

CATECHESIS FOR CONFIRMATION AS A PASTORAL CHALLENGE IN SLOVENIA

Abstract

The article aims to present the state of confirmation pastoral care in the Slovenian territory. When thinking about confirmation pastoral care we cannot overlook the society we live in, the values this society sets as exemplary. This is where we encounter excessive materialism and secularism. Modern media and various social media are also an important influence. There is also the additional fact that Slovenia is one of the few countries where religious education is not part of the school system. This means that the entire weight of religious education falls on parishes or parish catechesis, the parish pastoral care which has to find ways to be simultaneously a religious education and catechesis, a life of religion. Nor can we overlook the families our candidates for Confirmation grow up in. In Slovenia, the sacrament of Holy Confirmation is granted in the last two years of primary school, therefore, at the milestone between primary and secondary school. Some people call this sacrament the “farewell to Church”. Such a state of Confirmation pastoral care encourages the search for new approaches, both in the preparation for Confirmation as well as regarding the approaches and methods of work after the sacrament of Holy Confirmation has been granted. This process includes several factors: the people being granted Confirmation and their basic family, the parish community, godparents, animators, various pastoral groups (altar boys and girls, singers, scouts), and also various prayer groups who pray for the candidates for Confirmation, godparents and their families. In the concluding part of the article guidelines are presented which will have to be considered in future work with candidates for Confirmation, Confirmation groups, godparents, and parents. Family catechesis is suggested as an alternative which, methodologically speaking, encompasses the entire family and thus ensures greater stability regarding the preparation for Confirmation and the life after it. Some parishes already practice this form of catechesis and the results there have proven to be positive. This means that catechesis is in need of thorough reform. It is a complex

process demanding time and a lot of energy. Nevertheless, this approach should be tried with at least some of Confirmation groups.

Key words: *Confirmation, Confirmation pastoral care, family catechesis, New Evangelisation, carriers of Confirmation pastoral care.*

Introduction

In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church it is written that through baptism, the baptismal character of the faithful makes them worship the Christian religion; therefore reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church. They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit so that they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and deed (C 11).¹ These words of the Council, written fifty years ago, are the ones we wish to “verify” and evaluate in the present Slovenian catechistic and pastoral context. The Council emphasises the duty of professing faith and imposes a stricter duty of being witnesses by word and deed. The scientific aspect of this was presented by Polona Vesel Mušič in her doctoral thesis entitled *Birmanska pastorala na prepihu: vzgojno-pastoralni model kot oblika celostne vzgoje v Cerkvi na Slovenskem*.² Her vast scientific research is additionally presented in five books published in recent years.

1. Young People in Contemporary Society

This chapter aims to examine who our candidates for Confirmation are and where they come from.

1.1. A Young person – a Candidate for Confirmation

In Slovenia, Confirmation is usually conferred on teenagers, in their eighth or ninth grade of primary school. This is a person at the crossroads between childhood and the teenage period.³ John Paul II wrote that this is the time of discovering oneself and one's own inner world, the time of generous plans, the time when the feeling of love awakens, with the biological impulses of sexuality, the time of the desire to be together, the time of a particularly intense joy connected with the exhilarating discovery of

¹ Cf. *Koncilski odloki (2. vatikanski vesoljni cerkveni zbor)*, Nadškofijski ordinariat, Ljubljana, 1980.

² Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birmanska pastorala na prepihu: vzgojno-pastoralni model kot oblika celostne vzgoje v Cerkvi na Slovenskem, doktorska disertacija*, Teološka fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2012.

³ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma – pečat svetega Duha (priročnik za starše birmancev in birmanske botre)*, Zbirka: *Birmanska pastorala I.*, Ljubljana, 2013, p. 17-26.

life. But often it is also the age of deeper questioning, of anguished or even frustrating searching, of a certain mistrust of others and dangerous introspection, and the age sometimes of the first experiences of setbacks and of disappointments.⁴

Thus a young person matures in the physical, spiritual, and mental areas. It is also a period when young people leave the safe haven of their families and seek new friends, new company. This is youthful socialisation where he or she becomes one of the group, becomes the co-creator of the group he/she belongs to. It is a period when they are saying goodbye to childhood and forming new habits and a new style of living. If we look at a young person comprehensively and consider all the changes that are happening, we see that it is not always the case of a complete synchronisation, and discrepancies, dissonances, and tensions that reflect outwards also occur.

