



***Fr. Bolesław Żychliński's (1857–1929)***  
***Guidelines for Family Religious Education***  
***Wychowania religijne w rodzinie –***  
***postulaty ks. Bolesława Żychlińskiego (1857–1929)***

**ABSTRACT**


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**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:** This study aims to provide an overview of Fr. Bolesław Żychliński's pedagogical views on religious education within the family and to present the educational guidelines he addressed to parents.

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**THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS:** What practical educational guidelines did Fr. Bolesław Żychliński offer for the religious upbringing of children, specifically addressing mothers and fathers? This article employs historical-pedagogical analysis of printed sources to explore these questions.

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**THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION:** The article begins by explaining the basic concepts related to the topic. It then provides comments on Fr. Żychliński's biography, followed by a detailed presentation of his educational guidelines for mothers and his recommendations for the educational duties of fathers.

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**RESEARCH RESULTS:** Fr. Żychliński's educational postulates regarding religious upbringing in the family fall within the domain of the pedagogy of religion. He advises parents to take educational measures aimed at fostering and solidifying faith in their children while encouraging good behavior.

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**CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPLICABLE VALUE OF RESEARCH:** Fr. Żychliński's educational postulates offer valuable guidelines for modern parents on the practice of religious education within the family.

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→ **KEYWORDS:** **RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING, UPBRINGING IN THE FAMILY, PEDAGOGY OF RELIGION, PEDAGOGY OF THE FAMILY, FR. BOLESŁAW ŻYCHLIŃSKI (1857–1929)**

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## STRESZCZENIE

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**CEL NAUKOWY:** Ukazanie zarysu poglądów pedagogicznych ks. Bolesława Żychlińskiego w zakresie wychowania religijnego w rodzinie. Przedstawienie wskazówek wychowawczych skierowanych do rodziców.

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**PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE:** Jakie praktyczne wskazówki wychowawcze odnoszące się do wychowania religijnego dzieci w rodzinie ks. Bolesław Żychliński adresował do matek, a jakie do ojców? W artykule posłużono się metodą analizy historyczno-pedagogicznej źródeł drukowanych.

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**PROCES WYWODU:** Wychodząc od wyjaśnienia podstawowych pojęć związanych z tematem artykułu, zaprezentowano uwagi do biografii ks. Żychlińskiego, a następnie jego wskazówki wychowawcze kierowane do matek oraz zalecenia dotyczące obowiązków wychowawczych ojców.

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**WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ:** Postulaty wychowawcze ks. Żychlińskiego odnoszące się do wychowania religijnego w rodzinie wpisują się w obszar pedagogii religii. Duchowny proponuje rodzicom podejmowanie oddziaływań wychowawczych, zmierzających do wzbudzenia i utwalania wiary w dzieciach oraz praktykowania przez nie dobrych zachowań.

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**WNIOSKI, REKOMENDACJE I APLIKACYJNE ZNACZENIE WPŁYWU BADAŃ:** Wśród postulatów wychowawczych ks. Żychlińskiego współcześni rodzice mogą odnaleźć ważne wskazówki z zakresu praktyki wychowania religijnego w rodzinie.

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→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**      **WYCHOWANIE RELIGIJNE, WYCHOWANIE W RODZINIE, PEDAGOGIKA RELIGII, PEDAGOGIA RODZINY, KS. BOLESŁAW ŻYCHLIŃSKI (1857–1929)**

## Introduction

Religious education is a nuanced concept. On one hand, it can be seen as the educational activities of an individual, and on the other, it is viewed in the context of faith that shapes a person (Marek, 2014, p. 157; Rynio, 2008, p. 450). Given the various interpretations of “religious upbringing,” we can follow Fr. Zbigniew Marek’s understanding, which describes it as “the process of helping students learn to explain human existence through the lens of religious teachings” (Marek, 2012, p. 34).

The family, as the primary educational environment, plays a crucial role in religious upbringing. In a Christian family, religious upbringing should introduce the Christian worldview and knowledge of God, highlight the significance of an encounter with Him, prepare individuals for participation in Church liturgy, and transmit faith through shared prayer, Bible reading, biographies of saints, and learning the truths of the catechism (Poręba, 2010, pp. 105–110; Rusiecki, 2012, pp. 310–312; Stala, 2016).

