return to elementary, foundational concepts that address the experiential core of the human person. Ultimately, the study argues that restoring the balance between the lived tradition and the contents of the faith is a theological requirement for helping contemporary believers to live their faith in daily life.

Keywords: *fides qua* and *fides quae*; practical theology; religious disaffiliation; art of accompaniment; liquid religion

1. Introduction

‘I believe,’ is a phrase which is so easy to utter with one’s lips, but which is laden with meaning. ‘I believe’ can be a proclamation of someone who is approaching any theme related to the faith as a believer in any religious tradition. But what does ‘I believe’ imply within the context of the contemporary world? What does this statement stand for? ‘I believe’ in fact has a dual meaning. Primarily, one can believe in the contents of what one confesses as one’s faith. In theological circles, this is usually referred to as *fides quae*. But one can also state that s/he believes and also seeks to live the faith. One demonstrates what one believes in through actions and decisions. In theological circles, this is known as *fides qua*. Faith is not made up of either one of these exclusively of the other, but together in a harmonious and beneficial coexistence (Dupré 1998, p. 382).

This paper attempts to give a tentative solution to the apparent failure of catechesis and evangelisation as a symptom of the broader trend of institutional disaffiliation.¹ This will be done by considering how evangelisation and catechesis have evolved along the ages from a proclamation which was strictly linked to the lived tradition of the Church (*fides qua*) to a catechesis which started to base its contents on conciliar definitions (*fides quae*). The latter did not necessarily help the faithful to live their faith. The proposal which this paper seeks to make is to return to living the faith by seeking a balance between the *fides qua* and the *fides quae*.



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The methodology adopted in this paper utilises a practical theological framework, specifically engaging with Richard Osmer’s descriptive-empirical and normative tasks to bridge the transition from historical analysis to a proposed pastoral strategy (Osmer 2008, 2011, 2014). The study begins with a diachronic theological analysis of the shifting tension between *fides qua* and *fides quae* throughout different epochs. This historical survey functions as the descriptive-empirical task, identifying the evolution of catechetical transmission and the factors leading to the current apparent failure of catechesis and evangelisation. Subsequently, utilising hermeneutical insights from tradition, as well as modern theologians like Karl Rahner and Tomáš Halík, the paper transitions to the normative task—addressing what evangelisation and catechesis ought to be by proposing a restoration of balance through the art of accompaniment. This study argues that such a shift to restore the balance between the *fides quae* and the *fides qua* is not merely a pastoral preference, but a theological imperative rooted in Rahner’s transcendental theology. By identifying revelation as God’s continuous self-disclosure in history, the proposed inductive methodology of catechetical accompaniment is framed as the necessary epistemological vehicle for the reception of the divine in the contemporary context. While this analysis proceeds from a Catholic theological perspective, it offers broader insights into the global phenomenon of the contemporary pick-and-choose mentality in religious trends, contributing to religious disaffiliation in contemporary societies.

Using the Catholic church as a primary analytical focus, the point of departure is the institutional self-understanding that the Church essentially exists to evangelise. This phrase was originally coined in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Paul VI 1975, p. 14) and later picked up again in *Evangelii Gaudium* (Francis 2013, p. 7). To do this, credibility is a binding factor. However, it seems that the biggest challenge that the Church has today is linked to its institutional status. A significant challenge for the Church that requires critical attention comes from the fact that people who no longer feel bound to the Church as an institution, and hence to what the Church teaches, still claim to be believers (Groeschel 2010). This ‘pick-and-choose’ approach reflects what Ward (2017) identifies as liquid religion, where individuals navigate through a supermarket mentality. Such disaffiliation from institutional structures suggests that while personal belief remains, the traditional binding nature of the institution has eroded (Bullivant 2019). This brings about a situation where one believes in God, but at the same time does not feel the need to be attached to any particular institution, faith or religion.