1.2. A Young Person – a Candidate for Confirmation and his Relationship with his Family

Every person creates the foundations of his life in his family. In the field of religious education we have come to notice that the family used to be the first “religious school”. The family spent time together praying: in the morning, before meals, in the evening, upon holidays etc. They went to mass together, while eating Sunday lunch they discussed the sermon of that day etc. This was the way for a child and later also teenager to slowly enter into the world of faith. Looking at this from an educational perspective, this involved all three dimensions: cognitive, experiential, and engagement. Changes in society and changes in the manner of living brought changes to the way faith is perceived, too. With many, faith increasingly became a matter of “habit”, a matter of “tradition”. Prayer grew increasingly rarer. Many people left religious education to the institution, meaning catechesis, Sunday school. Catechesis used to be just an upgrade of home-based catechesis. Today, for many people, catechesis presents the only religious activity. And at some point, such Sunday school pupils become candidates for Confirmation. They need the support of their families but often they do not receive it. At home children frequently hear such words of solace: “Hold on, just Confirmation and then you’re done with the sacraments”. When this attitude towards the sacrament of Confirmation and the young person to be confirmed occurs, we need a redefinition of the preparation for Confirmation, which not only involves the preparation of the candidate but of the entire family.

⁴ Cf. Janez Pavel II, Apostolska spodbuda o katehezi v našem času *Catechesi tradendae*, Cerkevni dokumenti 5, Ljubljana, 1980, 28.

1.3. A Young Person – a Candidate for Confirmation and the Internet

The invention of the Internet can be compared to some of the greatest revolutions in the history of communication (speech, writing, Internet). The invention of writing changed human communication in a great many ways, the same happened with the Internet. Still, it is clear that these changes do not bring along only positive things.⁵ Young people are part of this world and the statistics which reveal and represent the levels of use of social media more or less reflect the behaviour of our candidates for Confirmation, too. The internet brings information, eases many tasks and makes access to various content much easier. Therefore, our pastoral work includes the question of how much we know about how to include these media as a pastoral aid, as the aid to our catechesis. Using is one thing, abusing another. Another thing is a contribution to the Internet so that it could increasingly be used as an aid. To what extent are the websites of our parishes the tool of the New Evangelisation and are they “attractive” to our young people preparing for Confirmation?

1.4. A Young Person – a Candidate for Confirmation, Materialism and Secularism

A teenager, the candidate for Confirmation today is a part of this world. The society we live in is filled with material goods. We could also say: “What you have is what you’re worth.” Intentionally or unintentionally hidden competitions take place constantly, of who will have more, who will have better, who will have it first. This materialism is first revealed in the family (the standard of living, the car, property) and then in the “property” of the young person (all kinds of gadgets). Confirmation is frequently tightly connected with gifts. It happens that we hear young people say how they can’t wait to go to the Confirmation so that they can get something. In such a context it is very difficult to move to the spiritual sphere and establish the sacrament of Confirmation as a “purely” spiritual event. In this context we should consider the influence of the secular conception where there is ever less room for the spiritual. This is overtaken by materialism, social position, importance etc., and there is much less room for the spiritual and sacramental. When we think about the sacrament of Confirmation, the essence of the problem lies in the climate of society which is becoming increasingly “materialistic”.

2. Pastoral practice on Confirmation in the past and today

The essence of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation has never changed through history. As it is written in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

⁵ Cf. B. Rustja, *Kako je internet spremenil naše mišljenje in ravnanje*, Cerkev danes, 49 (2016) 2, p. 8-11.

“Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.” (1316) Considering all of the social changes and the changes in the school and catechism-pastoral care fields, the pastoral care of Confirmation calls for its own development. This is not a blind adaptation to the situation of the present time, but the search for a path towards our young people preparing for Confirmation. Here we face the questions of methodology, didactics, and animation.

