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GEN Z AS RECIPIENTS OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

ABSTRACT

Based on results of research carried out in the United States and Poland among people counted as the so-called Gen Z, the text searches for an answer to a question about the possibility of preaching Christian values in this group of listeners. Pointing to the qualities describing the discussed generation (among others, departure from religiousness, inclusivity and state of psyche), as well as way of communication or an erosion of authority in the virtual world, the author puts forward postulates for preachers who want to preach Gospel to present-day teenagers and young adults. They concern both the content of homilies (leading to the meeting with God, before preaching moral norms), and their form (dialogical attitude, building a community and rhetoric of empathy). The author also notices the role of pre-evangelization actions in the virtual world, but leaves this issue to be discussed in a separate elaboration.

Keywords: Generation Z, homily, sermon, listener, communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this article may appear oxymoronic, particularly when considered in light of recent reports concerning the religiosity of the generation now entering adulthood, which leave little room for doubt. In Poland, Generation Z represents the fastest secularizing group in Europe. Young Poles are not only distancing themselves from religious belief, but are also openly demonstrating their disaffiliation from the Church, often treating this disaffiliation as a source of pride (Institute, 2022).

In referring to Generation Z, I follow the definition proposed by American psychologist Jean M. Twenge and point out to individuals who “grew up with a mobile phone, had an Instagram account before entering high school, and have no recollection of a world without the internet” (Twenge, 10). According to Twenge, Generation Z includes those born after 1995, who entered adolescence around 2007 - coinciding with the release of the first iPhone - and began high school in 2010, the year the first iPad was introduced (Twenge, 10). These markers should be understood as approximate, especially in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, where the widespread adoption of such technologies occurred somewhat later. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to associate Generation Z with today’s teenagers and young adults.

Within this context, the terms “recipient of religious communication” and “member of Generation Z” appear, at first glance, to be mutually exclusive. The vast majority of young Poles are not in a state conducive to receiving traditional forms of religious discourse, such as sermons or extended catechetical instruction, whether delivered during liturgical celebrations or in classrooms. This, however, does not exempt the Church from the obligation to seek ways of reaching this generation with the Gospel. Jesus’ words, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15) include no footnote suggesting that anyone could be excluded from the audience of God’s word. On the contrary, it is the task of those sent to proclaim

the Gospel to search for methods and strategies of reaching even those who do not identify themselves as the intended recipients of the evangelical message.

This article contributes to a series of studies in the fields of communication science and theology. It is clear that an effective presentation (religious or otherwise) requires a clear understanding of the target audience. Hence, this study advocates for the necessity of gathering comprehensive knowledge about the listeners and incorporating that awareness into the very process of preparing the text to be presented. Numerous handbooks used to train preachers urge them to begin their ministry by discerning the pain present within the hearts of their listeners. Only then can the preacher offer a pathway toward healing (Dees, 2–13).

However, the present article seeks to examine the particular characteristics of Generation Z as recipients of religious communication and to explore whether and by what means it is possible nowadays to meaningfully engage them with the religious content.

WHOM ARE WE SPEAKING TO?

Polish psychologist Elżbieta Rydz, working from the premise that every act of proclaiming the Word of God may be understood from a psychological perspective as “a process of transmitting significant religious content between a sender and a receiver,” notes that “the quality of the transmission and reception of religious content depends on the level of an individual’s psychosocial development (including cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development), particularly on the level of religious development” (Rydz, 56). Therefore, before we attempt to address the fundamental question posed in the introduction, it is essential to draw attention to the distinguishing features of the individuals under consideration in this study, especially those that have so far been overlooked in discussion on preaching the Word of God to youth and young adults.

Here, I refer specifically to those attributes that have emerged with the advent of technologies that enable continuous connectivity and constant exposure to digital communication, thus building the so-called always-on culture, accompanied by the pressure to be permanently alert to what is happening on social media. There is no doubt that smartphones, above all, have transformed not only the way people communicate with one another, but also how they work, learn, rest, spend their free time, shop, eat, watch, read, listen, and ultimately, how they perceive the world (Czechowska, Marcela, 12). This transformation was vividly captured by a newspaper which, following the unveiling of the first iPhone, portrayed Steve Jobs as a modern-day Moses descending from Mount Sinai, holding two devices bearing the distinctive Apple logo in his hands, in place of the stone tablets of the Commandments. At the time, the media spoke of the beginning of a new era in human history, and the image implied that the mere appearance of the smartphone was tantamount to the establishment of a new law governing humanity (Marcyński, 9).

