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ROLE OF MERCY IN CHRISTIAN SELF-UPBRINGING

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The article is aimed at showing the meaning of role of mercy in Christian up-bringing. The dimensions of Christian merciful upbringing cover the self-conscience level and self-active level where mercy takes its place there in sanctuary of interior meeting man with God that is expressed in latent dialogue between them. It requires understanding of the differences between notions "upbringing" and "self-upbringing". The first one focuses on exterior influences on a person that undergoes the process of bringing up, the second one focuses on interior factors that need deep consciousness "pushing the person" towards more mature attitude reflected in merciful acts of doing. These acts have the inner and outer character. They let lifelong process of upbringing go towards transforming itself into self-upbringing one. Hence, this article is going to depict some aspects of the latent area of experience fostering building up the mature attitude of a man.

Key words: upbringing, self-upbringing, mercy, Christian self-upbringing transformation, role of mercy.

Introduction

As far, as the role of mercy in Christian selfupbringing is considered, there is the need of depicting the meaning of self-upbringing, Christian selfupbringing, mercy, bringing up mercy imagination from early stage of a human being, acts of moral development, acts of merciful development, mechanisms of these acts, examples of mercy behavior, and Christian merciful upbringing of those who are responsible for educative process, is what will be highlighted in the article. The dimensions of Christian merciful upbringing cover the self- conscience level and self- active level where mercy takes its place there in sanctuary of interior meeting man with God that is expressed in latent dialogue between them. The issues mentioned above imply the following scientific questions to be posed: What is the role of mercy in Christian self-upbringing? How to bring up a person in the context of two mercy dimensions already stated? Why is upbringing of a mercy imagination crucial for a complex human being development?

The theme of the article can be one of a key problem to be challenged by teachers, and any educators

who treat a Christian merciful self-upbringing as a pragmatic way leading a person to self-realization, regardless of any obstacles that can appear within any stage of life.

However, the most important aspect is to form an attitude of self-upbringing directed to become merciful. Whenever a man becomes merciful as an effect of the process of merciful self-upbringing, he/she becomes an example to follow by those who contribute in building up the relation assigning the shape of the environment, merciful environment that helps all its members become missioners of merciful love.

The aim of the study

Thus, the material beneath will be analyzed in the specific aspects of: self-upbringing understood widely from mercy perspective; discovering merciful God in relationship with a man; merciful upbringing in practice.

Theoretical framework and research methods

In perspective of Polish pedagogical concepts, the analysis of relevant scientific research and publications

covering the subject of upbringing and self-upbringing. authors as Matulka (1995), Jundzwłł (2001), Balcer (2015), Zabielski (2006), etc. indicate the meaning of values that are fundamentals for these areas. In terms of pedagogical axiology one should mention: Kunowski (2003), Rynio (2004), Nowak (2001), Łobocki (2009), Kowalski (2010), Marek (2017), Chałas (2003, 2007, 2009, 2016), Maj (2016), Walulik (2011), Miśkowiec (2015), Szymańska (2014, 2016, 2017) and so on. To understand the values in the process of integral development and upbringing (e. g. Kunowski, 2003) it is necessary to depict the anthropological understanding of the man (Wojtyła, 2000; Krapiec, 2005) that correlates with cognitive-humanistic social (Dąbrowski, 1975; Kozielecki, 2000) concepts. However, the particular issue about the role of mercy in the process of upbringing is rarely undertaken, thus, the authors direct their attention to it. The way of its analysis and presentation is tightly connected with depicting the aspect of responsibility and has not only the theoretical but also pragmatic dimension, what appears to be novum in the field of the authors' scientific interests.

Results

Self-upbringing – expression of responsibility for own development. Man constantly forms and changes himself in his personal interiority throughout the history of his life. At the beginning of life it happens under the upbringing acts of doing, which are undertaken by family, school, and other upbringing environments. A man gradually gaining the consciousness of "self", should be aware of necessity of own influences, what results in making the work effort upon himself. Thus, lifelong process of upbringing goes towards transforming itself into self-upbringing one.