The preparation for Confirmation includes certain fixed points, such as:

- 1.1. Preparation for Confirmation in the last triad of primary school
- 1.2. Preparation of the candidates⁶
- 1.3. Confirmation groups
- 1.4. Preparation of parents⁷
- 1.5. Preparation of godparents⁸
- 1.6. The role of the animators in the preparation for Confirmation⁹
- 1.7. Direct preparation for Confirmation
- 1.8. Confirmation¹⁰
- 1.9. What about after Confirmation?

The state of mind in Europe and in Slovenia is changing. This is revealed also by the statistical data in the field of Confirmation pastoral care. In the last ten years the number of candidates for Confirmation in Slovenia has decreased from 14,788 (in 2004) to 10,557 Confirmations, which is a drop of 28.61%. The greatest decrease happened in 2004 – 2005 for 2,257 Confirmations and in 2012 – 2013 for 1,426 Confirmations.¹¹

The Slovenian Bishops' Conference explains the table with the following words: “Changes in the manner of expressing faithfulness and participating in religious life are the expression of socio-political changes in the past decades and even during the entire last century which brought secularism, laicism, and distancing from religious values. We are faced

⁶ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 54-65.

⁷ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 66-72.

⁸ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 73-81; P. Vesel Mušič, *Tobija, Sara in Angel Rafael – o poročni ljubezni in botrstvu*, Zbirka: *Birmanska pastorala II.*, Ljubljana, 2014.

⁹ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 82-80; P. Vesel Mušič, *Birmanski animatorji (dragocena priložnost)*, *Salve*, Ljubljana, 2015.

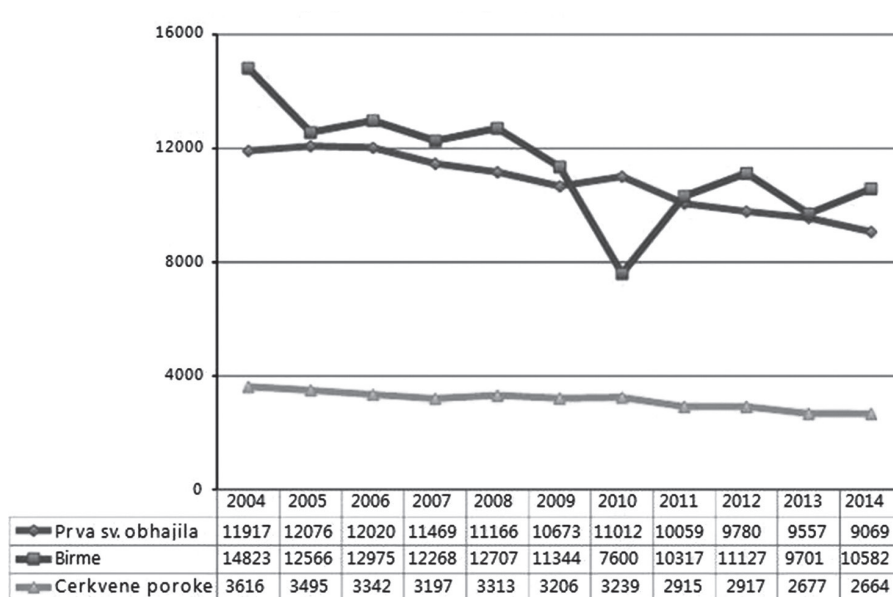
¹⁰ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Birma*, p. 163-225.

¹¹ All statistical data is taken from: <https://www.domovina.je/v-sloveniji-krscenih-samo-se-dobra-polovica-novorojencev-strmo-dol-tudi-stevilo-prvoobhajancev-in-birmancev/> (accessed on 10. 1. 2017).