People of the new era

This journalistic narrative reflects an account of the development of human civilization, typically presented in three phases: the era of spoken language, the era of writing and print, and the era of electronic media (Siemieniecki, 16). Without delving into detail, one may say that in the first era, communication between people relied primarily on the spoken language and a complex system of non-verbal signs. During this period, a special role was assigned to individuals who possessed relevant knowledge and/or experience, which they transmitted to other members of the community. Hence, in some publications, this era is referred to as the tribal era. Regardless of the terminology used, communication at that time was based on direct, face-to-face contact and functioned one-way: from the sender to the receiver. The survival of a given group largely depended on the extent to which younger, less experienced or less knowledgeable members absorbed knowledge imparted by the teacher.

Although it may sound comical today, it must be admitted that the invention of print fundamentally revolutionized the process of communication, the transfer of knowledge, and life wisdom. Since an educator could now record what they wished to convey, the need for face-to-face interaction became less important. Various forms of published materials became effective carriers of information and the distance between the sender and the receiver ceased to be a problem. Moreover, the print enabled the preservation of knowledge for future use. The only aspect that remained unchanged was the role of the sender. The authority of the individual sharing their expertise continued to go unchallenged. Indeed, one might argue that the unidirectional nature of communication was even further reinforced, as the lack of direct contact entirely eliminated opportunities for interaction with the sender – the author of the text.

If the invention of print constituted a revolution in the communication process, then the emergence of the era of electronic media may be more aptly described as a Copernican revolution in the functioning of entire societies. In the context of this study, two features of this seem most significant: the dissolution of traditional sender-receiver roles and the elimination of the need for direct contact. In this era, there is no longer a single teacher who leaves the audience with no choice but to agree. In the virtual world, no one may legitimately claim exclusive authority over truth or reality. Dominant values include pluralism, tolerance, and chaos. Everyone has the right to be both a content creator and a dialogue partner. The world they create seems to resemble a network composed of an infinite number of nodes, in which knowledge is acquired by jumping from one point to another without any clear order. It is the receiver who determines the direction, which content to engage with more deeply, and which to ignore altogether. Moreover, the receiver possesses endless possibilities to co-create this network and enjoys unrestricted rights to express thoughts and observations at every stage of the process. This has given rise to new terminology such as “navigation” and “surfing” across a boundless ocean of data (Kasprzak, 50-107).

One of the studies described by J.M. Twenge involved installing a programme on students' laptops that took a screenshot every five seconds. The findings revealed that students switched between tasks approximately every ninety seconds. Three-quarters of the windows open on their computers remained open for less than one minute. It is difficult to imagine these participants sitting attentively, and listening to someone sharing knowledge and experience with them, reading a book, or focusing on a single long-form text (Twenge, 75-76).

These observations have led many researchers to express concern about the negative effects of electronic media on contemporary individuals. They point to problems with concentration, a decline in reading comprehension and academic writing skills (Twenge, 75-76). They speak of a so-called "drip model of time, in which concentration is multidirectional and allows for constant jumping across bits of information: drops of tweets, text messages, and social media comments" (Czechowska, Marcela, 31). They emphasize that older technologies required concentrated focus on a single task at a time. Therefore, individuals accustomed to the traditional structure of the world may find it difficult to understand multitasking, perceiving it as something harmful. Meanwhile, the new era and new media require new skills, which Generation Z members have mastered to perfection. Some scholars even argue that multitasking may not be inherently detrimental. Engaging with several projects over a long period of time can trigger creativity, help individuals avoid mental blocks, and facilitate problem-solving (Czechowska, Marcela, 31-32). Suffice it to say that psychologists who study the creative process highlight that innovative solutions tend to emerge when a person is not intentionally focused on a particular problem (Twardy, 73-77).

