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## **Media Education in the Formation of Candidates for Priesthood in the Context of the New „Ratio Fundamentalis“ and Polish Seminaries**

*Medijska vzgoja pri formaciji duhovniških kandidatov v kontekstu novega „Ratio Fundamentalis“ in poljskih semenišč*

*Abstract:* On the basis of the „Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis“ of the Congregation for the Clergy of December 8, 2016 (Congregation for the Clergy 2016), the particular Churches with their Bishops' conferences create the basis for the formation of future presbyters in their respective countries. The previous „Ratio“ was published more than 30 years ago by the then competent Congregation for Catholic Education. Between 1985 and 2016 there was a revolution in the field of social communication and media. It is difficult to imagine the modern intellectual formation of a candidate for the priesthood without things such as media education. Future presbyters should know how to communicate with contemporary men and evangelise through the Internet, especially on social media. It will be good if they also understand the system of media work in general and know how to establish contact with journalists. Many valuable indications concerning contemporary communication and the journalistic world are contained in the teachings of the three popes of the Internet era and the relevant dicasteries of the Holy See from that period. The competence of future clergy in the field of IT is also important.

The present paper contains a proposal for a new programme of media education in the seminaries. It [the proposal] is based on contemporary IT and media knowledge and on the research of nearly 30 years of experience in media education in the formation of future clergy in Poland. The article also presents an outline of the reception of the Vatican's indications concerning media education in the seminaries of selected particular Churches: in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. These analyses may help to determine the formation of future presbyters in the field of media education covering: the teaching of the Church on the media, media theory, IT and Internet education, elements of public relations and media relations.

*Keywords:* Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis, formation of candidates for the priesthood, media education, seminaries, seminarians' education, IT, media

*Povzetek:* V skladu s Temeljnimi smernicami za formacijo duhovnikov („Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis“), ki jih je 8. decembra 2016 izdala Kongregacija za duhovnike, glavna merila formacije bodočih duhovnikov v posameznih državah določajo delne Cerkve s svojimi škofovskimi konferencami. Prejšnje Smernice („Ratio“) je pred več kot tridesetimi leti objavila takrat pristojna Kongregacija za katoliško izobraževanje. Med letoma 1985 in 2016 se je na področju družbene komunikacije in medijev zgodila revolucija. Sodobno intelektualno vzgojo duhovniškega kandidata si je zato težko predstavljati brez medijske vzgoje. Bodoči duhovniki se morajo znati sporazumevati s sodobnim človekom in oznanjevati na spletu, še posebej na družbenih omrežjih. Dobro bi bilo, če bi v splošnem razumeli tudi sistem medijskega delovanja in znali vzpostavljati stike z novinarji. Veliko dragocenih navodil glede sodobne komunikacije in novinarskega sveta vsebujejo nauki treh papežev spletne dobe, pa tudi sporočila ustreznih dikasterijev Svetega sedeža v tem obdobju. Prav tako so pri bodočih duhovnikih pomembne kompetence na področju informacijskih tehnologij.

Članek prinaša predlog novega programa medijske vzgoje v semeniščih. Temelji na poznavanju sodobnih informacijskih tehnologij in medijev ter na raziskavah skoraj tridesetletnih izkušenj z medijsko vzgojo in izobraževanjem bodočih duhovnikov na Poljskem. Članek predstavlja tudi pregled sprejemanja vatikanskih navodil glede medijske vzgoje v semeniščih izbranih delnih Cerkva – v Litvi, Belorusiji, Ukrajini, na Slovaškem in Češkem. Te analize lahko pomagajo pri opredeljevanju izobraževanja bodočih duhovnikov na področju medijske vzgoje, ki pokriva nauk Cerkve o medijih, teorije o medijih, informacijsko in spletno vzgojo ter prvine odnosov z javnostmi in medijskih odnosov.

