

DIDACTIC ACCENTS OF PASTORAL CARE

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Abstract:

The paper presents the importance of didactics in the pastoral process. It presents different perspectives on didactic methods in the proclamation of the Word of God. The right choice of didactic methods has a key role in the process of transmitting the faith and promoting the spiritual growth of individuals and church communities. It is important to communicate the faith in as many different ways as possible to reach out to the widest possible society, especially in today's world where the Church faces many challenges. Didactic practices are not just a theoretical matter but a practical approach that has the potential to transform the life of the Church.

Keywords: didactics, individual, community, pastoral care, education.

Introduction

In today's dynamically changing world, churches are facing many new challenges and transformations as they respond to cultural and spiritual challenges. Pastoral care is thus becoming an increasingly complex mission. It is necessary to find innovative didactic approaches. Whereas in the past pastoral

care was seen as the source and patronage of traditional pastoral care, today's pastoral care, as a key part of church and spiritual life, is focused on supporting individuals and whole communities. Increasingly, it is becoming a complex activity focusing on cult aspects and spiritual care. It also includes faith formation and education as such. It helps to navigate the complexity of the contemporary world. As the Church community faces many challenges today, it is necessary to approach pastoral care from the perspective of the contemporary educational system. Today's pastoral care requires effective educational approaches that help individuals and communities grow in their faith and personal development. The adoption of modern educational practices and approaches that focus on the process of faith transmission and formation brings closer the didactic ways in which knowledge, values and spiritual principles can be presented most effectively, enabling not only the understanding of theological doctrines but also their effective and active application in daily life. There is a need to explore which didactic methods and approaches can be most beneficial for reaching and forming across generations and social structures.

The paper will focus on key didactic elements, approaches, perspectives and methods that can strengthen and enrich pastoral care. It introduces how educational strategies can be incorporated into the life of the Church and thus contribute to the effective transmission of the faith. We will look at the importance of active learning that promotes the involvement of participants in the learning process and the creation of an appropriate environment. We will not neglect the use of modern technology to effectively reach different generations and cultural groups. Likewise, we will address the ethical and theological principles that are indispensable to the educational process in pastoral care. We will emphasize the importance of adapting didactic approaches to the specific needs and contexts of each community, and the need to create a safe and supportive environment for learning.

In this paper we will try to show that didactic emphases in pastoral care are not just a theoretical matter, but concrete practical tools that can effectively promote the spiritual growth of individuals and entire communities. With this aim in mind, we will look at various methods and examples that illustrate how to effectively integrate educational forms into pastoral care, thus contributing to the revitalization of the life of the Church and fostering a deeper relationship with the faith, which is much needed today.

Pastoral care is an integral part of the life of the Church, a complex process that focuses on the promotion and development of faith, and orientation to the life challenges of individuals and communities within the Church community and thus enables the building of strong interpersonal relationships. This process

includes a wide range of activities such as preaching, ministry, prayer, spiritual counselling, and educational programs that help deepen faith.

Pastoral care is intrinsically linked to spiritual care - providing spiritual support and guidance - this can include prayer, counselling and confession. This support enables people to face the various challenges of life. Pastoral care also emphasises education in matters of faith, ethics, theology, and morality, which helps to deepen understanding of spiritual values. This is done, for example, through Bible studies, catechesis, and workshops. Pastoral care also focuses on building and supporting church communities, which are essential as a protected space for faith sharing, mutual support and active participation in the life of the church and society. An integral part of pastoral care is also engagement and solidarity not only within the community but also with the surrounding society. Social and charitable activity is a signal to the surrounding society of the living faith of the community. An integral part of pastoral work is also the knowledge and personal development and growth of pastoral workers so that they can effectively create an enabling environment and lead others in their spiritual lives. Pastoral ministry must include a holistic approach to the spiritual life and development of individuals and whole communities.