Religious education, a key aspect of upbringing, is explored by the pedagogy of religion (Rynio, 2008, p. 450). This field, “situated at the intersection of pedagogy and

theology, examines the educational potential of religion and the theory and practice of its application in various educational settings” (Bagrowicz, 2005b, p. 242). It also “emphasizes the role of religion in promoting a holistic understanding of human development” (Bagrowicz, 2005b, p. 242). According to Fr. Jerzy Bagrowicz, this discipline encompasses “the entire process of religious teaching and upbringing, aiming for a comprehensive religious formation oriented toward living according to Christian principles” (Bagrowicz, 2005b, pp. 242–243). Fr. Zbigniew Marek adds that “religious pedagogy” should also apply to non-Christian religions (Marek, 2012, p. 30).

From the perspective of this article, family pedagogy is another important concept. Pedagogy refers to “the set of educational methods and strategies employed by educators,” comprising the practical art of educating (*Pedagogia*, n.d.). Family pedagogy, in contrast, “involves activities within the family that impact all its members, particularly parents’ efforts to educate their children.” These efforts aim to ensure children’s proper functioning within the family and prepare them for adulthood (Werbiński, 2020, p. 12).

Fr. Bolesław Żychliński is recognized among the key figures defining the principles of the pedagogy of religion (Bagrowicz, 2004, 2005a; Rogowski, 2007; Milerski, 2019; Marek & Walulik, 2020; Marek, 2022). In his writings, he highlighted the low moral standards of children and adolescents, attributing this to parents who failed to fulfill their educational responsibilities. He believed that these duties should be carried out in the spirit of religious pedagogy and that religious upbringing was the only branch of education capable of contributing to the revival of Polish society and the nation (Żychliński, 1916, p. 9). Acknowledging the gaps in the pedagogical knowledge of parents in his time, he emphasized the need for parents to seek guidance from those well-versed in education, including himself.

Żychliński believed that the primary responsibility for child-rearing lay with mothers (Żychliński, 1911b, p. 21), who, he argued, were better suited than fathers to monitor children and guide their behavior (Żychliński, 1916, p. 13). However, he also stressed that religious upbringing required the strength, effort, and dedication of both parents (Żychliński, 1917a, p. 10).

## A Brief Biography of Fr. Bolesław Żychliński (1857–1929)

Fr. Bolesław Żychliński was a prominent religious writer in the early 20th century. Born on November 30, 1857, in Poznań to a landed gentry family, he graduated from St. Mary Magdalene Gymnasium in 1876 and pursued theological studies in Würzburg. He was ordained a priest on April 24, 1882, and served as a vicar in Bnin and Przemęt. In 1886, he became a confessor and preacher at the Archcathedral Parish in Poznań (Szatkowski, 2009, p. 183). Two years later, he was appointed cathedral vicar and briefly worked as a catechist at the Anastazja Warnke High School for Girls in 1891. That same year, he became chaplain to Archbishop Florian Stablewski, who appointed him vice-rector and Father of the Clergy at the Gniezno Seminary in 1892, where he also taught homiletics and catechetics (*Ks. Bolesław...*, n.d.).

During this period, Żychliński joined the Historical and Literary Department of the Poznań Society of Friends of Science and became president of the Gniezno Association of the Ladies of Charity of St. Vincent a Paulo, an organization involved in charitable activities (NN, 1894). In 1901, he was honored as a canon of the Gniezno Collegiate Church of St. George. Due to ill health, he retired from teaching in 1908 and moved back to Poznań, dedicating himself to writing. He passed away on July 1, 1929, in Poznań (Szatkowski, 2009, p. 183).

His pedagogical writings primarily offered practical advice for parents, focusing on raising children in a Christian manner and emphasizing the responsibilities of parenthood (NN, 1914; Żychliński, 1911a, 1911b, 1911c, 1911d, 1916, 1917a, 1917b, 1928).

## Parenting Advice for Mothers

Fr. Żychliński believed that the key to properly raising children is to set a good and pious example for them to follow. He advised that improving parenting should start with self-improvement, and encouraged mothers to strive for greater holiness. He noted, “Children take after their parents, especially their mothers” (Żychliński, 1911b, p. 13).

He also noted the importance of setting a good example for children, particularly in their early years, which is often neglected. He recommended not only avoiding inappropriate behavior in front of children but also refraining from discussing topics unsuitable for their age. Additionally, he advised ensuring that children only have access to books or images that would positively influence their future moral conduct (Żychliński, 1911a, pp. 12–16; 1911b, pp. 16–18). He further recommended providing a strong example of religious life to young people, making this a condition for receiving the grace and divine blessing needed for moral conduct (Żychliński, 1916, pp. 77–79).

Assuming that the primary responsibility for raising children lies with the mother, Żychliński suggested that mothers focus their educational influence on religious upbringing. He believed that there is nothing more important than instilling the principles of the Christian religion in children. Mothers should remember that children belong to God, who entrusts them to be their guardians and protectors. Most importantly, they should “raise them for God,” and guide them to lead good and honest lives (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 33–34). This, he argued, is essential for achieving both earthly and eternal happiness for children and their parents and for “eradicating even the worst vices in children” (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 21–42).