2. A Long Evolution

The evolution of Catholic doctrine serves as an illustration of how religious institutions seek to codify experiential kerygma into formal systems—a process that has historically impacted the lived religiosity of the faithful. The first to proclaim the faith were the apostles, who devoted themselves to evangelisation and to proclaiming the kerygma. The use of the term ‘kerygma’ here is not neutral. It indicates the contents which the apostles proclaimed. These had very strong accents of a kerygmatic and experiential language (Dodd 1936; Dunn 1997, pp. 631–38). In fact, the apostles, especially Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2, 14–42), proclaimed Christ’s resurrection as the fulfilment of prophecy, hailing him as the Lord, calling the interlocutors to repentance and to baptism (Benedict XVI 2006).

This initial proclamation and evangelisation were challenged throughout the ages, when different interpretations were given to it, and a number of heresies and other erroneous teachings emerged. These threatened the unity and harmony in the believing community to such an extent that a number of divisions emerged within the Church. A response to these divisions was addressed through the different councils of the first millennium. The aims of these councils were threefold: clarifying the contents of the faith

([Holy See \(The\) 1992](#), p. 250); maintaining unity within the Church and taking decisions which were authoritative and binding ([Farrugia 2015](#), pp. 1800–14).

The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) was the first council to tackle a doctrinal issue which emerged as a result of the erroneous doctrine promulgated by Arius and leading to Arianism. Arius posited that Christ was created and not co-eternal with the Father. The Council of Nicaea affirmed that Jesus Christ is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father” ([Holy See \(The\) 1992](#), p. 465; [Fernández 2025](#); [Edwards 2009](#), pp. 105–35; [De Durand 2002](#), pp. 4–9). The Council of Nicaea was followed by the First Council of Constantinople (381 AD) which sought to clarify various heresies, amongst which one finds the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the full humanity of Christ. As a result of this council, the Nicene Creed was expanded with articles stating that the Holy Spirit is “the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified” ([The Nicene Creed 325](#); [O’Collins 2009](#), pp. 158–87; [De Durand 2002](#), pp. 9–14).

Nestorianism argued that Mary was the mother of Jesus but not the mother of God (theotokos). In this line of thought, Nestorius was distinguishing between Christ’s human nature and his divine nature to the point of nearly separating them. The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) declared that Mary is the mother of God, and that in Christ the human and the divine natures are inseparably united ([O’Collins 2009](#), pp. 188–97; [De Durand 2002](#), pp. 14–16). Some years later, another lack of agreement emerged on Christ, which asserted that he had only the divine nature. In asserting this, Eutyches was denying the full humanity of Christ. This heresy, known as Monophysitism was clarified by the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) which defined that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures, which are united without confusion, change, division or separation ([O’Collins 2009](#), pp. 190–201; [De Durand 2002](#), pp. 15–16). Other councils followed these seeking to tackle and clarify other minor issues which emerged from time to time, aiming at the unity of doctrine and of interpretation of the contents of the faith.

Through these councils and the new way of doing theology, it is interesting to note a shift in the way in which evangelisation and catechesis now started taking place. During the apostolic era and in the first three centuries of the Church, evangelisation and catechesis relied heavily on the Word of God and on its application in the form of a kerygma ([Hippolytus of Rome 1934](#), p. 17). With the emergence of heresies and of erroneous teachings, in a bid for unity and clarity, the contents transmitted in evangelisation and catechesis started to rely heavily on what the different councils decreed as the true doctrine. Here, one can note a paradigm shift: from evangelisation and catechesis as the proclamation of the good news, to the transmission of the faith of the Church using the official declarations of the contents of the faith as declared and promulgated in the several councils as Magisterium; from the transmission of a faith which is personal, to the use of formulas and creeds as the secure way for evangelisation and catechesis. Still, this does not mean that the councils were creating these formulae without sufficient and logical reasons. The formulae of the councils were a strategic attempt to safeguard the kerygma from interpretations which could have obscured the integrity of the lived tradition of the faith.