From this perspective, didactics, the study of teaching and learning, is a key element - its main task and goal is to optimize learning processes and ensure the effective transfer of knowledge, values and skills in a meaningful way.

It focuses on methods and strategies for communicating faith and promoting spiritual growth to encourage active student engagement. In pastoral care, people need to be active participants in their spiritual development. It is also essential to create an environment in which people feel safe to engage and openly discuss their faith, concerns or opinions.

In this context, it is essential to focus on the main didactic emphases that can enrich pastoral care and make education and personal development more effective. We will look at the importance of community and community education, the individual approach, interactive methods and the involvement of modern technologies that can support and enrich education.

Didactics, through its structured learning, provides a space for planning and organizing learning by allowing for a more precise definition of objectives, the selection of appropriate methods and support for the progress of participants - this systematic framework increases the effectiveness of the learning process and by schematizing the topics. In the same way - e.g. lectures, discussions, project-based learning, practical activities, can be adapted to the actual needs of all participants using specific didactic methods. It is necessary to take into

account different levels of understanding (e.g. age, experience of faith, social environment, upbringing...) to make the transmission of the pastoral message as intensive as possible.

Engaging the widest possible range of approaches contributes to creating a dynamic and inspiring environment that fosters a deeper understanding of faith and a stronger spiritual life.

The essential task of pastoral care is to transmit the faith. This task can be approached in terms of selected methods that enrich the process of education and spiritual development.

- a) Stories and testimonies - personal testimonies, sharing experiences and stories - are both a source of lessons and can inspire and encourage others to deal with situations. More people will be moved by a concrete story than by a theoretical lecture. From this perspective, Scripture is an inexhaustible resource, with its emphasis on bringing biblical characters to life in their often difficult situations. Application in today's world can strengthen faith and understanding.
- b) Interactive learning - the active involvement of participants allows, for example through role-playing, to explore different perspectives, approaches and perceptions of different situations from a faith perspective. In this way, they can often better express themselves, share views, or learn from each other and act hidden in the role. It also brings opportunities to express themselves differently than usual.
- c) Visual and media materials - the use of visual materials, e.g. presentations, videos, and apps, often not only enriches learning but also supports and facilitates understanding of more challenging topics. At the same time, the use of social media is a means of reaching a wider audience and thus increasing the reach of evangelism, especially among the younger generation.
- d) Practical engagement - promoting and connecting relationships across generations, learning from each other. Organising e.g. charity events and community services demonstrates lived faith and strengthens a sense of belonging.
- e) Observance of customs, festivals, and spiritual practice - observance of regular commemoration, and celebration of various festivals or events leads to the rhythmization of the year, to the clarification of time and to the common experience of planning and enjoyment. Likewise, the integration of meditation, prayer and other spiritual experiences strengthens the personal relationship with faith.
- f) Artistic experience - the use of music, visual art, and other art forms supports and enriches the experience of faith and thus becomes another means of

expressing spirituality. Symbols, paintings, sculptures, and music are means that resonate, speak to the heart, and evoke a spiritual experience.

- g) Experiential learning - a form of learning based on artistic representation. However, it is specific in that it is a practical exercise, simulation or field learning that allows one to practice theoretical knowledge in real situations. It is about consolidating and strengthening self-confidence and the ability to react in life.

The importance of didactics lies in the systematic investigation of how to transmit knowledge and skills, focusing on the goals, methods and organization of education.

- a) The teaching and learning process - teaching is the deliberate and structured delivery of information, skills, and values (here by a pastoral worker) including planning, implementation and evaluation. It may also include different forms e.g. lectures, discussions, practical exercises or projects. Learning is an active process where individuals actively receive, process and integrate new information. Learning can take place in different contexts and forms, including formal (e.g. in school) or informal (e.g. in everyday life, and community activities)
- b) Objectives of didactics - knowledge acquisition - to provide the necessary information and skills for understanding and mastering a topic.
- Developing critical thinking - to promote the ability to analyse, evaluate and apply the information obtained.
 - Values acquisition - to support the development of ethical and moral principles that influence behaviour and decision-making.
 - Promoting personal and social development - promoting growth on a personal and social level.
- c) Methods of didactics - standard methods - lectures and demonstration methods, exercises - the main source of information is the pedagogue.
- d) Interactive methods - active involvement of students in the learning process, such as discussion, group work, and projects.

