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THE WORKING METHODS OF RELIGION

IN SCHOOL FOR DEAF CHILDREN

1. Jesus heals a deaf

Jesus, during his way to Jerusalem, stopped by the Sea of Galilee *“the deaf-mute person was brought to him and He was asked to put His hand on the deaf-mute man. He took him to one side, away from the crowd and put his fingers into his ears and by the saliva he touched his tongue, and looking in the sky he sighed and said to him: <<Effatha>> which means Open yourself! Immediately, his ears were opened and this tongue came untied and he could speak normally”¹*. In such - a miraculous- way, the activity of Jesus for the deaf mute has started, so also they would be able to absorb the Word of God². His gestures and actions: *“he put his fingers into his ears”* or *“by the saliva he touched his tongue”* expose in the particular way the deep and metaphorical symbolism of <<the hand>>-which in the Jesus case, means the miraculous deaf- mute healing.

Nowadays, interpreting in the metaphorical way, it may mean the indicating the part of the human body *manus* that is used for “healing”- opening the deaf for the Word of God. The Jesus activity has initiated *“the difficult pastoral task that refers to find and improve ‘the speech’, for all touched by the deafness disability, which would be able to transmit them, all the richness of the Jesus address”³*. After all, the hands are used as a communication tool with the deaf. They serve to communicate. Using the hands, the children and the adults affected by the deafness disability are able to “listen to” the Word of God at their houses, at schools during the Religion lessons and at churches all over the world.

¹ Mk (7, 32-36).

² K. Półtorak, *Duszpasterstwo niesłyszących*. W: *Duszpasterstwo specjalne*. Red. R. Kamiński, B. Drózdź. Lublin 1997, p. 162.

³ Jan Paweł II, *Międzynarodowe Ekumeniczne Seminarium Szkoleniowe poświęcone duszpasterstwu głuchoniemych na całym świecie*. Rzym 1983.

2. New biblical exegesis

The problem appears with the starting of the linguistic development process, caused by many factors for example: the late diagnosed hearing impairment or the environmental negligence and also the necessity of mastering the huge material by the deaf students who prepare themselves to the First Holy Communion. In such a situation, the language limitation of the children, originate because of their hearing impairment, causes the inability of the equalizing the linguistic absence. Such children do not know the prayers, the religious phrases; they do not use the Bible from where the Evangelic address is flowing out.

It is not meaningless for their development; it is commonly known that it is the Bible that is the source of the universal human culture and world view, the value system and the moral assessments, the literature and art richness. Its universal value consists in the fact that it is a timeless tale about the human and his archetypical feelings, the passions about the complexity of the human nature. The book- the magazine (the motives, the characters, the situations) where not only the writers, the painters, the sculptors, the poets – the artists of all branches, but also the average, ordinary people derive from. The Bible for them is the important point of reference. The Bible, paraphrasing the John Paul II, makes the man more “human”, thanks to it; he gets into much bigger richness of his existence.⁴ Its reading enables to establish and maintain the contact with God, and it facilitates sanctification of the human⁵. Thanks to knowing the Word of God, that is included inside it, the man can answer himself the question: how can I live? How can I act? What kind of person do I want to be?

By reading the Bible, and what is more the parables, many people are able to “base their lives on Jesus”. With the help of simple plot, they show the deeper essence about the human. The events that are told, they are only to show the hidden, universal truths, which aim is to clear out the secret of God’s Kingdom, its essence and impose the requirements on the human being⁶.

That is why, we ought to think if there is no need for the new biblical exegesis, that would be more available, much more adapted to needs of the deaf children mentioned above, they are in need of equalizing the language shortage- faster enriching of their own language?

⁴ Por. Jan Paweł II, *Przemówienie w UNESCO*. Paryż 2.06.1980 r.

⁵ Z. J. Zdybicka, *Człowiek i religia*. Lublin 1993, p. 360.

⁶ A. Jankowski, *Królestwo Boże w przypowieściach*. Kraków 1997, p. 12.

Isn't it necessary to introduce the changes in the present way of conducting the religious education, to meet a new challenge?

Such a question is undoubtedly asked by many people: the theologians, the catechists- the people who care about what indeed Jesus wanted to say. The people who want to share the richness of the Bible with the deaf students, to get them richer in The Word of God. At the same time, caring about the Jesus's words to be unequivocally and theologically interpreted correctly. So that also the deaf people could reach for the Bible and for them it should be the source of inspiration in their lives- the life sign- the truth treasure house.