To summarize this section, one may conclude that Generation Z members, raised on short, clear, and straightforward messages, are not used to passively having to listen and agree. They also have the right to comment, to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and regard the

virtual world as equally important as the real one. Moreover, they believe in the legitimacy of their own opinions and reject the notion that others have the right to judge them. This cannot be ignored in the context of religious communication, which, when viewed against the backdrop described above, hardly fits into the communication model imposed by the era of electronic media.

Inclusive and irreligious

The problem of communication, as explored in the research conducted by J.M. Twenge appears to be the least challenging issue faced by contemporary preachers of the Gospel. Based on an analysis of responses from 11 million young Americans, she outlined several significant factors shaping Generation Z. These individuals are inclusive, placing high value on acceptance, freedom of speech, and equality, and consequently tend to view any form of intolerance, condemnation, or exclusion negatively. This characteristic goes hand in hand with a strong belief in independence from imposed norms, limitations, or prescribed lifestyles. Additionally, with a smartphone in their hands, they spend a significant portion of their time online, often at the expense of face-to-face relationships, prioritizing virtual connections instead. Communication among them typically takes place through short text messages and instant messaging apps. They often do not feel the need for face-to-face conversations, or even voice calls. The American psychologist refers to this group of people as "isolated", as compared to previous generations, they spend more time alone and report significantly more mental health problems than their older peers from the Millennial generation (Twenge, 11).

Another important and more complex observation concerns Generation Z's religiosity, or more accurately its decline. A study conducted by the Pew Research Centre involving over 35,000 Americans revealed that between 2007 and 2014, the percentage of individuals identifying as Christians dropped from 78.4% to

70.6%. Most of those abandoning religion do so before the age of 24. While the results indicate that this decline affects all religious groups, it is most pronounced among those raised in the Catholic Church. Equally concerning is the fact that, unlike in previous years, this decline was no longer accompanied by a corresponding increase in affiliation with other religious group. Instead, there has been a sharp rise in the number of individuals who identify as having no religion at all. Among those born between 1980 and 2000, they constitute over 35% of the population (America's).

The reasons why young Americans choose to leave the Church are well illustrated by studies conducted independently in two American dioceses: Springfield in central Illinois and Trenton in New Jersey. In Springfield, 575 "inactive parishioners" were recruited to complete an online survey. In Trenton, more than 300 participated. These surveys revealed four main reasons for disaffiliation. The first is broadly defined as "issues with Church doctrine." This includes difficulties in accepting teachings regarding the inadmissibility of divorce, contraception, attitudes toward homosexuals, the ordination of women, and the use of in vitro fertilization. Respondents also mentioned feeling judged or too easily excluded in their parishes. Some also expressed concerns about perceived conflicts between religious teaching and the natural sciences. The second major reason involves broadly understood discrepancy between Church teachings and the moral behaviour of its members, particularly clergy. This includes so-called sex scandals and their concealment by Church hierarchy, or instances of inappropriate treatment by parish representatives. The third main reason concerns the manner in which services are conducted, which in practice translated into dissatisfaction with the liturgy, dissatisfaction with the quality of music used during services, unmet spiritual needs, and poor knowledge of the Holy Scriptures among preachers. Young Americans also criticized the political involvement by clergy and their excessive focus on material needs. One particularly valuable aspect of these studies is the inclusion of a question about potential

return - what changes could inspire teenagers and young adults to reengage with parish life. Among various suggestions, one of the most frequently mentioned was the improvement of homilies, both in terms of content (with an emphasis on relevant application of Holy Scripture) and form, highlighting the importance of inclusive language and respect for all individuals (Hardy; Byron; Faith).