*Ključne besede:* „Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis“, formacija duhovniških kandidatov, medijska vzgoja, semenišča, vzgoja semeniščnikov, informacijska tehnologija, mediji

## 1. Introduction

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»Communication permeates the essential dimensions of the Church, which is called to announce to all the joyful message of salvation. For this reason, the Church takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the communications media as pathways providentially given by God to intensify communion and to render more penetrating the proclamation of His word. The media permit the manifestation of the universal character of the People of God, favouring a more intense and immediate exchange among lo-

cal Churches, and nourishing mutual awareness and cooperation.« (John Paul II 2005)

This is what Saint John Paul II wrote about the media. Also his collaborator, Archbishop John Patrick Foley (2002), when speaking about the necessity of »preparing the Web for use by the Church, which is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, in such a way that the Internet may be one, holy, catholic and apostolic«, pointed to analogies between the reality of faith and virtual reality. Today there is also a certain blurring of the boundaries between the real world and the virtual world (Morbitzer 2015, 416).

Internet technologies find their use in building a real community, which is the foundation of the universal Church, and they can be a way of contact with the modern man to convey the message of salvation to him (Osewska 2014; Stala 2015). The web can be called Catholic because, like the Church, it is universal and reaches everywhere. It is apostolic, and this term refers to a new style of being apostles, who are called to cross – through the Web – the borders of continents, countries or cultures. It is not only believers who notice the similarities. Also, the creator of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee (2011) pointed out one of the most important features of the Internet, namely openness: »/.../ any person in the world can exchange information with any other on an ongoing basis.« Today it is especially through social media (Lim 2017).

## 2. The Necessity of Providing Media Education for the Modern Man

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The use of the media in the community of the Church, the proclamation of the kerygma in them and the witnessing are closely related. In the media, there is a need »not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, /.../ in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically« (Benedict XVI 2011). The Catholic Church faces the challenge of an active and creative presence on the Internet. It is worth ensuring that the message of the Gospel is present in the communication channels which are used every day by billions of people around the world. Unless the Gospel is present in social media, it will not be present in the lives of many people. According to the theory of the order of everyday life – if there is no Gospel content in the media, there will be no Gospel content in people's minds. The essence of the believer's presence on the Internet is giving testimony of faith in Jesus Christ, which St. John Paul II (2002) called for:

»From this galaxy of sight and sound will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard? For it is only when his face is seen and his voice heard that the world will know the glad tidings of our redemption. This is the purpose of evangelization. And this is what will make the Internet a ge-

nuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man.«

Nowadays, people are present for many hours on social media, as indicated by many communication researchers, numerous reports, analyses and statistics. Hence, the Church's involvement in practising various forms of spirituality on the Internet is extremely important (Kloch and Przybysz 2015). Online retreats, prayer communities (Rosary Roses), online pilgrimages, prayer in social media (live transmissions from Mass, services, adoration), and even meditations on the Word of God or perhaps graphics containing quotations from Holy Scripture and short video reflections published by priests – these are important activities not only in the spiritual life of young people but also in promoting holiness on the Internet. These activities are important both in the private communication of Christians and in institutional communication (Arasa 2008; Arasa, Lorenzo, and Lucio 2010).

However, proclaiming the truth of the Gospel, or indeed any truth, today is not easy. According to researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the most prestigious technological universities in the world, fake news spreads six times faster than real information, and fake news has about a 70% chance of being shared (Mayer 2018). This is why media education is so important, as it can significantly help with media comprehension, reception and also content co-creation. Following the definition given in the UNESCO documents, media education:

- deals with all media communication, including the printed word and graphics, sound and both still and moving images;
- enables people to understand the media used in their society and how they work, and to acquire the skills to use these media to communicate with others;
- teaches how to use the media, critically analyse, interpret and produce media texts;
- supports the ability to identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural connections and contexts;
- teaches how to interpret the news and values offered by the media. (Fedorov 2008)

Media education is supposed to support the media consumer in forming specific communicative competencies (Gašpar and Garmaz 2016) in the media area, including: using information, building relations in the media environment, understanding the language of the media, using the media creatively, promoting ethics and values in communication and the media, safety in the media, understanding and applying the law in communication and the media, understanding the economic aspects of the media, building digital competences (Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska 2014.), etc.