Specific accents of didactics in pastoral care

Didactics in pastoral care have specific features that emphasize the uniqueness and goals of the pastoral mission. These approaches not only promote knowledge and intellectual growth but also foster the personal and communal relationships that are essential to the development of the church community.

- a) Moral values - emphasis on moral and ethical values inherent in faith. The didactics of pastoral care should promote Christian values, ethical decision-making and behaviour of individuals and communities in everyday life. Pastoral workers should also fulfil the criteria of Christian values and be role models. They should inspire others to follow the example of their behaviour.
- b) Spiritual growth - one aspect of the selection of didactic methods is aimed at promoting spiritual growth by deepening a personal relationship with God and faith. By leading to the application of spiritual principles in our lives, faith becomes a practical and unchanging part of each day.
- c) Empathetic approach - empathy is a pillar in pastoral care as it is a source of trust and openness within relationships, which promotes the effectiveness of teaching as the ability to listen and support individual needs is essential within pastoral care.
- d) Social environment - didactics in pastoral care must respect the cultural, social and historical accents that influence the members of the community. Understanding and integrating local customs and traditions enriches education and makes it meaningful for students.

The cultural context of pastoral didactics

The cultural context in pastoral didactics plays a key role in the choice of methods. It influences how beliefs, values, spiritual traditions are transmitted and what the recipients find meaningful and motivating, what norms and values influence the teaching process. Pastoral care is linked to people's specific needs and living conditions. It is necessary to be receptive to the cultural environment in which pastoral care takes place since adapting methods to the cultural environment allows for a better reception and deeper understanding of the message.

- a) Perceptions of spiritual values and faith - cultural context influences perceptions of faith and religious values. In some communities, faith and religious life are firmly integrated into daily life. The pastoral approach addresses personal and social needs, there is a marked emphasis on ritual and normal preaching. Conversely, in more secular communities or cultures that emphasize individualism, pastoral care needs to focus on more general spiritual values and the meaning of life. Here it is better to use methods of individual informal conversations or personal stories as a source of proclamation.
- b) Values and social norms - this point is intertwined with point a) - preferences for individualism or collectivism influence the methods chosen. In

collectivist cultures, collaboration is used more often - e.g. group teaching. In individualistic cultures, more emphasis is placed on independent projects and individual presentations.

- c) Communication - it is necessary to take into account different norms in communication - e.g. whether it is acceptable to listen to the teacher or to ask questions or discuss with him/her and whether it is acceptable to show disagreement. In hierarchical cultures, the teacher is seen as the authority and the audience passively receives information, e.g. lectures or analytical work with text can be used here. Cultures that emphasise individuality place emphasis on personal opinion and discussion; practical exercises or project methods can be used here.
- d) Spiritual leadership - according to the cultural background there is a different approach to authority and therefore to spiritual leaders. In cultures that respect authority, listeners will receive clearly articulated spiritual advice. In individualistic cultures, on the other hand, a more facilitative, dialogical pastoral approach and the individual's personal responsibility for his or her own spiritual growth are necessary.
- e) Motivation - the cultural influence is also evident in students' attitudes, their motivation, what they expect and what they see as success. If it is a competitive environment and the emphasis is on results, performance-oriented and comparative methods will be chosen. Conversely, if the emphasis is on an individualised approach, it is better to use e.g. project-based learning or experiential learning on the actual concept.
- f) Perception of difficult life situations - cultural context also influences how people perceive illness, death or suffering. Some cultures see suffering as an opportunity for spiritual growth, while in others it is a source of anxiety and fear. A pastoral approach must reflect this and choose an appropriate didactic method of proclamation.
- g) Community structures and traditions - in traditional communities, pastoral care focuses on the family and the wider community, with pastoral workers working with whole groups across generations. In individualistic societies, pastoral care focuses on individuals or smaller groups, with an emphasis on personal growth and relationship with faith.