It is not an easy task. Since, interpreting the evangelic parable touch both material and spiritual reality. The first one is familiar to the readers, taken from life; however, the second just by comparison may be closer to the human concept and as a consequence understood. The essence of the parable should be discovered and, as we all know, it is not an easy thing. It requires specific way of teaching, and from the listener intellectual involvement and the will of searching the hidden meaning inside them⁷.

How we ought to hit the deaf, who are not always ready to the intellectual effort "cracking" the Jesus lesson. How should we hit the deaf, whose linguistic development is not inadequate, not letting them freely draw on the Bible richness? Is the biblical exegesis language- as they were written (beautiful, vivid, and poetic) not too difficult - leaving the deaf reader only the possibility of the literal interpretation, without showing its essence and fundamental depth?

The Method of the Fast Enriching the Linguistic-Cultural and Conceptual Competence-used during the religious education of the deaf children -taking it into consideration but also the desire of the maximal raising of the biblical reading comprehension and also fast equalizing of the linguistic developmental shortage of the deaf students, the author of the study has decided to create such a toll that does not deprive the biblical texts their "metaphorical" accretion. Such a condition is met by the method of the fast enriching the linguistic-cultural and conceptual competence. This is an innovative method, based on the Callan method-originally used to teach English language⁸. Such a method requires that the religious classes are conducted according to the determined formula developer by M. Białas:

"1.The school catechist reads the catechesis` content using the cued speech method, On the base of the coursebook (the Bible) you should choose the text, that is usually too long, and

⁷ E. Szymanek, *Wykład Pisma Świętego Nowego Testamentu*. Poznań 1990, p. 108.

⁸ See more: *Callan Metod*, Student's Book 1

at the same time it is not appropriate to the method's need, summarize it but retain its meaning and the original vocabulary (without simplification) It is necessary to prepare earlier the lesson text by the school catechist, who will choose the subject so as to it will represents the closed wholeness.

2. The catechist gives to record of the catechesis` reading content. It is important that the content, which is written on the board, sounds identical with the one the school catechist has just read out. It is possible to apply the multimedia presentation and the projector.

3. The catechist explains the students incomprehensible concepts etc. During the concept explanation, it is important to pay attention to their content (connotation), it is composed of the essential features and also its range (denotation), meaning all the objects that are entitled to them.

4. The school catechist uses the cued speech method and he asks the students some questions. In this part of the catechesis, he uses the text given during the lesson and asks the questions that result from the content. He asks the questions, each one he repeats twice, what let the content be assimilated much better. Afterwards, he points out the student and waits for the answer. The school catechist answers simultaneously with the student for giving all the students the ready and correct model of the answer (for not preserving the mistakes) .He aims that the students answer in a normal pace, correctly (revising the possible mistakes) to build their answer on the base of the answer's content and the notes (it ought to be the answer as long as possible). Referring to the mentioned above parable about the grain of mustard seed, the example questions and answers of the student look like these ones:

- The school catechist: what do we need the God's kingdom for?
- The student: for the grain of mustard seed- undesirable answer (too short)
- The student: God's Kingdom is similar to the grain of mustard seed that was taken by the man and sowed in the field- the correct answer

The moment the student gives the correct answer, the school catechist asks the next question to another student according to the model presented. He strives for asking each student the same number of questions.

5. The school catechist aims to automatize the students` answers.

The number of the questions asked depends on the assimilating pace by the students; generally it is from 4 to 6 times. The school catechist asks the student the same question as many times as he realizes that the students assimilate the answer in a satisfactory way. In case of the difficult material, containing the huge number of new words and concepts for example abstract, the number of the revisions must be increased.

6. Every lesson starts from the revising the earlier acquired material. It is important that each student revises the material redone earlier; otherwise, his time of studying will lengthen significantly.

7. After mastering the specific part of the material, checking the knowledge is necessary. The school catechist prepares the test, that contains all questions (the most important) the students answered for during the classes and also the task that check the practical knowledgee”⁹.

The author of the study remains hopeful that the method suggested will make the deaf students “*get to know You, the only God, and The One you have sent, Jesus Christ*”¹⁰.

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⁹ M. Białas, *Materiały metodyczne do katechezy dzieci niesłyszących – przygotowanie do I Komunii Świętej. Metoda Szybkiego Wzbogacania Kompetencji Językowo-Kulturowej i Pojęciowej w nauczaniu religii dzieci niesłyszących.* Kielce 2007, s. 6-10.

¹⁰ (J 17, 4).