### 3. A New Programme of Media Education in the Seminaries in Poland

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The new general decree „The Way of Formation of Priests in Poland: *Ratio institutionis sacerdotalis pro Polonia*“ (KEP 2021) introduces to the seminaries an obligatory subject called ‚media education‘, taking 30 hours, which is an important change in the seminarians’ curriculum (Rustja 2005, 457). The basis for this is the reflection that »In the modern world one cannot function without the media – one needs to know how they work, how to skilfully use them to promote good and how to apply them in the mission of the Church, especially websites and social media. This knowledge, skills and competence acquired in the framework of the obligatory subject ›media education‹ will allow future clergy to understand the essence of the media and to use them competently and fruitfully in their everyday pastoral work (Kloch 2013; Przybysz and Kloch 2012; Przybysz 2008; 2013). This knowledge is also intended to protect them and the Church from crisis situations (KEP 2021, no. 590). The specific issues to be included in these classes concern:

- pre-evangelisation – a proclamation of the kerygma in the media in relation to evangelisation;
- critical reception of media messages; the review of techniques of manipulating media recipients;
- the media being used to have a destructive influence on children and young people;
- protecting children and young people in cyberspace;
- communication of institutional Church communities on the websites and in blogs;
- building religious communities in social media;
- the role of images in social media;
- the importance of video in social media communication;
- problems of addiction to online games and virtual reality;
- promoting religious content on the Internet;
- principles of creating press releases and making them available to journalists and the local community;
- contacts with local and national media, giving interviews and statements to the media;
- reactive crisis situation management;
- proactive management of crisis situations (prevention);
- press law and protection of image and property rights. (no. 591)

In the proposed topics, there are issues related to the problems of technology, factual communication as well as media competence. It is worth briefly analysing this choice and the construction of issues.

Proclaiming the kerygma has been an indispensable part of the Church’s activity for over 2000 years. The commitment of the Church’s people and the concern to proclaim the full, unchanging kerygma make it possible to undertake evange-

lization activities and are a missionary imperative for all the faithful (Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali 1989, no. 1). Throughout the centuries the kerygma has been proclaimed in various ways, while in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries various means of communication have begun to be involved in this process, including, in recent years, social media and the entire space of the Internet. True evangelisation takes place in a personal encounter between man and God (Duff 2013, 28–29), often in the real presence of another person. This is always an encounter which involves an act of will to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and consequently to enter into the community of the Church and accept her teaching (Vodičar 2014). Very often, however, the media play a huge role in this process of preparation for this act of will, precisely a pre-evangelisation role. And although the Church took 3 different attitudes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century toward the media – assimilation, rejection or accommodation (Sultana 2014), the words of John Paul II »Do not be afraid! Do not be afraid of new technologies!« (2005, no. 14) are an extremely important message today in the context of dynamic technological changes, which have been taking place rapidly in recent years and will probably accelerate even further.

The media communication in today's world is fraught with many distortions, among which there is the problem of information overload, with knowledge but without the understanding of the modern world (Prijatelj 2011, 115), as well as huge emotions sold in the media as a basic product in place of information, the associated problem of hate speech causing serious health consequences in people, especially young, and as a consequence even suicide attempts, in addition to the polarization of society and building information bubbles, the problem of Internet addiction, smartphone use, and also the ubiquitous fake news. This is why classes on the critical reception of media messages and the ability to recognise techniques of manipulating recipients are so important in the curriculum, as well as the problem of the media being used with a destructive influence on children and young people (e.g. paedophilia, pornography, promotion of violence, peer violence in the media, hate, pathostreamers etc.). The issue of addiction to online games and virtual reality is also extremely important in this education. One of the highest priorities is the protection of children and young people in cyberspace, to which pastoral workers must be particularly sensitive, and they should be able to support young people in crisis situations and redirect them to the appropriate institutions and persons.

As concerns the positive issues in pastoral ministry, it is also important to know how to communicate institutional communities of the Church on the WWW, in blogs, and also how to build religious communities on social media. These tools may support pre-evangelisation and pastoral activities, and their skilful and professional use may serve to promote good, the message of faith and religion (Spadaro 2014, 17–20). The use of appropriate language in the process of communicating with the recipient may be a factor determining the success of the process of proclaiming the kerygma. The language of the media and the Internet is evolving, so it is important to follow the emerging changes, to understand the role of the

image in social media and the importance of video in social media communication. This will serve to promote religious content online.