Selected methods and their cultural adaptation

The cultural background not only influences the acceptance of pastoral activities, but also the intensity of the experience and the resulting outreach, the

transmission of the message, and the integration into the daily life and values of individuals and communities. Each of these selected methods has its validity in a given cultural context and can enhance the relationship between the pastoral worker and the community being reached.

- a) The narrative method - storytelling is one of the oldest and very effective methods in pastoral care of the community, which has a strong oral tradition and becomes an inalienable element of pastoral care. It is possible to tell biblical stories, use local history, legends, mythology, and personal testimonies.
- b) Ritual activities - rituals and liturgical ceremonies are indispensable in pastoral care in terms of linking spiritual experience and faith content. The cultural context of the community determines the appropriateness, e.g. symbolic rituals such as candle lighting or offerings, while in other communities the emphasis is on processions or pilgrimages or congregational singing during ceremonies. Whereas in Asian communities, for example, ceremonies may be more meditative. Respect for the cultural context, local customs and symbols is crucial to the acceptance of the message.
- c) Dialogical method - this is a group meeting and discussion as an opportunity to exchange and share perspectives on a given topic, to share experiences and to search together for answers to questions of faith. This method is particularly appropriate in communities based on shared experiences, where everyone can contribute their perspective. In Asian communities, for example, it is necessary to respect local authorities and to respect hierarchical relationships in the discussion. In individualistic cultures, this method can be used in smaller, focused groups where everyone can share their relationship to the faith.
- d) Pastoral Conversations - Individual pastoral conversations focus on individual support and spiritual guidance. It is a method that is welcomed in individualistic cultures, especially when the individual approach is the starting point for spiritual growth and reflection. In communal cultures, it is necessary to complement the individual conversation with the experience of a community gathering.
- e) Experiential pastoral care - Experiential pastoral care offers activities that also have a spiritual dimension, such as the creation of a common project, pilgrimages and, last but not least, charitable activities.

Traditional and modern concepts of pastoral care

Tradition and modernisation have an indispensable place in pastoral care and can often complement each other. The traditional approach provides continuity,

and stability, grows out of cultural roots and relies on proven methods. The modern approach to pastoral care allows us to respond to the changing needs of society and to communicate more effectively with the emerging generation. Although at first glance it may seem so, these concepts are not contradictory, but rather complementary. Tradition provides a solid foundation, and proven spiritual and moral values. The goal of traditional pastoral didactics is to ensure the continuity of faith and religious skills. In this concept, the clergy has the role of guarantor in the didactic process, transmitting the basic truths of faith and moral guidance. Traditional practices include the observance of liturgical ceremonies, symbols, prayers and customs.

Traditional pastoral didactics

It relies on the tradition of the Church, the authority of spiritual leaders who represent and transmit the traditional values and spiritual life of the community. It is also about maintaining continuity and identity.

- a) Authority and Tradition - The cleric is seen as the mediator of God's Word, Church tradition, and Church doctrine. His authority gives weight to the teaching and helps to maintain continuity of doctrine and faith. The catechism (a summary of doctrine in the form of questions and answers) is a classic method of helping to inculcate the basic truths of the faith. This method is based on rote learning.
- b) Preaching and Interpretation of Biblical Texts - Preaching is one of the main methods of traditional teaching whereby the interpretation of the text and the resulting recommendations for life are imparted. It is about emphasizing the sacredness of the texts. In addition to preaching, prayer is a pillar of faith, e.g. the Our Father. The individual approaches the texts presented with respect and humility. The memorization of prayers is seen as a means of deepening faith.
- c) Symbols and rituals - Traditional pastoral care uses rituals and symbols as important didactic tools. Traditional rituals such as Baptism, Holy Communion or festive seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter provide a space for learning and understanding the faith through symbolic acts. This creates an emotional and spiritual experience that deepens the inner understanding of spiritual truths. Teaching through visual symbols such as icons, altars, crosses, etc. leads to a sensory perception of the sacred and then to a deeper grasp of the faith.

