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CHRISTIAN CARITAS IN CHRISTIAN PEDAGOGY

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Abstract. The article highlights the leading ideas of Christian pedagogy, which are the upbringing of children and youth of spiritual and moral values. The author stresses that Christian pedagogy serves the effective tool for the formation of the spirituality of the younger generation, the formation of philosophical representations and beliefs, etiquette, spiritual traditions and values of people in the universally accepted commandments of God. Considerable attention is paid to the formation of high morality of the younger generation, etiquette, love of people, religiousness, etc. In the Christian religion the highest value compared to all other virtues is „love”. The Christian love is rooted primarily in the commandment of love for God and man, that is why genuine charity comes from the heart full of love. This article presents the teaching of Christ for mercy to others and its practical application in the first Christian Communities. The author described the economic organization and charitable initiatives in the communities of early Christians.

Keywords: Christian, Caritas, religion, Christian pedagogy, spiritual values, work charitable.

1. INTRODUCTION

The German historian G. Uhlhorn stated: “The world before Christ was the world without love” [1]. In this way he wanted to explain the astonishing power of Christian influence. Christianity has introduced new insights into the world and humanity. It gave new social meaning to the word of “mercy”. It also aroused the sense of solidarity and responsibility for each and every man. Regardless of a situation, everyone is a brother to each other. This also applies to those who are poor, disinherited, homeless or sick.

Christ himself experienced poverty. He was born in a poor stable. He was a stranger in the land of Egypt. And during his public activities he also experienced poverty: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”. (Matthew 8:20).

In the accounts of evangelists we find many references to charity. Jesus in his teaching very strongly emphasized the need for love of man, which must be expressed in the concrete attitude in everyday life: “But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you” (Luke 11:41); “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:42).

The essence of the mission of Christ is that He has not only taught, but predominantly performed acts of mercy – miraculous feeding of people following him, numerous healings of the sick, resurrection

of the dead, consolation of the afflicted. From His disciples he has also demanded the attitude of mercy: "They do not need to go away; You give them something to eat" (Matthew 14:16, Luke 9: 13-16).

The idea of mercy was best expressed by Jesus in the talk of blessings and in the parable of the ultimate judgment. In the first text, Jesus shows that the attitude of a man of mercy is the path to happiness: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6: 20-22).

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The parable of the Last Judgment unequivocally indicates that the criterion of this Court is love. The necessary condition for salvation is spiritual help and material support for one's neighbour: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:31-40).

Love for the poor cannot be reconciled with the disordered love of material goods and their selfish use. St. James in his letter warns: "Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you" (James 5:1-6).

The Jesus gospel of love has transformed human thoughts and attitudes. What particularly strikes the pagan in the encounter with Christians is love, unity, kindness, mutual help together with genuine brotherhood [2]. Confirmation is a second-century certificate, written by Tertullian: "Look - they say - how do you love each other" [3].

Sharing wealth with the poor was seen as a duty of Christians and an expression of justice. St. John Chrysostom teaches: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. It is *not* our own goods which we hold, but theirs" [4]. And St. Gregory the Great believes that "For, when we administer necessities of any kind to the indigent, we do not bestow our own, but render them what is theirs; we rather pay a debt of justice than accomplish works of mercy" [5].

The life of the Jerusalem community described in the Acts of the Apostles, shows us a very important aspect namely, the economic organization. The first Christians shared what they had in common: "They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2: 45; 4: 34).

Giving goods for common use were voluntary. St. Luke gives an example of Barnaby, who sold the field and gave all the money to the apostles (Acts 4: 36-37) [6].

According to J. Daniélou and I. Marrou, the interpretation of the sharing of goods encounters difficulties: "It could be understood as the creation of a common fund for the satisfaction of the needs of the poor, as it existed in the Synagogue, and that is the reference to supporting widows. (Acts 6: 1). However, it seems that Luke is talking about something more about the real return of property for common use" [6].

The Acts also describe the economic organization of Christians. Due to the protests of the Hellenists who complained of their widows' neglect, the apostles appointed seven deacons entrusted with the service to the poor [7]. Their task was to care for the poor, the sick, prisoners and orphans. The appointment of the seven deacons in the first Christian community is considered to be the beginning of organized assistance [8].

The urgent social issues include helping widows and orphans. In the Old Testament there is already a warning: "You will not hurt any widow or orphan. If you hurt them and they complain to me, I will hear their complaint, my anger will burn" (Exodus 22: 21-23). Because they are vulnerable, they require special care from the community [9].

The dilemma of the first Christian communities was the question of whom to give support? The answer to this question is given by St. Paul, in a letter to the Thessalonians, where he explains: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat". We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing what is good. Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer!" (2 Thessalonians 3: 6-15).