It is worth mentioning that only physical development occurs naturally, other sorts of development need different circumstances for its growth. The personal effort here is understood as a constant overcoming "Self", and is aligned with posing "Self" higher demands (Matulka 1995, p. 43). Realizing them appears as a must that encompasses varied, multi-side areas of personal development. From self-upbringing perspective the man's multi-side development is very probable. Selfupbringing turns out to be the only one possible path to reach maturity in all dimensions of personality and human activity. This means a process of perceiving a particular model to follow and designating goals to be reached successfully. Also, this means an activity undertaken in order to perform actions oriented towards personal, spirituals, and social development. Dabrowski (1975, p. 39) claims that self-upbringing starts at the moment of giving birth to personality. At this moment, the process of self-conscience and self-knowledge has the beginning. In everyday life self-upbringing is described as the realization of particular upbringing goals that emerge from personality model.

One can say about self-upbringing existence only when man's own activity is a subject oriented towards it. The man completely consciously and actively takes a stance on own development process. In upbringing acts of doing, the man becomes an active subject of own activities, the subject that brings up himself (Półturzycki, 1978, p. 14). This subjectivity reveals itself in: managing own behavior, taking decisions comprising themselves, reflecting upon "Self" and own life, free pursuit to overcome varied weaknesses, and developing own abilities and skills. Work upon oneself demands to go through particular stages of self-upbringing process (Jundzwiłł, 2001, p. 349).

The structure of self-upbringing activity includes the following components: choice of the model, analysis of the situation, obtaining the knowledge of "self" and self-assessment, taking decision, managing "self" in pursuit to obtain the goal and self-control. In the course of the process, the stages can be repeated, complete and become a basis for the sequent ones (Balcer, 2015, p. 35).

Self-upbringing activities are to cause changes in the man's personality, his specific activity, and enable him to express himself in a surrounding word. Self-upbringing means the not only work upon oneself but cooperation with others as well. It is understood as stable readiness to learn, learn from others, learn from events, lifelong learning of the world and "self" thanks to others while using own every-day reality for own growth, what appears very crucial in multi-side development.

Taking responsibility for shaping own humanity, for a religious man, will be interpreted as taking responsibility for the shape of own faith. Self-upbringing in the Christian life means autonomous personality formation in the religious aspect and an attitude to different signs of life from Jesus' doctrine point of view. The aim of the Christian self-upbringing is not the only one to achieve a human being maturity, but also Christian one, that finally turns out to be sanctity. This aim cannot be achieved only with the natural devices but it requires transcendence and the cooperation with Christ. Thus, for a faithful man, self-upbringing means also the cooperation with God, a constant preparation of own nature for His grace perceiving, and activity taken to reach the life goal that is assumed to reveal the mystery of God's activity in the man (Balcer, 2015, pp. 35–37).

Christian self-upbringing goes into becoming more and more human being, to be Christian in order to discover and develop gifts given from God in Self and realize individual calling to sanctity. If the whole man's development can be treated as a task, thus, faith is not given to us in a complete form, and one should achieve it during the whole life. Christian self-upbringing needs strategies and methods enabling effective goal realization. John Paul II points at prayer, live contact with God's Word; participation in sacrament life, imitating personal models, putting demands oneself; professional work (also education); contribution to cultural goods; interaction with nature and nature contemplation (Rynio, 2004, p. 190).

Furthermore, Christian self- upbringing is going to complete development of human person, formed on Jesus Christ model. That is why, the sense of self-upbringing is to get in personal touch with Jesus Christ. The effort taken in this self-upbringing spirit is tightly connected with taking own responsibility and activity during the process of achieving perfection imitating Christ. For Christian who is to take up the process of self-upbringing as a challenge, the following words, hidden in the gospel by saint Mattew: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48), should be the goal of the pursuits, and the reference point to any activities and actions taken by the man.

The Bible reference quoted above is specified in calling from Evangel according to Saint Lucas: "Be merciful, as your Father is merciful" (Łk 6:36). These words are fundamental for an attempt of defining the role of mercy in Christian self-upbringing.

Discovering merciful God and His relationship with a man. In Christian self-upbringing, the central place in hierarchy of values is assigned for love expressed in a varied way to God and people. At its basis, there will be the commandment of God's and human person's love. The sign of this love will be mercy, which means the collaboration with God while discovering and taking His mercy that takes its place in man's life.