Modern pastoral didactics

The modern concept of pastoral didactics is a response to the changes in society, to the current needs and challenges in the spiritual sphere. It allows to accentuate the changing social and cultural environment. Different influences - generational, cultural or technological - meet here. Modern didactic practices are based on interactive and participatory methods. The priority is the active involvement of students, critical thinking and the transfer of spiritual values into everyday life. The pastoral worker takes more the role of a guide and supports the process of independent spiritual discovery.

- a) Participatory approach - teaching is conducted in the form of open discussions, practical activities, and sharing personal experiences, thus participating in the teaching and creating a personal relationship to the curriculum. This approach promotes skills such as analysing and applying religious teachings to everyday life. The minister takes the role of facilitator.
- b) Adaptation to individual needs - modern didactics recognize and respect that believers have different needs, experiences, expectations and levels of spiritual understanding. Pastoral care seeks to reflect this diversity and create space for the spiritual growth of each participant or community.
- c) Emphasis on topicality and practical application - teaching does not neglect current social and ethical topics and emphasizes interpersonal relationships, social justice, personal development, and mental health. In this way, faith is connected to everyday life, which reinforces its proclamatory value.
- d) Use of modern technologies - modern pastoral care uses modern technologies, communication platforms, and mobile applications. This opens up new opportunities to reach a wider range of recipients, especially the younger generation. Online formats allow access to study materials (webinars, podcasts, digital recordings of lectures, texts and commentaries on them). Flexibility and easy accessibility from anywhere is important here. Online worship services, Bible classes, and discussion meetings allow participation by those who cannot be present in person.
- e) Focus on social engagement - modern pastoral care also encourages activities that promote social involvement, e.g. individual help for the needy, charitable events, and support for environmental projects. Provides individual support in crises.

Modern methods do not have to mean the rejection of traditional methods, they are not contradictions, on the contrary, they can complement each other. Tradition can be seen as the solid foundation and authenticity of pastoral care, while modern methods bring the faith closer to the younger generation. The right

balance between traditional and modern concepts allows pastoral care to remain alive, relevant and appealing in every age and for everyone.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by approaching didactic emphases in pastoral care, it is clear that the effective use of all - i.e. modern and traditional educational methods and practices plays a key role in the spiritual life of individuals and church communities. We have come to recognize that educational approaches built on understanding and adapting to the needs of the individual or community foster mutual cohesion, and understanding greatly enhances the proclamation part of pastoral care and contributes to personal and spiritual growth. Contemporary pastoral care must be able to respond to the needs and challenges of our time and must include the use of modern technologies, and diverse educational strategies that contribute to broadening the reach of the Church's activities, thus enabling it to reach a wide range of people and creating space for the active involvement of all sectors of society. Thus, creating space for a vibrant and dynamic growth of faith and its interweaving into everyday life. At the same time, it is also essential that the educational process of religious communities focuses on creating a safe and supportive environment where it is possible to freely express and share one's experiences and insights since in this way pastoral care becomes not only a promoter of the faith but also a way of strengthening interpersonal relationships and building and strengthening community cohesion.

The paper emphasizes that didactics is not just a theoretical basis or concept, but is mainly a practical "tool" that can contribute to the revitalization of church communities and to the transmission and deepening of faith. Strategies leading to activation of participation in the life of the community not only strengthen the spiritual life of the individual but also contribute to the proclamation of God's Word to the general public.

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