In recent years, a number of crisis situations related to the image of pastors, the institution of the Church itself or activities concerning her problems appearing in the media and the reaction of Church hierarchs began to appear in the media space. Such phenomena may generate long-lasting cracks in the image of the Church and its individual representatives. Therefore, it is very important to be able to deal with crises in the media communication of the Church, and at the same time to use the help of specialists in crisis situations. It is also worth preparing ourselves for concerning facts and anticipating crisis situations that may arise in the near future in the ranks of the Church. Therefore, important issues such as reactive crisis management and proactive crisis management (prevention) and the ability to manage these processes are essential for every pastor.

For a selected group of priests it will also be important to know the principles of creating press releases and making them available to journalists and the local community; in addition: to how to maintain professional contacts with local and national media, to have the ability to give interviews, statements to the media; to have knowledge of press law and the protection of image and property rights. The latter, legal knowledge, should be available to all priests by virtue of running institutional communication channels on social media or supervising them. When it comes to Church communication, it is also worth remembering internal and external communication (Kloch 2021). Internal communication consists in reaching individual members within the institution with the right information, using the media belonging to the organisation. This strategy is needed so that individual members of the organisation know what is happening in specific sectors of the organisation. External communication, on the other hand, involves communicating a professional message to the media using professional tools so that the public becomes interested in what the organisation is doing. This is why it is so important to contact the media in order to present selected issues to them, also by offering appropriately prepared content, especially video content.

#### **4. Research on Media Education in Seminaries: The Case of Poland**

The new programme of media education in the seminaries of the clergy in Poland was created on the basis of nearly 30 years of experience in this field<sup>1</sup>. Before the latest concept was proposed in 2019, research was conducted on the media education of seminarians to date. The results of the research became the starting point for the new scheme on this subject. After the adoption of the project con-

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<sup>1</sup> The research covered 71 out of 84 seminaries in Poland - both diocesan and religious, which is 82% of all seminaries of this type. Data for the years 1990–2017 collected using online research questionnaires were analysed. The study lasted from May to August 2017. The author of the research is the co-author of this article, Rev. Dr. Ronald Kasowski.

cerning media education in the entire „Ratio institutionis sacerdotalis pro Polonia“ (KEP 2021) by the Polish bishops<sup>2</sup>, the programme awaits a *recognitio* from the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy.

Empirical online research was conducted in diocesan and religious seminaries in Poland from May to August 2017. The research includes in its scope analysis of the issues related to the presence of media education subjects in the current seminary Ratio corpus and will illustrate to what extent and in what time course mass media issues appeared in the formation of candidates for the priesthood. The time range covered by the research panel for data acquisition concerns the years from 1990 to 2017. The collected results will allow the presentation of conclusions and indication of trends related to the presence of elements of media education in the formation process of candidates for the priesthood.

The research covered, among other things, the existence of published syllabuses, the teaching aids used, the forms in which students completed the course, the content of classes, the proportion between the lecture method and hands-on classes, the years of study in which media education was taught and the number of lectures, as well as their form (compulsory, optional).

#### 4.1 Syllabus

The answer to the question: *Is there a syllabus for the subject?* revealed that only in one in four seminaries the subjects related to media education were taught on the basis of a syllabus (Figure 1). In the remaining 75% of cases, lecturers used individual programmes. This largely involved the creation of original materials prepared and dedicated specifically to lectures and classes.

Syllabus for media education subjects	
Exists	24%
Does not exist	48%
Not applicable	15%
No response	13%

**Table 1:** *Syllabuses in seminaries in Poland (Source: own research, N=62).*

A textbook was used across the research group as part of the teaching in one in three seminars. Ready-made course books were also used at a similar level. However, the most popular form of teaching aids were ready-made materials in the form of presentations, short films or press clippings. This was the case in 89% of the seminaries (Figure 2).

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Damian Bryl presided (from 2018) over the work of the team for the preparation of new rules for priestly formation in Poland. After presenting the programme, the Polish Bishops' Conference adopted the „Ratio institutionis sacerdotalis pro Polonia“ in 2021 during its March plenary meeting. The date of entry into force of the „Ratio“ will be determined by the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference, after receiving the *recognitio* of the Holy See.