Birme	Škofija	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	Celje	0	0	2176	1872	2097	1816	2184	1828	1869	1580	1813
	Koper	1509	1412	1109	1155	1232	1068	1092	1077	1055	937	1093
	Ljubljana	6076	5543	4845	3767	4778	3418	n.p.	3175	4167	3151	3926
	Maribor	7203	5590	2722	3086	2786	2766	2633	2349	2360	2177	2142
	Murska Sobota	0	0	945	891	788	847	812	825	689	776	551
	Novo mesto	0	0	1140	1463	1014	1403	848	1038	953	1054	1032
	Vojaški vikariat	35	21	38	34	12	26	31	25	34	26	25
Skupaj:		14823	12566	12975	12268	12707	11344	7600	10317	11127	9701	10582

with the first generation of young adults who are partly or completely estranged from their religion.”

The following chart shows the trend in the number of Baptisms, Confirmations, and Christian weddings:



The fact is that numbers are decreasing but they are not nearly as low as in some other European countries. What remains of traditional religion is still well visible in Slovenia; nevertheless, these numbers may cause worry about the future.

Authors A. Slavko Snoj and Dieter Emeis write in their book *Kateheza o zakramentih (Catechesis on the Sacraments)*: “Goals and contents for the catechesis for Confirmation cannot be determined without considering the expectations of the candidates for Confirmation, and also not without a certain pastoral scheme in the preparation for Confirmation. Thus it is impossible to prepare a draft for Confirmation catechesis for all candidates and for all circumstances. Parishes prepare for Confirmation for various periods of time. These goals cannot be determined from a purely theological aspect. There is a need for pastoral decisions which should be substantiated considering the circumstances and comprehensive scheme of pastoral behaviour.”¹²

We would like to include among the activities in the field of Confirmation pastoral care the website designed in the Maribor Archdiocese: <http://www.birmanec.si/>. The answer to the question why such a website (and a Facebook page) is needed is given by the Archbishop and Metropolitan Alojzij Cvikel: “Why? For us to get to know each other, connect, tell each other what we want to say...”. The Archbishop continues: “I would like the webpage [birmanec.si](http://www.birmanec.si/) to become a ‘giant playground’, where we meet each other, inform one another, exchange experiences, discoveries... To be awarded the sacrament of Confirmation means the confirmation in faith, as well as a more conscious entry into the community of Jesus’ friends. Every friendship grows slowly, but the more time we spend together, talk, confide in each other, the more likely it is that this friendship will become real.”¹³

Hence, a new attempt to enliven Confirmation pastoral care happened at an archdiocesan meeting of candidates in Maribor on November 5th, 2016. The programme was well-prepared (guests, testimonies, musical groups) and the experience has proven to be very positive.

The Church is searching for a path towards people, families and candidates. Despite all this, we see that the statistics are still “negative”. Therefore, the Church strives to find a “formula”, which would turn a negative trend into a positive one.

The Church in Slovenia is aware of the state in the field; there are children and young people entering into parish catechesis who come from families who try for a life from faith and also those young people for whom this catechism lesson is the only time they engage in faith. In such cases, how do we lead a person to a personal relationship with God? What do we do so that Confirmation is not the sacrament of departure but the sacrament of confirmation and support in growth? These are the questions which the emerging Slovenian catechism plan is trying to address,

¹² A. S. Snoj – D. Emeis, *Kateheza o zakramentih*, Katehetski center Knjižice, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 91.

¹³ <http://www.birmanec.si/> (accessed on 12. 1. 2017).

the plan which is being prepared with the cooperation of the Slovenian Catechetical Office, Faculty of Theology, and Interdiocesan Committee for Young People. As the basic starting point of the catechetical work it emphasises the individual in all age periods and a personal approach. Thus we wish to establish, in the field of Confirmation pastoral care, a system of preparation which would take into account the candidate's level of growing in faith and not only Confirmation as the logical consequence of the specified lesson of catechesis. Here a special preparation for the sacrament cannot be omitted (but the candidate would enrol in it himself). It will be founded on the construction of a small community, contact with contemporary witnesses, and a life of faith within the community of young people; similarly to what is happening in numerous programmes organised by the Interdiocesan Committee for Young People and SKAM (Community of Catholic Youth). All this is done with the purpose to enable the young to experience how the Holy Spirit is present in our lives and how he works, in the hope that they would, through experiential dynamics, discover that God loves us, as we can read in the invitation to the spiritual weekend for candidates organised by SKAM. The hope that after Confirmation the young people remain part of the community is also ever-present. We get hope and joy from the fruits of the project already in motion and that is the annual *Stična mladih* event, the meeting where thousands of young people from all over Slovenia join together to celebrate faith, as well as the initiatives of the above-mentioned organisations.