This suggests a shift from a faith where the *regula fidei* was seen as a core summary of Christian beliefs prominently based on the living tradition, typical of the times of Irenaeus of Lyon, to a faith which is based on the Magisterium ([Irenaeus of Lyon c. 180](#), Books 1 and 3). In the early centuries of the Church, it was the living tradition which constituted the foundation of the first proclamation, of evangelisation and of catechesis. On the other hand, after the emergence of theological disputes, the importance of the tradition as this was embraced by the early Church was substantially narrowed down to the Magisterium of the Church as the definition of true doctrine through different forms

of pronouncements, notable of which are the different councils. This is such that, today, it is the Magisterium of the Church which is considered as the basis of the contents of evangelisation and catechesis, starting with the first proclamation.

3. Challenges to the Faith and Reactions

The Church has faced many challenges during its 2000-year history. These have helped the Church to grow and to develop and to purify itself and the pastoral service which it renders. One of the challenges which the Church had to deal with was of an external nature—the collapse of the Roman Empire. Since the Edict of Milan in 313AD, the Church had always leant on the authority and the structure of the Roman Empire for its strength. However, when in 410AD the city of Rome was sacked, the greatest support structure of the Church was shaken to the foundations. With its internal support structures failing, the Church had to seek sustenance from elsewhere. It is here that charismatic individuals within the Church came to its rescue and sought new and more credible ways of supporting the Church in view of the crumbling Roman Empire. Two such outstanding persons were St Augustine of Hippo and St Benedict.

St Augustine (354–430) in his genius sought to give a tangible response to the crisis of the Church which was seeking new sources of support (Dupré 1998, p. 384). In one of his most eloquent writings—*De Civitate Dei—The City of God* (426), Augustine seeks to address the pagan claim that the Roman empire had collapsed because the God of the Christians had failed to protect the city of Rome (Augustine of Hippo 1887, book II chap. 18–22; Cornish 2010; Benedict XVI 2008a). In the work, Augustine introduces the idea that there exist two cities: the City of God which is driven by the love of God and the city of the human beings, driven by the love of self (Augustine of Hippo 1887, book XIV chap. 28, book XV, chap. 1; Leo XIII 1884, p. 2). Augustine explains that the City of God, to which Christians pertain, is not a political structure but a spiritual reality (Augustine of Hippo 1887, book XI chap. 1; John Paul II 1986). Augustine placed Christian values side by side with the values of the contemporary society he lived in and showed that the two were independent. At the same time, Christian values could sustain society itself, thus overcoming the prevalent pagan culture of the time. Moreover, Christian teachings and Christian values can by themselves sustain and perfect the Church (Dupré 1998, p. 384), and therefore the Church does not need any external, man-made structures, forces or authorities as supports since these can be found within it. Augustine confronts the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena* and establishes those values which are necessary for evangelisation and for the dissemination and living of the Gospel in his contemporary time (Halík 2024, p. 114).

St Benedict of Nursia (480–547) is famed for being the father of monasticism. In his peculiar way, and distinctly from St Augustine of Hippo, he helped in preserving Christianity in a crumbling and degenerating society. He did this through his rule based on the motto *ora et labora*—prayer and work (Benedict of Nursia 2001, chap. 43, p. 48; Quartier 2020; Pius XII 1947, p. 13). St Benedict sought to preserve Christianity in its purest and most uncontaminated form. As from the beginning, Benedictine monasteries served as fulcrums of evangelization, attracting many people to the faith (Brown 1995; Pius XII 1947, p. 22). Through his endeavours, St Benedict safeguarded the purity of Christianity in its essence, promoting moral integrity during a period in which this was losing its crucial aspects to more mundane and frugal things (Little 2002; Benedict XVI 2008b; Pius XII 1947, p. 22).

St Augustine of Hippo and St Benedict of Nursia were amongst the individuals who had foresight in seeing what Christianity was going through and each in his way contributed to helping it move on. Contemporary Christianity necessitates a similar farsightedness to address challenges in a correct way. The integration of faith into contemporary

life requires the development of innovative presentation methods which render the faith relevant and appealing to the contemporary human being.