Type of teaching aid	
Textbook	29%
Ready-made course book prepared by the teacher	32%
Other kinds of teaching aids, ex. video clips, ready-made coursebooks, ets.	89%
There were no teaching aids	13%

**Table 2:** *Teaching aids for media education in seminaries in Poland. (Source: own research, N=62).*

## 4.2 The Name of the Subject

Media education subjects gained different names over the years. To a large extent, this depended on the thematic scope and subject type of the course. Among the answers given (87% of respondents provided an answer), the names of the subject dedicated to media education can be grouped by subject matter into three categories:

- communicative and cultural,
- educational and pastoral,
- IT and Internet.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the names of the subjects<sup>3</sup> included in the course of seminary studies devoted to the issues of media education:

- Some of the lectures and classes related to social media carry the marks of theoretical classes and hands-on classes.
- Within the framework of theoretical classes, the role of the media inscribed in the social and cultural context is widely presented.
- The role and significance of mass media in relation to the teaching and indications of the Church is included in the content of lectures.
- The significance and use of the mass media in relation to the pastoral challenges of the contemporary world is strongly emphasised.
- Media education through lectures and classes gives the seminarians practical use of the acquired skills in pastoral ministry.
- It also teaches the responsible use of mass media.
- It presents ethical and moral consequences of functioning in the world of media.

<sup>3</sup> Subject names related to media education have been collected and grouped into three subject categories: 1. Media education subject names relating to the communication and cultural context, such as: 'Information and communication technologies', 'Propedeutics of using new media', 'Social media', 'Mass-media. Public Relations', 'Interpersonal communication. Information techniques', 'Mass media in contemporary culture', 'Media culture'. Names of the subject of media education referring to the educational and pastoral context, e.g.: 'New technologies in the mission of the Church', 'Media in the mission of the Church', 'Social media in pastoral ministry', 'Mass media in the Church', 'Information technology and communication practice in pastoral ministry', 'Media theology', 'Mass media pedagogy'. Names of the subject of media education referring to the IT and Internet context, e.g.: 'Elements of Information Technology', 'Information and Internet Education', 'Basics of Information Technology (ICT)', 'Basics of Information Technology', 'Basics of Computer Technology', 'Organisation and Methodology of Mental Work', 'Information Technology in Religious Education', 'Basics of Information Technology'.

### 4.3 Form of Assessment

The study proposed various forms of course credit: *examination, credit, only attendance*. The results of the collected data showed (Figure 3) that in more than half of the seminaries (58%) the respondents indicated practical work through a *credit project* as a form of assessment.

Form of subject assessment	
Type of assessment	Average score (diocesan and religious seminaries)
Project / practical work	58%
Course credit (without stating the type)	31%
Only class participation	8%
Exam	2,5%

**Table 3:** *Form of subject assessment in seminaries in Poland (Source: own research, N=62).*

By crossover of the collected data, an interesting trend existing in the area of student work assessment can be observed. Practical work in the form of a *credit project* was definitely chosen more often by 2/3 of the research group in religious seminaries. In diocesan seminaries, on the other hand, such a form was accepted in every second surveyed case. Such a trend implies the premise that in the media education of the seminarians, more attention was paid to the seminarians' acquired practical skills and the possibility of their application in pastoral ministry. In diocesan seminaries, more often, that is in almost every second case (Figure 4), the form of assessment for subjects related to media education was a course credit. Only 3% of the respondents indicated the exam as the best form of assessment for the subjects dedicated to social media.

Type of assessment	Seminaries	
	diocesan	religious
Project / practical work	47%	74%
Course credit (without stating the type)	42%	15%
Only class participation	5%	11%
Exam	5%	0%

**Table 4:** *Credit – forms in diocesan and religious seminaries (Source: own research, N=62).*

### 4.4 Topics of Classes

An important issue in the study was to identify the topics of media education in the course of the seminary studies. The following elements of media education were identified in the research questionnaire sent out:

- the teaching of the Church in the area of the media,
- the theory of the media,
- IT and internet education,
- issues related to the image (*public relations*),
- contact with the media and presence in them (*media relations*),
- other types of media education.