God is the source and the giver of mercy. God constantly responds to the man with His grace. The highest sign of His merciful proof of love is God Son's incorporation. Christ becomes Father's tool of mercy in relation to people. This happens by performing acts of reconciliation with their Father. "He becomes Father's merciful love mirror. This love intensifies with the contact with bad and man's sin, bears fruits of reconciliation and restoration to graces" (Pyc, 2010, p.106). Passion, death on the cross, and resurrection are the climax of revealing the deepest sense of God's mercy (Kowalska, 2011, p. 301).

Mercy is the quality – God's approach that expresses particular respect directed to God. Jon Paul II in Encyclic *Dives in misericordia* gives it the second name of love describing it as the deepest and most

touching aspect. It is the most human quality of Deity, in which its love is gracious, sympathetic, and erects the man above his weakness towards never-ending God's sanctity areas. Saint Faustyna Kowalska received the order to tell people that mercy is God's highest quality and all His masterpieces are crowned by mercy (Kowalska, 2011, p. 301).

The man is bound to face such a truth while taking the effort for self-upbringing. The condition to accomplish effectively self-upbringing work is to know himself/ herself. If the man wants to know the whole truth of himself, he cannot leave aside the truth about human being sinfulness, but he must contemporaneously know and open himself for God's merciful love activity.

Mercy has its beginning in God, reveals itself to man in the whole salvation economy, understood as God's Mercy revelation for human person, as God's love sign. In the act of mercy God is This who as the first One bends over the sinner. God revealed in Jesus knows that the man himself cannot know Him, and that is why, He as the first One takes initiative (Rychlicki, 2010, p.444). Thus, the fundamental of self-upbringing process, the knowledge and affirmation of the truth about God, and truth about man being wounded by original sin and redeemed appears the key one. Mercy matches not only with the deepest truth of this love, which God is (and which is God), but also man's inner truth.

Mercy always means the form of personal God's meeting with the man. "It is the personal interaction between persons unified with each other with the love bonds. This kind of bond is marked with specific and unique character. Persons participating in the mercy act are seen in the equal domain, notifying and respecting dignity assigned to each of them" (Zabielski, 2006, p. 65).

Affirmation of the truth abort merciful God, hence, will be the fundamental for discovery of own quality and dignity, for invisible God in superabundance of his love who turns Himself to people, regards them as friends, exists with them in order to invite them to community with Himself, and host them in it. In this community all the Christians as new creatures, thanks to rebirth from water and Holy Spirit call themselves God's children and they are them due to the Baptism Sacrament (DW Ch 2). It is a holy gate for the Christian, who consequently is obliged to make the self-upbringing effort, accept own sinity and tawdriness, finally experience and discover God's mercy directed to him on the affirmation of own creature dignity and infancy rendered by God.

Christian upbringing intends to form a perfect man inside according to Christ's whole measure. God looking at people with benevolence and friendship, dedicates his own word to them, which should find the answer from the man. The sense of God's grace means a personal meeting with the Lord crucified and raised from dead through Holy Spirit activity, especially designated in sacraments. This personal meeting has three selfupbringing dimensions. First is the meeting which transforms the man. This meeting is not a single one, but extends throughout the man's whole life. Speaking in a different way, grace is the continuous meeting with live God in Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit. These meetings build a new relationship between Trinity God and the man, the relationship which lasts, deepens, and develops (Wołyniec, 2010, p. 197). The sign of this relationship will be the trust in God, never-ending dialogue with Him leading to constant formation based on Jesus person's example. The man will frequently experience God's mercy on this formation path, especially through sacrament life, particularly in sacrament of penance and Eucharist. Making self-upbringing effort requires defining the goals and making appropriate choices on the way that leads to achievements.

The second dimension of personal meeting with merciful God will be to discover own calling in Him. God stepping towards the man considers his unique and non-repeatable state. The man making a personal relationship with God finds God's concrete plan for himself. Thus, disclosing own calling and choosing own life way with its goal, will be the man's answer given to God's love. This answer will be given through neverending choices each day of his life.