During the second millennium the Church was shaken again to its foundation by the Protestant Reformation. This reformation was considered by the centralised authority of the Church as a direct attack on its teaching authority. It uncovered the way in which the Church had degenerated from its mission of evangelisation and of catechesis (Braido 2015, pp. 31–47). The Reformation set the Church in motion to try and minimise the damage, and to reverse the process through catechesis and evangelisation, starting from the very basics. This was initiated through the Council of Trent which decreed that, for an effective evangelisation of the people, Catechisms should be redacted and used (Council of Trent 1564, Twenty-fifth session). These were to be in the form of questions and answers which were meant to be taught off by heart to children and adults alike, in such a way that they could distinguish between true doctrine and false doctrine (Braido 2015, pp. 33–79, 127–42). This brought about the traditional method of catechesis which was essentially that of teaching the Catechism in question and answer by heart to the faithful (Braido 2015, pp. 394–97). Still, we need to avoid an anachronistic reading of this situation and of the intentions of the Council of Trent. One has to see these motions towards a *fides quae* within their historical context. They were aimed at preserving the integrity of the faith in a time of radical fragmentation. Nonetheless, in the long run, they contributed to the imbalance between *fides quae* and *fides qua*.

Moreover, while the Reformation was advocating for a ‘sola scriptura’ position, the Church was emphasising both Scripture and tradition, that is, giving the Magisterium of the Church a central position equal to that of Sacred Scriptures (Braido 2015, pp. 417–525). In doing this and emphasising the *fides quae* over everything else, the Church was creating a loophole in the living of the faith. While the faithful did know the contents of the faith, at times by heart, they still did not practice the faith, nor could they live the implications of the faith in their daily lives (Biancardi and Gianetto 2016, pp. 97–112).² This emphasis on the teaching authority of the Church was the norm for the following centuries and was brought to the forefront again during the First Vatican Council with its affirmation of the infallibility of the Pope in faith and morals (Vatican Council I 1870, chap. 4 §9). This affirmation of the status quo of the Church as a teaching institution lasted up to Vatican Council II, when a breath of fresh air reached the Church through *Dei Verbum*, which re-established the primacy of the Word of God over the Magisterium (Vatican Council II 1965a, p. 10).

4. A Post-Vatican Council II Revival

The post-Vatican Council II era was characterised by a revival of evangelisation and catechesis. This was thanks to the way in which the Church during Vatican Council II made an anthropological turn (Marmion 2017). This is mostly evident in *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican Council II 1965b). The period following the Vatican Council II continued in this trajectory with two ordinary synods of bishops which were entirely dedicated to evangelisation and catechesis in our contemporary time.

The first synod in 1974 was on evangelisation in our contemporary world, and as a result of this synod, the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was published. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* emphasised the primacy of the evangelisation mission of the Church, and that the Church exists in order to evangelise (Paul VI 1975, p. 14). The exhortation also elaborates on the scope (Paul VI 1975, pp. 2, 29–30, 59, 76), the process (Paul VI 1975, pp. 29, 51), and the contents of evangelisation. With respect to the latter, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* calls for a renewed prophetic proclamation (Paul VI 1975, p. 28). *Evangelii Nuntiandi* also advocates for a lived faith through witness, affirming that the contemporary human being is not

impressed by teachers but by witnesses who live their faith before preaching it (Paul VI 1975, p. 41).

The second synod of bishops (1977) dealt with the catechesis of children and of young people, with the resultant post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Catechesis Tradendae*. This post-synodal document reiterates the centrality of evangelisation and catechesis in the life of the Church, and that these should be given priority (John Paul II 1979, pp. 1, 15), while distinguishing between catechesis and evangelisation (John Paul II 1979, pp. 18–19). In terms of the contents for evangelisation and catechesis, *Catechesi Tradendae* is more direct, stating that the entire good news of salvation should constitute the content of evangelisation and of catechesis (John Paul II 1979, pp. 26–27). In this respect, there is an attempt at restoring the harmony and balance between *fides qua* and *fides quae*.

5. Towards an Inductive Pedagogy of the Heart

The question arises as to which theological frameworks can serve as guides to re-establish the importance of *fides qua* in view of establishing a balance with *fides quae*, and which perspectives might illuminate the theological paths so that the lived tradition is given its importance again. A further question concerns who and what can help us in the purification of belief from peripheral constructs.