The response mechanism in the research questionnaire was based on a multiple-choice field. Such a response formula allowed for a thorough examination of the current thematic scope of media education. The analysis of the collected data allowed several conclusions to be drawn and trends to be indicated (Figure 5).

a) In those seminaries where media education was taught, all the elements indicated in the questionnaire were included in its scope. In every second seminar, subjects are referring to the teaching of the Church related to social media and elements of media theory concerning the nature and principles of their functioning.

b) Most often (in 68% of the surveyed cases) issues related to IT and Internet education appear within the framework of the classes. This proves the discernment of the necessity of getting to know digital technologies, which prepares seminarians as future pastors to work in the world of cyberspace.<sup>4</sup> It also allows to discover and perceive opportunities and threats in the use of *social media* in the pastoral space.

c) Among the indicated elements of media education, classes on contact with the media and learning to be present in them play an important role. The basic principles of *media relations* teach clerics the proper and optimal use of media communication for ecclesiastical and pastoral purposes. Learning the elementary rules of communication functioning in the media and knowledge about the structure of the mass media allows for the presentation of content and care for the image of the Church in the media space. Classes in *public relations* facilitate and support communication with the modern world.

d) The category of *other type of media education* (Figure 5) is clearly noticeable in the results – which means that in some of the seminaries there is an original programme concerning the mass media. This may testify to the flexibility and availability of seminary formators in responding to current needs and challenges. Originally authored curricula also include in their content the possibility of participation of invited guests who are people from the world of the media.

Elements of media education in the presently taught subject	
Church teaching on the media	57%
Media theory	54%
IT and internet education	68%
Public relations issues	38%
Contacts with the media and presence in them (media relations)	60%
Other type of media education	40%

**Table 5:** *Components of media education (Source: own research, N=61).*

<sup>4</sup> »Using new communication technologies, priests can introduce people to the life of the Church and help our contemporaries to discover the face of Christ. They will best achieve this aim if they learn, from the time of their formation, how to use these technologies in a competent and appropriate way, shaped by sound theological insights and reflecting a strong priestly spirituality grounded in constant dialogue with the Lord. Yet priests present in the world of digital communications should be less notable for their media savvy than for their priestly heart, their closeness to Christ. This will not only enliven their pastoral outreach, but also will give a ‚soul‘ to the fabric of communications that makes up the ‚Web‘.« (Benedict XVI 2010)

## 4.5 Lectures vs. Classes

The survey questionnaire allowed us to collate and compare the proportion of activities between lectures and hands-on classes (Figure 6). The data shows that the proportion of classes in all elements of media education present in the seminary curriculum is proportional to the number of lectures, with a tendency for theory to prevail over the practice. This is the case, for example, with regard to »Church teaching on the media«, »media theory« and »public relations issues«. Topics such as »contact with and presence in the media« and »other type of media education« show more or less the same ratio of lectures and practical classes. As far as IT and Internet education is concerned, there were definitely more practical classes than lectures (ratio 93% to 65%), which is quite obvious – Internet surfing and the use of ICT devices were practiced.

Elements of media education in the presently taught subject	Forms	
	Lectures	Classes
Church teaching on the media	83%	36%
Media theory	82%	44%
IT and internet education	65%	93%
Public relations issues	88%	67%
Contacts with the media and presence in them (media relations)	76%	71%
Other type of media education	80%	88%

**Table 6:** *Forms of classes in elements of media education (Source: own research, N=61).*

## 4.6 Year of Study, Number of Hours

The question »In which year of study were media education classes conducted?« showed two tendencies: theoretical classes and practical classes in media education are placed in the initial or final years of study. In the case of diocesan seminaries, most often media education classes are held in the second or sixth year of studies, in religious seminaries – mainly at the beginning of studies (second or third year). It is worth emphasizing that the second year of studies in the seminary is the time of concluding the strictly philosophical subjects, while the sixth year is the time devoted to practice and pastoral subjects, directly serving pastoral preparation. The practice of placing subjects related to the means of social communication at the end of the studies indicates that they are regarded as direct preparation for entering the priestly ministry. The research shows that media education is taught for 30 hours in more than 50% of the seminaries, and in more than 80% it is an obligatory subject.

## 5. Reception of the Vatican Guidelines in Selected Particular Churches of Central and Eastern Europe

At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, similar freedom processes began to take place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The ‚Velvet Revolution‘, the fall

of the Berlin Wall and the restoration of sovereignty to the Baltic states radically changed the geopolitical configuration of Europe. The particular Churches in these countries found themselves in a new situation, which radically changed their functioning, pastoral work and preparation for the priesthood. In the seminaries of Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, elements of media education were gradually introduced according to the indications of the 1986 Vatican „Ratio“.