Meeting with God's mercy takes place in the most unrepeatable way in the man's conscience, where he can transcend himself, getting into the dialogue with God. It is the most internal place of conscience where the mystery of grace and man's free will is going to be fulfilled (KDK 6). The man will enter in the dialogue with Merciful God in a specific and unique way. However, this requires the fundamental task to be performed while bringing up Self. It encompasses the self-upbringing effort put particularly on the conscience formation. The conscience cannot be imbued with the fear of punishment, but has to be brought up in order to recognize the source and the whole good in God (Matulka, 2007, pp. 174–175).

Mercy in Christian pedagogical practice. Presenting the meaning of mercy in practice in the context of self-upbringing and its role, it is necessary to deal with some key aspects that seem to be fundamental. First of all, one should know: what role of mercy imagination is performed in moral development of a human being; secondly, how it is transferred into acts of doing; thirdly, how it makes a human being more merciful from self up-bringing point of view; fourthly;

how it is transferred into work with others to help them become merciful on the way of self-upbringing.

Showing the first aspect demands to focus on the key notions that highlights the others. Discussing the role of mercy imagination in moral development leads to the explanation of imagination, moral imagination, mercy imagination and moral development. Maruszewski (2011, pp. 267-269) claims that imagination is both a particular cognitive process and ability to form images, especially creative ones. Someone who has a rich imagination can create the images of items that has never seen in life. These images can be described as mental pictures of reality resembling the insight notices that appear during absence of the item. They can be either extracted from memory or constructed from elements comprised of it. All kinds of images: visual, audio, move, taste and smell ones indicate at the reality experienced both insight and outsight. Finally, they are exposed in peculiar way nurturing the receiver's imagination that encompasses all elements in shaping new pictures of reality. Guroian states: "Each image (...) gives birth to more images" (2005, p.1). Thus, they enhance a person's creativity affecting reason, emotions, feelings, motivation, and will; make a human being wax in overcoming difficulties or wane in searching the sense of life. Images become moral and immoral, similarly, imagination becomes moral and immoral, what depends on ethical upbringing from early stages of life. As a result, it can be claimed that moral imagination produces moral images, helps the person work on own reason, emotions, feelings, motivation and will, while immoral imagination can cause negative effects on a human individual and social personality. The author says: "Where there is no real imagination, itself a form of vision, the people will become captives of corrupt and corrupting imaginations, for while imagination as such may be an innate human capacity, it needs proper nurture and cultivation. If the tea rose is not properly attended, it withers, and the thistle grows in its place. If the moral imagination is not fed by religious sentiment and supported by reason, it will wither and be replaced by the corrupt forms of imagination" (Guroian, 2005, p. 1). The author distinguishes such sorts of imagination: idyllic, idolatrous, diabolic and enriched. For the purpose of this article, the last one appears crucial. That is why, he enlightens its meaning when writes: "a well-fortified and story-enriched moral imagination helps children and adults move about world with moral intent and ultimately with faith, hope, and charity" (Guroian, 2005, p. 12). Moral enriched imagination becomes a source of motivation that moves feelings, emotions, reason and will do unfathomable good for others. It is the key to charitable acts of doing that can be understood as

merciful acts of doing which indicate mercy as a virtue itself. In the context of the material presented above, the need of analyzing the notion of mercy imagination emerges as valid, especially, that a person who intends to be brought up in Christian value system needs to take a hard self work on bringing up own moral and mercy imagination. Nowak pays attention to imagination of mercy and claims that imagination: in others can be formed only by those who possesses it, and transferred into own life acts of doing, transferred into didactic and upbringing activity; is called and necessary in difficult and critical moments of life; is formed in relationships between a form teacher and a pupil (2008, p. 381). This notion needs to be stopped reflectively for a while. The sentence explaining that imagination of mercy can be formed in others only when somebody possess it, implies the fact that the starting point lies in self-upbringing running towards mercy. It leads to the statement that mercy imagination resonates with deep latent penchant to serve oneself in order to serve others. Such servitude approach is positively malleable in moral development of a man, what is aligned with self-moral development. Moral development means the process that starts with moral heteronomy and goes to moral autonomy (Gałkowski, 2003, p. 114). Szymańska states that "moral autonomy is connected with the person's skills of creating social interactions based on mutual respect between people, equality and justice. Teachers possessing their own autonomous system and hierarchy of values, moral principles, should behave morally, being open and ready to recognize consciously their self-sense of moral duty and willingness to fulfill moral standards" (2014, p. 44). But, the opening moment is to affirm own dignity and identity trough experiencing self-moral autonomy, what emphasizes the meaning of Christian identity in building the self-upbringing attitude to Self and others. Reaching this level of identity called the postconventional one (Witkowski, 1988, p. 197–219), appears to be an objective in a conscious process of selfupbringing. Thus, moral autonomy resonates with innate, latent penchant to behave morally, to behave mercifully, to make love as a stream of goodness which is the breath of love (Hildebrand, 1984, p. 46) reflected in acts of doing. Wojtyła acknowledges that act of doing can be named as a man's conscious activity (2000, p. 74). The author introduces the term actus personae which encompasses actus voluntaris and actus humanus in itself. He underlines that man personally experiences his own act of doing, being his causer treating moral positive and negative values as own. He lives them on the bases of relevance being both sense and assessment. Hence, the act of doing is tightly connected with values confirmed personally on individual level (Wojtyła, 2000, p. 97). It