2. Confirmation Pastoral Vision for the Future

The Church in Slovenia is greatly aware of the importance of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. The search for the answers to the problems arising in the fields of pastoral care and Confirmation thus never ends. Polona Vesel Mušič in her book entitled *Utrip birmanske pastorale v Cerkvi na Slovenskem*¹⁴ presents several suggestions for Confirmation pastoral care which are sought within the existing practice:

- 2.1. The need for the re-evaluation of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Here we need to return to the study of the theology of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. This means the re-evaluation of the formation of all those who work with young people preparing for Confirmation.
- 2.2. According to the research it is necessary to redefine the pastoral care of Confirmation according to priorities, expectations, approaches, pastoral areas.

¹⁴ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Utrip birmanske pastorale v Cerkvi na Slovenskem*, Salve, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 248-253.

- 2.3. Clear evaluation of the functions of the main carriers of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation (the candidate, parents, godparents, animators, community, priests, bishops).
- 2.4. The importance of the team and comprehensive approach including the cognitive, experiential, and engagement aspects. Aspects need to be brought to light which include personal assistance, methods and the doctrine of Gestalt pedagogy, and the theology of the body.
- 2.5. Regarding the age of the candidates for Confirmation it remains in the period of the third triad (8th and 9th grade). A year earlier could be better so that candidates for Confirmation could actively participate in the life of the parish after Confirmation (various groups).
- 2.6. Systematic continuation with Confirmation groups and spiritual exercises for both, the candidates for Confirmation and their parents.
- 2.7. Thorough preparation of Confirmation animators, for example within the framework of the Slovenian School for Animators.
- 2.8. Much thought should be devoted to thorough training of priests and laics, especially future theologians, for work in the field of Confirmation pastoral care.
- 2.9. The Bible should be given a crucial place in the preparation for Confirmation, as well as the community and personal prayer. This would profoundly promote the New Evangelisation among all its carriers. We should work as if everything depends on us, pray and have faith as if everything depends on God.
- 2.10. Much has been done regarding Confirmation literature. What is needed is the systemisation and unification of aids (incorporation of various methods and manners).
- 2.11. In parishes, such pastoral care should be created which will be open for new members, for young people in particular (candidates for Confirmation).
- 2.12. The question of gifts upon the granting of the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. In the polls candidates for Confirmation clearly state that gifts upon this occasion do not mean very much to them and that they do not want to be "left alone by the Church", but want to be incorporated in a quality manner, meaning we have to evaluate interpersonal relationships.
- 2.13. Since Confirmation is a spiritual event, prayer is of key importance.

All these suggestions reveal that we remain, more or less, within the framework of existing pastoral care. This means that we want to deepen the existing things, re-evaluate them or redefine them in certain fields.

The problem we notice is simple. Candidates for Confirmation who display a lesser degree of preparation or those candidates who are more difficult to motivate are part of a wider issue. The problem does not lie only

in the candidates but often in the environment they come from (family, relatives). If there is no support in the family, the animator, priest and Confirmation group will find it difficult to “move” such a candidate. On the basis of this fact we will try in the continuation to develop a vision of a somewhat different approach and that could bring the answer to this problem.

3. To Think about: a Slightly Different Confirmation Pastoral Approach

Confirmation pastoral care is a very demanding field of work with young people. On one hand, this is pastoral care where we invest a lot of energy and time into the preparation of the young for the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. On the other hand, we are realising that our approach is not yielding the desired results. We would like Holy Confirmation to be a “mature” answer of the young to the Christian calling.¹⁵ But the truth is that the occasion presents some sort of a “farewell to Church”, a “farewell to sacramental life”.

3.1. Family Catechesis

One of the forms that could answer the challenges of time and circumstances is the so-called “family catechesis”.¹⁶ The presentation of family catechesis strives to open a new possibility for preparation for the sacrament of Holy Confirmation.