The „Ratio studiorum pro Lituania“ (2006) has been in force at St Joseph’s Seminary of the Archdiocese of Vilnius in Lithuania since 2006. Among the optional subjects in the curriculum, there is a proposal for classes on ‚public means of communication‘, as well as on ‚psychology of communication‘. Since 1995 the seminarians at the Vilnius seminary have been editing the seminary periodical *Teesie* (Vilniaus šv. Juozapo kunigų seminarija 2006) which is an almanack of the most important events and an overview of various contents of the theological discourse related to the formation of the seminarians. Since 2002 St. Joseph’s Seminary in Vilnius has been affiliated with the Pontifical Lateran University, which entailed a change in the quality and rank of education.

The formation of candidates for the priesthood in Belarus presents a different picture in terms of cultural, but above all socio-political conditions. Catholics constitute only 14.5% of the total population of Belarusian society (Catholic Church in Belarus 2010). The structure of the church administration is based on four dioceses: the archdiocese of Minsk-Mohylev, the diocese of Pinsk, Grodno and Vitebsk (Catholic Church in Belarus 2021). The preparation and formation of seminarians takes place in two seminaries: the Interdiocesan Major Theological Seminary of St. Thomas Aquinas in Pinsk (Wikipedia 2021) and the Major Theological Seminary in Grodno [Hrodna] (Videastudija Grodzenskai dyiatsezii 2021). Due to the small number of seminarians and professors, the didactic programme is carried out in a block system. The course of seminary studies is structured in such a way as to include a sequence of lectures on the same subject in one cycle. The course plan fulfils all the basic indications and guidelines of the current „Ratio fundamentalis“. Classes in media education are carried out on an optional and workshop basis; this is also due to the need to approach seminarians differently. Often seminarians come from mixed Catholic-Orthodox families, which means that first they need to catch up and deepen their baptismal formation, and only after that, they can move on to the optional classes programme.

Similarly, though under different conditions and scope, media education takes place at the St. Joseph’s Major Seminary of the Lviv Archdiocese in Lviv-Briukhovychi. Classes in mass media and the content covering issues related to the means of social communication are integrated into the scope of moral and practical theology, as well as pedagogy and catechetics. The seminarians acquire practical skills through practical classes, workshops and symposia. Since 2014 they have been publishing the seminarian information and formation bulletin *Duc in altum*, in which they publish their articles (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lviv 2021).

Media education is implemented in a slightly different way in the major seminaries in Slovakia. In this study we will look at two academic centres: The Roman Catholic St. Cyril and Methodius Faculty for Clerical Education in Bratislava (Rímskokatolícka Cyrilometodská Bohoslovecká Fakulta 2021) and the Catholic University in Ružomberok (Katolícka Univerzita v Ružomberku 2021). Both academic centres for the training of future priests bring together seminaries from various archdioceses and dioceses of the Church in Slovakia.

The didactic programme of teaching the subjects related to media education among seminarians affiliated to the faculty in Bratislava and the University of Ružomberok, in its most essential elements, is indicated in the general norms,<sup>5</sup> approved and adopted at the 74<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the Slovak Bishops' Conference in 2013. According to the recommendations contained in this document, each seminary as a formation and educational centre prepares its own didactic programme, scope and content-wise corresponding with the needs of the local Church community. The seminarians studying in Bratislava have the possibility of optional selection of lectures and exercises of subjects dedicated to media education, taking into account in the first place the implementation of the obligatory „Ratio fundamentalis“. Media classes are conducted within a systematic schedule in the form of workshops, faculties or conversation classes. Seminarians have the opportunity to verify and put into practice the acquired theoretical knowledge during student internships in various editorial offices of the Catholic media. Media education takes place in a very similar way at the seminary affiliated with the University of Ružomberok.

The Slovak media system came into being after 1992 as a result of an evolution in communications – a transition from a state model through a pluralistic to a dual model (Dobek-Ostrowska 2002, 14–15). The socio-political circumstances at the turn of the century and the economic transformations which took place in Slovakia inspired the Church to create many pastoral media initiatives, ranging from the press to radio, television and websites. The specificity of the media system in Slovakia and the social context in which the Church functions, as well as a number of nuances related to the vocation and creation of Catholic media, have made media education among seminarians an important formative element. The formation of seminarians into conscious and open pastoral workers, responsibly present on the social media, creates an opportunity for the permanent rooting of the evangelical message in the public space (KBS 2013).