Without seeking to unload the onus and to load the burden on a particular category of people, one has to acknowledge that catechists have a fundamental role to play in this. Their role is very important in this situation where we are experiencing and seeing Christianity as if this is waning. Catechists and evangelisers are called to give a helping hand to Christianity through different charisms and ministries. One can recall what St Paul wrote to the Corinthians when he stated that there are many different gifts but one Spirit (1 Cor 12, 4–11). All baptised persons, as believers are called to instil hope in a human being who may have lost hope. To do this, one needs to be very vigilant and to read the signs of the time and to enter into the ministry of evangelisation and catechesis as individuals with a unique identity and not as clones (John Paul II 1979, p. 21; Francis 2021).

Identifying the hermeneutical tools necessary to interpret the “epochal change” evoked by Pope Francis (Francis 2019; Halík 2024, p. 115) is a must. An epochal change calls for an historic leap, that is, to make a radical paradigm shift. This also applies to catechesis and evangelisation which should not be solely aimed at a thorough proclamation of the contents of the faith (*fides quae*), but at helping the person to live the faith—*fides qua*.

The implementation of this paradigm shift necessitates a visionary perspective analogous to that of the Old Testament prophets, who identified the trajectory of the community within its specific historical context. Historical precedents for such foresight are also evident in the life and in the works of St Augustine of Hippo and St Benedict of Nursia who addressed the disintegration of the social fabric without abandoning the core mission of Christianity in terms of evangelisation and catechesis. Rather than succumbing to societal collapse, these persons identified a feasible pathway for the Church which was characterised by a process of internal purification and a decoupling from restricting institutional bonds that hindered development. Furthermore, the Christian mystical tradition suggests a mode for internal transformation and conversion that prioritises quiet, substantive renewal over external clamour. Consequently, the theological imperative to refocus efforts on the essential tenets of the faith, prioritising a mission-engaged Church over its institutional status has to be given priority. This model describes an outward-facing institution that departs from self-enclosure to engage directly with individuals in their contemporary socio-cultural milieu, presenting the kerygma as a source of hope and liberation.

Adopting a visionary approach to evangelisation and catechesis requires tangible methodological departures from historical precedents to enhance ministerial efficacy. More

specifically, current methodologies and linguistic frameworks require rigorous revision, as the traditional terminology is frequently unintelligible to the contemporary human being (Halík 2024, p. 127). Following the precedents set by the prophets, a return to foundational elementary concepts is being proposed. Effective communication with the modern individual necessitates the use of a simple language which addresses the heart of the interlocutor as the experiential core rather than purely intellectual faculties. This passage from the mind to the heart is a pedagogical way in which one can ensure that catechesis does not remain something intellectual, that is limited to the knowledge of the contents, but moves to the heart in a symbolic way such that this moves the volition of the person who not only knows the faith by heart, but is able to put it into practice because it is in his/her heart. Such a linguistic shift aims to ensure that the faith tradition is transmitted in its essential form, avoiding the obfuscation often caused by complex formulae that may no longer resonate within a pluralistic, contemporary society, and that it touches the very heart of the human being as the place where action and will find their origin.

The language used by the prophets of the Old Testament was clear, focussed and specific. It addressed the heart of the people and not the mind. Its primary intention was to transform the heart and not the mind. It was addressed to all the people. It spoke directly to the masses because it addressed the very core of the human being leaving a direct impact on the heart and on the lives of the people. It was not an intellectual discourse, but words which were aimed at igniting the spirituality of the individual and inducing a deep transformation starting from the innermost sanctuary: the heart. This is why many people were touched by the words of the prophets and were moved by them, bringing about a transformation of the people of God.

The historical praxis of Old Testament prophets suggests a sophisticated pedagogical and psychological framework for contemporary evangelization and catechesis. This methodology prioritises an inductive approach, moving from the known, lived experience of the believer to the unknown horizons of divine mystery. Within the framework of transcendental theology, this is justified by the fact that the known—the concrete human history—is the very locus of revelation. Therefore, starting from human experience is not a pedagogical convenience but a reflection of the incarnational structure of revelation, which, as Avery Dulles suggests, never occurs in a vacuum but is mediated through the historical symbol of human experience (Dulles 1983, p. 131). By interpreting the ‘signs of the times’ through the lens of human experience, the prophets facilitated a paradigm shift that addressed the heart—the experiential core of the human person—rather than solely the intellect through the proposition of the contents of the faith.