Particularly important - and in the context of our discussion, worth quoting in full - is the reflection shared by a lecturer at one of the Catholic universities in the United States. At the beginning of a course in which he planned to analyse the individual articles of the Creed with his students, he asked them to write a short answer to the question: *What do Christians believe?* Almost every student included at least two of the following statements: "Christians believe that homosexuals are going to hell," "Christians believe that homosexuals are sinners," "Christians believe that homosexuals are paedophiles and should not be priests," "Christians believe that if you're gay, you can't have sex," "Christians believe that if you love God, you must choose to be heterosexual," "Christians believe abortion is a sin," "Christians believe abortion is murder," "Christians believe in protecting unborn children," "Christians believe one should be pro-life," (Christian Formation). These responses are particularly telling, as they indicate that for the overwhelming majority of young people, the Christianity they are abandoning has been reduced to a mere moral system - a collection of rules, prohibitions, or a component of the broader culture wars.

Homo narcissus

As noted by the American researcher describing the iGen generation, social media users appear happy online - "making faces on Snapchat and smiling in Instagram photos. But dig a little deeper, and it turns out that reality offers little reason for satisfaction" (Twenge, 107). Her observation should be ignored: these individuals are "on the brink of the most serious mental

health crisis in decades among young people. And yet, on the outside, everything looks fine” (Twenge, 108).

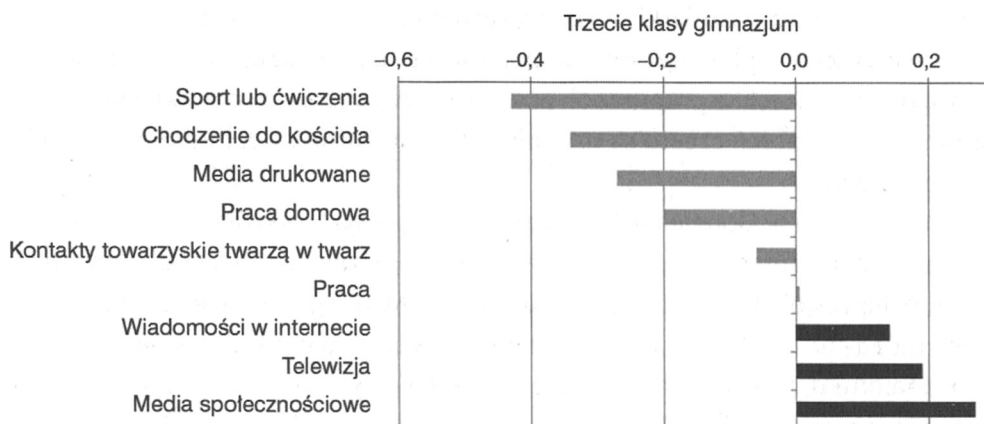
An attempt to explain this situation involves referring to the concept of homo narcissus, proposed by Anna Błasiak in her characterization of Generation Z. She also notices a dissonance between the self-admiration displayed by young people on the outside and their experience of the meaninglessness and emptiness of life (Błasiak, 72). While the socio-cultural approach to narcissism dates back to the 1970s, the internet and new media have so reinforced narcissistic tendencies that they now function as hibernarcissistic media. Immersed in this environment, young people accept almost as dogma that the path to success lies in being noticed and admired by others. This leads to an excessive concern with self-image and personal attractiveness, eventually resulting in a dependency on public approval, admiration, and affirmation expressed through positive comments and so-called “likes” (Szahaj).

The perceived discrepancy between one’s sense of greatness measured by online interactions and the simultaneous feeling of emptiness and lack of authenticity may be the primary cause of sadness, confusion, and a sense of worthlessness, potentially leading mental health issues or even life-threatening conditions. In this context, the statements of survey participants presented by J.M. Twenge seem particularly telling: “It’s because of other people that you think you have to change, lose or gain weight, instead of just being yourself”; and “Every day you wake up and put on a mask and pretend to be someone else, instead of just being yourself. And you can never really be happy that way” (Twenge, 121). Young people adapt their self-image to the expectations of an online audience. That audience confirms their value, which requires them to constantly put on new masks and play new roles. As a result, while seeking affirmation, these individuals often lose themselves in their strategies of self-presentation tactics, often contrary to their true selves (Błasiak, 67-72).