Family catechesis began in the Sunday school in Domžale in 2013-14. This is a catechesis for the entire family at the same time. The method is very dynamic. At the beginning the families sing a song together, say a prayer, and refresh the main points of the Gospel from the previous Sunday. This encourages children to increasingly follow the Sunday word of God. After this initial part they divide into four groups: parents, children of the first triad, children of the second triad, and preschool children. The official part lasts for 60 minutes. What follows is socialising, children play and parents chat.

Family catechesis is a pilot project in certain parishes all over Slovenia. It is an opportunity for all those parents who want to deepen their religious knowledge together with their children. The fact is that parents should be the first catechists (as used to be the case) for their children. Once a month, parents and children work together the entire meeting. Four times a year a quiz takes place consisting of questions from the previously appointed part of the Bible, and all the families are invited

¹⁵ Cf. P. Vesel Mušič, *Sveti Duh (naš prijatelj)*, Salve, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 67.

¹⁶ The complete presentation of family catechesis is adapted from the website: <http://natalijapodjavorsek.splet.arnes.si/> (accessed on: 12. 1. 2017).

to focus on that part. Four common meetings are intended for learning about the patron saints. Another part of the curriculum is the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

With the agreement of the local priests, children who are part of family catechesis do not need to attend Sunday school with their peers. Namely, family catechesis is designed to cover all the content a young Christian needs to know and will pass the year along with the other children at the end of the year. The curriculum differs from “classical” religious education lessons; therefore the children do not need books and workbooks, only a notebook. Currently, family catechesis includes children up to the sixth grade, while older children continue with the traditional form. Family catechesis can include them as animators.

Parents spend part of the meeting reading the Bible, another part discussing a pre-chosen book of spiritual content, a part talking about things related to individual days in the Church year, and the last part debating the contents of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Families having only one parent involved in Christian upbringing can also participate in family catechesis. The same goes for those families where, due to their job obligations, one of the parents is not always able to participate at weekly meetings.

In addition to regular meetings, family catechesis once or twice a month helps prepare family masses with introductions and singing, they head the Lent action for children, in which children who generally do not attend choir practice learn to sing songs that they later sing at the Easter celebrations, they prepare for a Passion performance, there is a charity on Epiphany, and they lead the May masses for children. They also actively participate in the preparation of the celebration for children attending First Communion. All families participating in family catechesis are invited to join these activities, but are not obliged to. Families participate as far as they are able to and according to their interests and also other families, who are not part of the family catechesis, are invited to join in the activities. The planners of family catechesis do not want family catechesis to become an isolated group within the parish pastoral care.

The first evaluations of the results in the parishes where family catechesis is carried out show that they are above expectation (satisfactory). What is needed is a greater connection between regular pastoral care and family catechesis, greater “presence” of the priest, chaplain (both of whom completely support the project of family catechesis). A positive result of family pastoral care is also the fact that families in the parish are much more connected, they get to know each other very well during this period, and their communication deepens.

Parents presented some much-appreciated feedback at the end of the year. They were satisfied with the explanation of the Bible. They liked being invited to read literature with spiritual content and that they were

able to plan preparation for Church holidays within the family group. They liked the Bible quizzes because they brought about a lot of laughter. Children also perceived these meetings as a more relaxed form of learning where they talk a lot about different themes connected to the life of a Christian.

Family catechesis set in motion several processes. One of the most important ones is the connection of the families. Pastoral theology frequently emphasises the fact that our efforts should be directed towards the formation of new communities. Family catechesis is the proof that this is possible.

Positive experience of family catechesis could present an encouragement for a thorough examination of Confirmation catechesis. An alternative Confirmation pastoral proposal could follow the direction of family catechesis.

3.2. A slightly Different Confirmation Approach

This proposal does not aim to “negate” the existing practice. The existing form of preparation includes many positive elements. The ceremony of Confirmation itself also cannot be changed and “modernised”. What stops us and makes us consider whether this is the post-Confirmation practice. We are faced with the question: why such a decrease? Why do so many people distance themselves from the Church and why do so many abandon the practice of the practical Christian? Despite much effort there are only a few pastoral workers who have managed to direct the preparation and happenings revolving around Confirmation in such a way that the young people remained in the community.