Consequently, the language required for the transmission of faith necessitates a transition from abstract, propositional contents (*fides quae*) toward a focus on the transformative act of believing (*fides qua*). This linguistic shift ensures that the faith tradition is not perceived as an intellectual discourse for the few, but as a specific and focused communication intended to ignite individual spirituality and induce deep personal transformation. Such a methodology seeks to move beyond abstract presentations of the faith, which often prove meaningless in our contemporary society, toward a transmission that remains present with the faithful in all the seasons of life.

The primary vehicle for this pedagogical shift is the art of accompaniment (Francis 2023; Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, p. 113; Halík 2024, pp. 98, 184, 192–94). Accompaniment functions as a methodological tool to bridge the gap between mind and heart, requiring a particular set of competencies, most notably the capacity for deep listening and empathy. Within the contemporary context, this pedagogical tradition is further augmented by digital communication frameworks, which serve as indispensable tools for achieving universal outreach in a technologically mediated society. Accompanying

others in their journey of faith is based on a pedagogy of presence which is founded on a relational epistemology amongst which one finds the capacity and the patience to listen deeply, and to empathise with others (Francis 2021, pp. 6–8; Halík 2024, p. 202). In this way, the faith is transmitted through a communal engagement rather than the mere transfer of information and knowledge.

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* stressed that evangelisers and catechists need to be formed in the art of accompanying the faithful, “reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in Christian life” (Francis 2013, p. 169). Accompanying as an art is made up of many other smaller actions. Amongst these, one encounters deep listening, which is more than simply hearing with one’s ears, seeking to be with the person where the individual stands and trying to understand the complexity and the mystery of life. Another virtue which is necessary is patience in waiting for the other and not giving up easily (Francis 2013, pp. 171–72). All these require a specific formation so that catechists and evangelisers may embrace this art of accompanying others in the faith (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, p. 135).

Accompaniment in these lines is more than walking alongside the faithful. It is seeking to understand the full reality of life and help the person to take decisions and to seek to make the next step forward in living the faith (Francis 2016, p. 300). It is this type of accompaniment which leads the human being to true freedom (Francis 2013, p. 170). Accompaniment is more than handing on the faith in an intellectual way, speaking to the mind. It is being with wholeheartedly, speaking to the inner most sanctuary of the person: the heart. In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis hints at a new way in which catechists and evangelisers may accompany others on the way as they seek to deepen their faith. This is by presenting the Sacred Heart of Jesus as that heart which is the source of all love in the world, urging the interlocutors to make this love of Christ present through their service (Francis 2024, pp. 205–16).

Karl Rahner’s theology of revelation provides the ontological justification for prioritising the *fides qua* in contemporary accompaniment. Rahner posits that revelation is not a static, past-tense event transmitted solely through the contents of the faith (*fides quae*), but it is rather God’s continuous self-disclosure through Jesus Christ to the human person within time and space (Rahner 1975, p. 1460; Xavier 2014, p. 366; Schiffers 1975, p. 1454). This means that revelation “does not start from some abstract concepts of a distant God, but from the concrete human person and his experience of God in everyday life” (Xavier 2014, pp. 359–60). God’s revelation never happens in a vacuum, but through symbol. In the case of the human being, the greatest symbol is historical. Revelation takes place through concrete human history and experience (Dulles 1983, p. 131; Rahner 1975, p. 1460). By way of conclusion, a catechetical focus on the *fides qua* becomes a theological requirement. Without an engagement with the concrete human person, the content of faith remains an abstract concept detached from the reality of the divine–human encounter.