The loneliness experienced by homo narcissus is also of considerable significance. This is not merely about the awareness of the superficiality of relationships formed in the virtual world. Although the internet gives teenagers the opportunity to maintain constant contact through rapid exchanges of information and the sharing of photos, it does not, as the American researcher points out, reduce the feeling of loneliness. On the contrary, in the entire history of her research - dating back to 1991 - “teenagers have never felt as lonely as they do now” (Twenge, 111). She identifies smartphones as the primary culprit, as they have replaced face-to-face interactions. These devices cause young people to spend less time on activities that would mitigate feelings of loneliness and more time on those that actually intensify them.

In recent years, the United States has witnessed a significant rise in depressive symptoms among teenagers. Since 2011, a record-high number of teens agree with statements such as “I feel like I can’t do anything right” or “My life is useless” (Twenge, 115–116). In just three years (from 2012 to 2015), the rate of depression among boys rose by 21%, and among girls by 50%. Experts speak of an epidemic of depressive disorders, self-harm, and suicide (Twenge, 117–123).

Twenge draws a clear connection between the rising rates of depression and the widespread presence of smartphones, combined with a decline in face-to-face interactions. She states categorically that the likelihood of developing depression increases by approximately 30% among teenagers who frequently use social media. She adds that this risk decreases among teens who engage in sports, participate in religious activities, read printed publications, complete homework, and maintain interpersonal relationships (Twenge, 94–95). The activities that either increase or reduce the risk of depression among adolescents are presented by Twenge in the following table (Table 1) (Twenge, 95):



Ryzyko względne wystąpienia silnych objawów depresyjnych, 2009–2015

Translation of the subtitles in the table 1 (Twenge, 95):

- Trzecie klasy gimnazjum – Third grade of middle school
- Sport lub ćwiczenia – Sport or exercise
- Chodzenie do kościoła – Going to church
- Media drukowane – Printed media
- Praca domowa – Homework
- Kontakty towarzyskie twarzą w twarz – Face-to-face contacts
- Praca – Work
- Wiadomości w internecie – News on the internet
- Telewizja – Television
- Media społecznościowe – Social media

Ryzyko względne wystąpienia silnych objawów depresyjnych - Relative risk of developing severe depressive symptoms

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that Polish teenagers are not an exception in this regard. According to Maciej Pilecki from the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Jagiellonian University, “the number of mental health disorders observed among children and adolescents has been increasing for several years - not only suicide attempts but also self-injury, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, depression, and addictions.” Research conducted by the Unaweza Foundation indicates that over half of students report low self-esteem, one in six self-harms, and one in three lacks the will to live. Nearly 9% of children report having attempted suicide, while 39.2% of students have thought about it (Kiedy dziecko)

HOW TO REACH THEM?

Educator and theologian Jared Dees points out that preaching the Word of God today takes place within a society that is “spiritual but not religious.” Therefore, it is essential for the preacher to begin their message by recognizing the pain residing in the hearts of their listeners. Only then can they guide them toward healing (Dees, 39–42). In the context of our discussion, this concise formula takes on the nature of a directive and prompts us, based on the above characterization of Generation Z, to identify certain areas that cannot be neglected by those responsible for transmitting knowledge and values (including religious values) to young people.

Adolescents who participated in the studies cited in this paper admitted that religion, as such, still remains an important part of their lives. However, they emphasized that they do not want to simply be told how to behave. They seek answers to questions about God, life, faith, and the meaning of human existence. What is particularly noteworthy is their expectation that these matters be addressed in a dialogical or interactive form, so that young people are not only to be passive listeners. J.M. Twenge calls on religious organizations to reconsider how they might encourage active participation and the expression of doubts during worship services. In her view, it is also of key importance to ensure that members of religious gatherings feel part of a community - one that accepts them and will never leave them alone (Twenge, 160). Thus, it is not the case that preachers addressing today's teenagers are doomed to failure from the outset.

Speaking two languages at once

One of the fundamental principles taught to every student of communication studies is the necessity of using language that is understandable to the listener. It is the perceptual capacity of the recipient that determines the choice of vocabulary, images invoked, and the arguments presented. One should thus avoid using terminology that, although technically correct, is intelligible only to a narrow circle of recipients. This principle is so obvious that it requires no further elaboration.