reveals who the person is and where is on a self-developmental stage. *Actus personae* indicate at merciful aspect of activity done on an intimate individual and social level.

To understand clearly the mechanism of mercy acts of doing in the context of self-upbringing process going towards being merciful to Self, it is necessity to present the scheme of human acts of doing by Krapiec (2005, p. 291). This scheme includes three kinds of order, put into three stages. The first one is named as the order of intent as a basis for act of doing. The second one is named as the order of concrete acts of doing aligned with the choice of means necessary to achieve the goal. The third one is named as the order of performing the free decision by man. All this stages indicate the meaning of employing the intellect, will and feelings. At the foot of them there is love interpreted in category of general analogical good. Love of good is a desire of personal, individual happiness that moves the will and helps to create the vision of concrete good by intellect. The vision awakes the will in desiring this good, what provokes intellect to select the means for realizing the good. The will accepts or rejects them. Here, the practical justice upon particular acts of doing appears thanks to intellect. It elicits the free choice of will what makes intellect demand to perform the act and move the will towards the delight of the goal achievement fruition - leading to desire satisfaction - quietatio appetitus - delectation (Krapiec, 2005, p. 291). This mechanism of acts of doing should become a challenge for anyone who takes care of self-moral development, self-mercy moral development. It requires to be a reflective self-merciful practitioner who focuses on quality of own intellect, will and feelings, while organizing own life project, while making constructive changes in any approach that should serve oneself in becoming more and more mature. It is aligned with selfforgiveness and self-reconciliation, regardless of any situations, what is strictly combined with the love commandment, already mentioned.

The analysis of moral imagination, mercy imagination, moral development and acts of doing enables us to ponder the meaning of mercy acts of doing. All the terms resonate with each other. Without moral imagination we cannot say anything about mercy imagination and moral acts of doing; without mercy imagination we cannot say anything about mercy acts of doing. Mercy imagination becomes a strong power to move the will, intellect and feelings to perform mercy acts of doing. This seems to be a key factor for Self if he wants to be merciful, for the others who are responsible for self-upbringing and upbringing others, especially the Christian educators and teachers. There is a must for

them to be exemplary models for the witnesses of their lives, pupils, students who should respect them, start imitating their style of being based on self-merciful upbringing leading to self-development. It is a tremendous challenge for those, who cannot reject the moral values in their activities. It is a fundamental pillar of their personal competences.