Theologically, this necessitates that the contents of faith (*fides quae*) must be mediated through the social and religious context of the individual (Halík 2024, pp. 195–96). Christ’s mission offered a practical liberation rather than a mere abstract doctrine. Consequently, any catechetical model that bypasses lived experience fails to meet the theological standard of revelation set by Jesus himself. Thus, the way of life proposed in catechesis must be the logical and necessary outcome of a theology that views God as active within the contemporary desert of human existence (Halík 2024, p. 132). For example, if one had to present the event of the liberation of God’s chosen people in the Exodus and of the experience of the desert linked to the situation, as God’s revelation to his people as a saviour, without linking it to the contemporary ways in which God is seeking to save and liberate the human being today, this revelation remains arid and irrelevant to the

contemporary human being. On the other hand, if one presents God's liberation of his chosen people as an action which started in the past and which is still necessary today for the contemporary human being, then the concept of God as a saviour becomes a relevant concept. So, in catechesis, one should not be speaking about concepts such as the desert, or the exile in themselves since these may be meaningless for the contemporary human being. But, if one speaks about the contemporary desert in which the human being is living, and the way in which all are called to return from the modern exile to the promised land in a metaphorical way, then the concepts will be automatically linked to the contemporary status of the human being, making them relevant.

6. Conclusions

This study has utilised a practical theological framework to demonstrate that the current difficulties in evangelization and catechesis are not merely sociological accidents, but the result of an imbalance between *fides qua* and *fides quae*. Through a diachronic analysis, this research has traced the evolution of faith transmission from the experiential kerygma typical of the apostolic era to a post-Tridentine over-reliance on formal contents. While these doctrinal formulations were historically necessary to safeguard the integrity of the faith, their eventual isolation from lived experience has rendered traditional religious language increasingly unintelligible to the contemporary believer.

Ultimately, addressing the supermarket mentality of the 21st century requires more than a mere update of pastoral techniques; it calls for a paradigm shift grounded in Karl Rahner's notion of revelation as God's continuous self-disclosure within concrete human history. The proposed inductive pedagogy of the heart is facilitated through the art of accompaniment. This approach, characterised by a pedagogy of presence and the use of elementary, foundational concepts, ensures that the faith tradition is not transmitted as an arid intellectual add-on, but as a transformative way of life. By restoring the harmonious coexistence between lived tradition and the contents of the faith, catechesis and evangelization can move beyond institutional preservation to become a source of hope and liberation within the contemporary world.

In presenting the faith and in catechesis today, the concepts which need to be presented are those which form part of the journey of the contemporary human being. It is these concepts which are related to the condition of the contemporary human being, and which are communicated in words which are relevant to the human being and with which the human being can identify him/herself which are ultimately significant to him/her. It is in this way that the faith is seen as relevant in helping human beings achieve the desired destination (Lakeland 1999, p. 69), and it is in this way that the faith does not remain an arid add-on to life but becomes a way of life. This is the shift which all evangelisation and catechesis are called to embrace and put into practice, striking a balance between the lived tradition of the faith—the *fides qua*—and the contents of the faith—*fides quae*.

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Notes

- ¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a detailed study about the reasons for the apparent failure of catechesis from the sociological point of view. However there exist a number of articles and papers which support this claim even from an empirical point of view. One may see: (Morante 1997; Smith and Denton 2005; Smith et al. 2011; Pew Research Centre 2012; Ward 2017; Parsons 2018; Barthe 2023; Meisner Hertz 2024; Galea and Sultana 2025; Grupa and Zarzycka 2026).
- ² With the emergence of new pedagogies towards the end of the 19th century in the educational realm, a new void was being experienced within the Church. While in schools the new pedagogies which were based on the psychology of the human being and on how the human being learns by moving from the known to the unknown were becoming more popular because they were seen as effective, in Church circles the traditional way of teaching contents by heart was retained. This resulted in the interlocutors knowing the contents of the faith by heart, but unable to apply them to daily life. Moreover, the didactic methods used by the Church took a directly opposite direction. They started from the unknown (God) and then tried to apply this the known (daily life experience). This did not work out and some individuals sought to bring about the pedagogical change which was positive in school to the ecclesiastical realm. These endeavours of different practitioners brought about the Method of Munich and the Kerygmatic Method. These two methods hailed what is today known as the Catechetical Movement (Biancardi and Gianetto 2016, pp. 163–229).

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