The characteristics of Generation Z, however, allow us to formulate an undisputable demand that every message should employ inclusive language - language that excludes no listener. This duty was emphasized by Pope Francis in his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, where he described a pastoral ministry full of love - always ready to understand people, to forgive, to accompany, to wait, and above all, to include (Francis, 2016). The Bishop of Rome reminded that people of the Church must follow a "logic of integration" in their pastoral ministry, through which everyone can experience the Church as a mother who wel-

comes, cares for, and supports people with love on the path of life (Francis, 2016). He spoke of avoiding judgments that fail to take into account the complexity of individual situations and the suffering people endure due to their circumstances. He emphasized that pastoral ministry must be about "including everyone" and "helping each person find their own way of participating in the Church community, so that they may feel the object of undeserved, unconditional, and gratuitous mercy" (Francis, 2016). He advised that ministers show "special care to understand, console, and include, avoiding the imposition of a set of rules as if they were carved in stone, which only results in people feeling judged and rejected" (Francis, 2016).

Given the situation of Generation Z, their confusion, but also the way they communicate and exist in both the virtual and real world, where each participant claims the right to free choice without being judged by others, the attitude demonstrated by the catechist or preacher toward their audience may be the primary factor determining whether the message will even be heard. It is unacceptable to introduce dichotomous divisions such as us versus them, to engage in accusation, to incite hatred toward anyone, or to discredit or humiliate others (Kowalski, 180–181). The language of religious communication should fulfill, to the highest degree, the demand to overcome existing divisions.

It is worth noting that a young person raised in the virtual world is not instructed but persuaded by online communicators. Influencers construct their messages in a way that avoids even the appearance of imposing anything on their audience. Instead, they employ a method of enticement and encouragement, showing the benefits of specific choices and creating the impression that the final decision lies solely with the recipients. They emphasize respect for the individual's freedom, stressing that each person has the right to make their own decisions and autonomously determine what they consider beneficial for themselves.

This style of communication appears to be the only way of reaching Generation Z. Young peo-

ple emphasize the importance of having their perspectives acknowledged and the opportunity to question the proposals presented to them. They claim the right to determine whether a message is valuable and consider any attempt to deprive them of that right as absurd. Moreover, just as in the virtual world, they do not wait for permission to express their opinion in the form of a comment or response.

This cannot be ignored by catechists or preachers who seek to effectively convey Christian values to teenagers and young adults. Following the use of inclusive language, the second “language” that speakers must learn when addressing Generation Z is the language of dialogue. Delivering religious content in this form seems to increase the likelihood of its acceptance and internalization. The authors of the Vatican’s Directory on Masses with Children observed, for instance, that a homily directed at this group “will at times take the form of a dialogue with them” (Sacred Congregation, 48). Thus, it is by no means inappropriate for the proclamation of the Gospel itself to assume the form of a conversation in which participants are given the opportunity to express their feelings, experiences, and insights, provided the context allows it.

At this point, it is also worth mentioning a particular speaking method known as “dialogical” communication, which involves what is referred to as virtual dialogue. The speaker delivers a monologue, but employs various strategies that make the audience feel seen and acknowledged. Through rhetorical questions, direct forms of address, the inclusion of possible objections and thoughtful responses to them, as well as the consideration of the audience’s experiences, listeners gain the impression that the message is being shaped in their presence, with attention to and respect for their views. Most importantly, it fosters a sense of joint exploration in search of the best solution. With the proper tone, attitude, and rhetorical strategy, it is possible to conduct a monologue that continuously feels like a dialogue with the gathered community (Chaim, 302–303).

To evangelize, not to moralize

"Too many preachers speak about who the listeners should be or what they should do, while remaining silent on who the listeners are and who they can become" (Sławiński, 47). This concise statement, taken from a document issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, should become one of the key principles guiding those who communicate Christian values to Generation Z. Research clearly shows that merely condemning observed evil or forcefully imposing moral norms has little effect on the lives of listeners. Rather, the focus should be on pointing to motivation, explaining the reasons behind certain actions, naming the grace already present in the lives of listeners, and showing them what they have been gifted by God - so they may be moved to respond to that gift freely and willingly.