Existing Confirmation pastoral care includes parents. But in comparison with the practice of family catechesis the extent is very small and there is the question of efficiency. Thus we give as an example of best practice the greater promotion of family catechesis. The Slovenian Bishops' Conference gave their consent to this practice which means that family catechesis is now an alternative to the regular Sunday school lessons and that they are free to prepare children for Holy Confession and First Communion themselves, the same goes for Holy Confirmation. In the beginning, although, the practice was for children to attend family catechesis, but for the preparation for the sacraments they joined other children and adolescents, their peers at the regular religious classes.

Good practice of family catechesis presents us with two options. The first is to encourage family catechesis in parishes and that means right from the start, therefore in the first triad and continuing through the second and third. Considering all the positive experience, this would lead the child to the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. Judging from the experience of family catechesis, participants feel good in this community and this

can be taken as an assurance that they will remain part of this community even after Confirmation. The question of godparents remains open. They could also be included in this catechesis (at least those who want to). If not, there remains the option of spiritual weekends or the systematic preparation of godparents for their duties. An example of best practice today can be found in the Diocese of Koper.

The other option is to introduce family catechesis in the third triad and form the third triad in such a way that it would be directed towards the sacrament of Holy Confirmation. We can assume that the group of candidates for Confirmation with their parents and godparents would be divided. On one side there would be those who would embrace the proposal and start the path of preparation according to the method of family catechesis, on the other those who would want it done "the old way".

This is a risky alternative which would, for those who choose it, bring some sort of an assurance that their Christian practice does not end with the day of Confirmation but will continue in the community ensured by the liveliness of the individual as well as the wider community (parents, brothers, sisters, godparents etc.). The future of the Church in Slovenia is not oriented towards massiveness but rather small communities. The suggested alternative methodologically supports the idea of small communities.

All these efforts are headed in the direction of New Evangelisation. Walter Kasper wrote in his book *Evangelij družine in nova evangelizacija Evrope*: "Naturally, we cannot simply copy local Churches from the first Christian times. We need extended families of a new type. For the nuclear family to survive, they should be included in a family network encompassing several generations... In the same way, nuclear families should be part of interfamily circles of neighbours and friends..."¹⁷

A few days before the election of the new Pope, Benedict XVI gave a lecture at Subiaco about the position of Europe.¹⁸ In his clear analysis of the present state he emphasised the composition of the programme for New Evangelisation: "What we need in this historical times are the people with faith, which is zealous and alive, who will show that God is real in this world... We need people who are gazing at God and learn from Him what the true humanity is..."¹⁹

¹⁷ W. Kasper, *Evangelij družine in nova evangelizacija Evrope*, Celjska Mohorjeva družba, Celje, 2014, p. 46.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Fisichella, *Nova evangelizacija*, Ognjišče in Slomškova založba, Maribor, 2014, p. 162-163.

¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture*, Siena, 2005, p. 63-64.

Conclusion

The document entitled *Sklepni dokument plenarnega zbora Cerkve na Slovenskem* reads: "The reform of Confirmation pastoral care has to be set in the framework of New Evangelisation. In addition to contemporary theological and ecclesial consideration this pastoral sphere has to stem from spiritual, cultural, moral, and other signs of the present time and our space."²⁰ This article presents Confirmation catechesis in the past and today. We have brought attention to its positive and negative aspects. We primarily stopped at the question of comprehensive Confirmation pastoral care, meaning the inclusion of all in the process of preparation and formation of the community. As a solution, we presented the positive experience of family catechesis which could serve as a preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation and simultaneously assure the community spirit after Confirmation, too. All of these correspond with the guidelines of New Evangelisation.

Abbreviations:

C – Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG = *Lumen gentium*) from November 21st 1964.

²⁰ *Sklepni dokument plenarnega zbora Cerkve na Slovenskem*, Družina, Ljubljana, 2002.