The problems of media education among students of the Church's seminaries in the Czech Republic look quite different. This is primarily due to an ecclesial situation different than in Slovakia, historical circumstances and the accepted structural division of the Church into two provinces: Czech and Moravian.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> On March 11-12, 2013 in Donovaly, the Slovak Bishops' Conference adopted a document regulating the principles of proclaiming the message of faith and the presence of clergy in the social media entitled „Normy Konferencie biskupov Slovenska ohľadom katolíckych médií a vystupovania klerikov a zasvätených osôb a predkladania katolíckej náuky prostredníctvom prostriedkov spoločenskej komunikácie“.

<sup>6</sup> The Czech province includes the archdiocese of Prague and the dioceses of České Budějovice, Králové-

formation of candidates for the priesthood in the Czech Republic takes place in two centres: The Archbishop's Seminary in Prague (Arcibiskupský seminář Praha 2021) and the Archbishop's Seminary in Olomouc (Arcibiskupský kněžský seminář 2021). The seminarians of the Prague seminary are students of the Catholic Faculty of Theology at Charles University in Prague, while those of the Moravian province are students of the Theological Faculty of St. Cyril and Methodius at Palacky University in Olomouc (Cyrilometodějská teologická fakulta 2021). Both seminaries, while having full autonomy, remain separate in the preparation of their didactic programmes based on the general guidelines for the education of future priests.

Classes on the mass media are either lectures or optional hands-on classes. In the Czech Republic, in the pastoral preparation of future priests, great emphasis is placed on the dimension of pastoral ministry. The Church, faced with a shortage of priests and a lack of new vocations, focuses all its efforts on evangelisation and catechesis (Matuszek 2012). The presence of clergy in the media and the use of the potential of the social media by pastors is becoming an activity that is in keeping with the needs of the signs of the times. It is an attempt to seek new forms of communicating the Gospel to a group of recipients who either belong to the ecclesial community or are outside it. Media education of seminarians concerns specific pastoral initiatives, such as retreats, and formation meetings, in which the tools of the new media are used as one of the means of effective communication.

Summarising the reception of the Vatican's indications on media education in selected churches of post-Soviet countries, it should be emphasised that they introduce elements of media education into individual pastoral subjects. They adapt this education to the needs and possibilities of local communities and, although it is often optional, it is implemented on the basis of the three-tiered model proposed by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 1986. In the seminaries of Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the role and importance of the media communication in pastoral work is appreciated. Local episcopal conferences, bishops and lecturers take care not only of the seminarians' theoretical knowledge, but also of their practical skills in handling and using the mass media in pastoral ministry.

## 6. Conclusion

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The Church should keep up with the rapid changes in technology and civilisation, and one of the goals is to make good use of social media (Reimann 2017, 67–71). And this is not only in the form of rapid adaptation on the technological side but also on the legislative, training, educational and organisational side. A guideline document for a particular Church community is often the incentive for some

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Hrad, Litoměřice and Pilsen. The Moravian province includes the archdiocese of Olomouc and the dioceses of Brno, Ostrava-Opava and the Apostolic Exarchate.

ecclesial entities to become active in social media. In 2012 the German Bishops' Conference issued such guidelines on the use of social media (DBK 2012), and in 2014 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a document on social media practices and activities for Church people: priests, deacons, consecrated persons, bishops, lay employees of Church institutions or volunteers (USCCB 2014), and a year later the Australian Bishops' Conference (ACBC) did so as well. The document prepared by the Diocese of Warsaw-Praga in Poland in 2018 is also a good example. It presents general principles of social media activity and rules related to the maintenance of accounts and profiles for both individual clergymen and institutions (Diecezja Warszawsko-Praska 2018).

## Abbreviations

**ACBC** – Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference 2015.

**DBK** – Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2012 [German Bishops' Conference].

**KEP** – Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 2021 [Polish Bishops' Conference].

**KBS** – Konferencie Biskupov Slovenska 2013 [Slovak Bishops' Conference].

**USCCB** – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2014.

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