Didaskalia give us the information about the attitude of Christians towards orphans. Usually the found child was passed on to a Christian family. It had to raise that child and prepare for life: "If one of the children of Christians be an orphan, either a boy or a girl, it is good that if there be one of the brethren who hath no children, he take the boy in place of children, and let him take a girl, everyone who has a son; when her time comes let him give her to him in marriage, and fulfil his work in the service of God" [10].

The fraternity also expresses itself through the service of deacons to prisoners, who rush to jail to relieve them of their misery [9].

Christian charity has taken different forms: meals, agricultural products or money (*sportula*), as needed [9].

All the needy were given help from the collected money called *collections* (Acts 11:29; 24:17; Galatians 2:1-10; Romans 15: 26-28; 2 Corinthians 8: 9), which constituted the type of tax paid during every liturgical celebration (in Africa in the third century money was collected monthly) [11].

Justin Martyr in his "First Apology" describes the process of gathering collections: "And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together. (...) And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need" [12].

The pagan world did not know this religious respect for the human being before. Christianity has shown the man as absolute value, the object of the merciful love of God, Creator and Savior. Hence, the fourth century truly deserves the name of the Christian era [6].

The charity of the neighbour, the source and principle of all forms of charitable activity, was called *Christian caritas* in the Church. This was reflected especially in the original charity initiatives.

One of the basic duties of a Christian was alms. A Roman senator Saint Pammachius, a friend of St. Jerome, after the death of his wife Paulina, summoned all the poor of Rome as guests to the basilica of St. Peter at the Vatican (397). A huge crowd filled the basilica and the square. St. Paulin of Noli, describing this event, states that in respect to social values a rebellion has taken place: the beggars are called patrons of our souls (*patronos animarum nostrarum*) and wealthy are now in the position of clients [6].

The initiative to organize charitable works at the institutional level belongs to the bishops, who were supported by imperial donations. St. Basil in Caesarea Cappadocia raises a complex of buildings: church, monastery, hospice and hospital. He brings there qualified doctors and nurses who are to provide care to the sick, especially lepers. This type of "houses for the poor" (*ptochotrophia*) was found in many eastern cities, such as Amasea in Pontus. The Alexandrian Church had a nursing team available to the bishop called *Parabalani*, whose number (in the years 416-418 exceeded five hundred people).

Similar works were also made in the west. Mentioned Pammachius founded a hospice, called *xenodochium*, at the Roman Gate from the Ostia side, where many refugees and pilgrims received later refuge. In turn, the Roman St. Fabiola, belonging to the ascetic circle of St. Jerome, founded the first hospital in Rome, called *nosokomion* [6].

325 the bishops meeting at the Council of Nicaea adopted the following resolution: "We recommend that a hospital is established under the name *xenodochium* in each city. Bishop will designate a hermit as its manager, with no relations in the city, away from his homeland and family, and, moreover, a pristine man. His duty will be to accept travelers, cripples and the poor, give them all help; In case, if the hospital income turned out to be insufficient, appeals to the pity of all Christians, so that they would be able to help their fellow men. In the execution of these pious works we find the forgiveness of sins and the end of all evil because mercy brings us closer to God" [13].

The hospitals founded by Christian communities were primarily nursing homes and not health centers. We can distinguish some specializations:

- a) *syndochium* – gave shelter to poor and pilgrims,
- b) *ptochotrophium* – fed the poor,
- c) *gerontocomium* – gave shelter to the old,
- d) *brephotrophium* – children were fed [14].

The theological foundation of charity is the commandment of the love of God and neighbour [15]. The best evidence of the truth and fervor of professed faith are deeds. St. James associates faith with deeds, religion with action, service to God with service to other people: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1: 27).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Consequently, Christian pedagogy is an effective means of cultivating the spirituality of the younger generation, forming ideological ideas and beliefs, etiquette, spiritual traditions and values of their people in the universally accepted commandments of God. Actually, love is one of the basic categories of Christian morality. Education of children and young people in love of people, compassion, mercy, empathy, mutual understanding, mutual assistance – is extremely important in today's conditions of integration of each country into the world community.

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У статті висвітлено провідні ідеї християнської педагогіки, які полягають у вихованні в дітей і молоді духовно-моральних цінностей. Автором наголошено, що християнська педагогіка слугує дієвим засобом формування духовності молодого покоління, формування світоглядних уявлень і переконань, етикету, духовних традицій і цінностей свого народу на загальноприйнятих заповідях Божих. Значна увага приділена формуванню у молодого покоління високої моральності, етикету, любові до ближнього, релігійності тощо. У християнській релігії найбільша цінність серед усіх інших чеснот – це “любов”. Християнська любов закладена в основному в заповіді любові до Бога і ближнього, тому справжнє милосердя походить від серця, повного любові. Ця стаття представляє вчення Христа про милосердя до інших та його практичне застосування у часи існування перших християнських громад. Автор праці описав економічну організацію та благодійні ініціативи в громадах ранніх християн.

Ключові слова: християнин, милосердя, релігія, християнська педагогіка, духовні цінності, благодійна діяльність.