Not only due to the loneliness and psychological struggles faced by members of Generation Z, but because of the essence of the Christian faith, the goal of every catechesis or homily should be to lead the audience to an encounter with God, who is love. The speaker should therefore shape the content of the message in such a way as to reveal the areas in which God is present in the lives of the listeners - places where they can establish a relationship with Him, and above all, where they can experience His healing presence.

One of the fundamental principles governing the preparation of a homily is the conviction that moral norms, “while not secondary, come second.” (Pontifical Commission, 18) The first place in Christian preaching belongs to the initiative of God, which theology expresses in terms of gift. The biblical perspective clearly shows that the first action God takes toward humanity is that of giving: life, free will, reason, and salvation. The God in whom Christians believe does not reveal a legal code of obligations, but rather reveals Himself as one who is love. When analysing the testimonies of those from Generation Z who have abandoned the Christian faith, one can state with considerable certainty that they did not reject God Himself, but rather a false image

of God - an idea, a theoretical construct that was imposed on them, often without their fault.

A final conclusion that also deserves attention is the emphasis on the community-building nature of Christianity, and therefore also of Christian preaching. During the pandemic, Pope Francis warned against the formation of a "virtual Church," emphasizing that the Church - as a community - is always something concrete, and that the Christian's relationship with Christ must be communal in nature. "Intimacy without community, without bread, without the Church, without the people, without the sacraments is dangerous. (...) The apostles' intimacy with the Lord was always communal, always at table, always tied to the sacrament, to the bread" (Francis, 2020).

Building community should therefore be another essential aim for anyone entrusted with proclaiming the Gospel - so that listeners can truly feel they are part of a real, living community. Young people do not retreat into technology out of ill will, but rather in search of something they failed to receive in real life and hope to find in the virtual world. Religious communities have the potential to serve as ideal environments in which young people may experience a sense of uniqueness, acceptance, respect, and most importantly, feel that their voices are heard and that they matter.

CONCLUSION

Pope John Paul II, when speaking of the need to evangelize the "digital continent," emphasized that the Church's involvement in the virtual world "is not merely intended to multiply the proclamation" (John Paul II, 37). This is a clear suggestion that simply using social media to spread the Christian message is insufficient. It is also necessary to incorporate the Christian message into the "new culture" created by modern means of communication - a kind of inculturation that, on the one hand, allows the Word of God to transform the virtual world, but on the other, also draws from that world what is valuable within it.

This statement guided me as I sought to answer the question of how and whether it is possible to reach Generation Z with the Good News today. The argument presented here shows that, although this task appears highly complex, it is by no means impossible to accomplish. Contrary to appearances, within the world of contemporary teenagers and young adults, there are many questions, needs, and desires to which the Gospel offers a perfect answer and fulfilment.

One issue that remains open and deserves further detailed study is the question of pre-evangelization through social media. Such an approach may help to initiate a relationship and, in doing so, transform someone not yet ready to listen into a person open to receiving religious content.

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GENERACIJA Z KAO PRIMATELJ RELIGIJSKE KOMUNIKACIJE

SAŽETAK

Tekst, koji se temelji na rezultatima istraživanja provedenih u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama i Poljskoj među pripadnicima tzv. generacije Z, traži odgovore na pitanje o mogućnostima naviještanja kršćanskih vrijednosti toj skupini slušatelja. Uzimajući u obzir karakteristike dotične generacije (uključujući, među ostalim, udaljavanje od religioznosti, inkluzivnost i mentalno stanje), kao i način komunikacije i eroziju autoriteta u virtualnom svijetu, autor iznosi smjernice za propovjednike koji žele propovijedati Evanđelje suvremenim tinejdžerima i mladim odraslim osobama. Tiču se one i sadržaja homilije (koja prvo treba voditi susretu s Bogom, a tek onda propovijedati moralne norme) i njezine forme (dijaloški pristup, izgradnja zajedništva i retorika empatije). Autor prepoznaje i ulogu predevangelizacijskih aktivnosti u virtualnom svijetu, no to pitanje ostavlja kao temu zasebnog proučavanja.

Ključne riječi: generacija Z, homilija, propovijed, slušatelj, komunikacija