Due to the analysis of the contents mentioned above, the teachers selecting the educational material, methods and means in realizing their objectives should remember that aspect of mercy is very crucial; what is more, they should remember about building their own mercy attitude to students. The real examples of mercy motivate the students to become merciful. Moving mercy imagination awakes moral approaches to life. It helps them experience the delight of mercy. It is a matter of transaction between the event and someone's experience while feeling it. Rosenblatt claims: "Human activities and relationships are seen as transactions in which the individual and the social, cultural and natural elements interfuse" (1988, p. 2). Considering the author's point of view, one can transmit it into the domain of moral upbringing as well. Remembering the meaning of transaction between different subjects and the means of contents they are committed into, the upbringing function appears clear, particularly while using the language that is a powerful stream in building moral and mercy imagination. The author says: "The individual's share in the language, then, is that part, or set of features, of the public system that has been internalized in the individual's experiences with words in life situations. There residue of such transactions in particular natural and social context constitutes a kind of linguisticexperiential reservoir. Embodying funded our assumptions, attitudes, and expectations about the word and about language this inner capital is all that each of us has to start from speaking, listening, writing and reading. We make meaning, we make sense of a new situation or transaction by applying, revising or extending elements drawn from, selected from, our personal linguistic, experiential reservoir" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 3). In this context, mercy acts of doing seem to be embedded in the meaning of the word that plays a great role in forming moral imagination. To create transactional relation between the text and the reader, the teacher is bound up to develop his/her competences also through reflective practice that is fundamental to be competent and professional. The example of mercy act doer is shown in well known parable of Good Samaritan by Luke (10.25 – 10.37). In this parable Samaritan has a mercy imagination that enables him to apply the perspective principle in his activity. Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. Samaritan, as he was travelling he noticed a man who was attacked by robbers, left by them in a very bad state. When he saw him, "he took pity on him, went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have" (Luk 34-35). Samaritan could not leave the Man. He was all committed to his merciful act of doing. Someone might say that taking the man to the inn was enough, for he had own life plans to do. Samaritan was found out to be more sensitive and more predictable; he also revealed responsibility from the early beginning to the end. Thus, to be mercy means to be responsible and bears consequences for the acts done to help others with love attitude. Mercy value overwhelms the reasonable motives of acts of doing. Kunowski claims that values are the magnet that either attracts man towards itself or designates the line of man's orientation and acts of doing (2003, p. 43). The merciful responsibility has some indicators that portrait a merciful person who: pursuits to inner harmony (verbal and non-verbal; emotional, performative); intellectual and considers consequences of own decisions and doing; assess the condition of other people; does not undertake activities that exceed his possibility; finishes tasks he/she was about to do; takes care of goods given to him/her; tries to develop the goods assigned to him/her; sees the common good and behaves to protect it; is worth trusting; has a sense of own value as a human being (Ostrowska, 1998, p. 29-30). The parable about good Samaritan suits perfectly the characteristic of merciful responsibility. Having this characteristic in mind, teachers are obliged to design own work in such a way that depicts the value of mercy. There is the need to use some examples based on parables taken from Bible in a processed way adequate to student's lives. They are to help them discover the deep meaning of mercy in own experience through the specific transactional relationship. Using exposed (impressive and expressive) methods in the work, bridges the theoretical, practical and problematic aspect of mercy. Planning the lesson, the meeting the Christian teacher takes responsibility for own quality of actus personae. He/ she will leave some traces in students' minds and hearts. That is why, the Christian teacher must wisely balance between curriculum requirements and latent message of his/her mission. Encouraging the students to be involved in an inductive way of solving problems brings fruit for new generations. Attitude of mercy present in literature, history, art, biology, etc. displayed in the transactional method enriches both teachers and students who eagerly, gradually may overcome many obstacles finding the merciful approach to them. The teachers must always remember that contents introduced to students should move their will, intellect and touch their hearts expending their experiences rooted in reflection. The teachers become merciful reflective practitioners only when they are professional in the aspect of Christian self-upbringing designated by mercy.

Conclusions

The problematic aspect of the role of mercy in Christian self-upbringing encompasses the necessity of specific lifelong formation that should concern the multiside dimension of personal development from holistic, integral perspective. Mercy in Christian self-upbringing emerges from God's mercy to the man who does not have to deserve it, who is just given to him as a gift. The conscience, self-conscience upbringing becomes very crucial for the whole process while Christian up-bringing is processed, transformed into self-upbringing, what is shown in the article. It concerns all the subjects engaged in the process. It becomes a challenge for Christian educators, teachers, parents, etc. who are obliged to implement mercy into their lives, to change their environments. The contents of material presented above can imply some scientific questions such as the following: - How does the formation process of selfupbringing look like from perspective of mercy? How do the educative programs represent the value of mercy in practice? How are they true and realistic? What is the role of mercy in building up Self conscience identity, Christian identity. These questions need to be analyzed and its implications should be incorporated into practice, if our lost contemporary society is going to become the civilization of merciful love that guarantees peace, unity and happiness.

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