Żychliński urged that religious upbringing should begin “on the day of the child’s birth.” He outlined this approach as including attending Mass, reciting prayers, teaching the catechism (including the most important passages of the Old and New Testaments, the six truths of faith, the Apostle’s Creed, the Decalogue, the Church commandments, and the significance of major liturgical feasts and religious observances), teaching acts of mercy, and the early reception of the sacraments (confession, communion, confirmation), followed by participation in religious classes (Żychliński, 1911a, pp. 20–37; 1911b, pp. 42–50, 64–79; 1917b, pp. 68–82).

He advocated teaching children that “there is no greater misfortune for a Christian than grave sin.” To achieve this, he suggested that mothers read to their children the lives of saints who regarded such sin as “the greatest, the only real calamity,” thereby providing them with role models. He also recommended that mothers help their children get accustomed to daily examinations of conscience (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 76–77). Żychliński himself authored *Lives of Saintly Mothers*, which served as models for Christian mothers, as well as *Lives of Saintly Spouses and Fathers* (Żychliński, 1925; 1927).

He also instructed mothers not to sink into excessive sorrow over material deprivation, lest this leads children to believe that happiness depends on wealth. According to Żychliński, true happiness comes from having a clear conscience and living without sin. Moreover, he advised against praising people for their wealth or innate qualities and against looking down on people of “low origin” (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 71–74).

Żychliński also warned that a spoiled child, who gets every whim granted, will grow up to be an adult prone to addictions and a sinful life (Żychliński, 1911b, p. 85; 1917b, pp. 50–68). To prevent this, mothers should focus on curbing their children’s tendency to be defiant, especially their desire to get their way in any situation and at any cost (Żychliński, 1911a, pp. 90–105; 1911b, pp. 89–91). In addressing defiance, mothers should not deny their children necessary items they can afford, such as notebooks, books, or clothes. However, they should avoid indulging their children’s whims or letting them to command or disrespect elders, from whom they should feel a sense of dependency. Additionally, mothers should not routinely side with one child, like the younger or weaker one, in disputes, nor should they allow a child to do something the father has forbidden, even if his prohibition was unjustified (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 91–94).

Żychliński also emphasized the importance of encouraging good deeds and nurturing Christian virtues. He noted that mothers have a “duty to teach their children to willingly give from their own possessions, share their property with the less fortunate, and be helpful to their siblings, peers, and servants” (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 96–98). Mothers were to instill piety and obedience in their children. Genuine piety, he believed, was the foundation of a child’s kindness and virtue. Żychliński particularly stressed the importance of nurturing piety in boys, as they would eventually face the “corrupt world.” Girls, destined for domestic life, were seen as less exposed to the dangers of moral failure (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 103–106).

He also saw the cultivation of obedience as essential to counteracting childish mischief. Żychliński primarily blamed parents for their children’s insubordination, arguing that respect, reverence, and love for parents were crucial for fostering obedience. He identified several obstacles to this, including parental quarrels and violence, addictions, criticism of the church, negative attitudes towards priests and religious practices, emotional coldness and indifference towards children, and mistreatment of grandparents by parents (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 108–113).

Fr. Żychliński considered punitiveness one of the most important parental duties and insisted that this “duty... is deeply engraved upon the maternal heart” (Żychliński, 1911b, p. 118). He advised using punishment for every sin a child commits to encourage better behavior. However, he lamented that children are often punished for trivial matters like

“breaking a pot, breaking a window pane, and things like that,” instead of more serious issues like lying, disobedience, or defiance (Żychliński, 1911b, p. 114).

He wrote that the purpose of punishment (e.g., with a rod) was to control the child’s anger and sinful tendencies, thereby preventing sin and its consequences. Achieving this goal was considered a praise-worthy act to God and the greatest benefit for the child. He warned against using punishment as a form of revenge or as an outlet for personal anger. In his opinion, punishment should be administered only for voluntary and knowing sins, not for issues beyond the child’s control, such as stuttering, short memory, or inexperience. He also advised against harsh or unjust punishment.

He recommended using punishment as a last resort, only after other measures like “a kind word, a calm explanation, and gentle requests” had failed. The child needed to understand that the sole purpose of punishment was to improve their behavior, and thus should accept it with some appreciation for the parents’ role in helping them. To ensure this, the mother should administer punishment calmly, showing through her demeanor that it causes her distress. Punishment should also be distressing to the child, appropriate to the misdeed (to avoid invoking God’s wrath), and applied consistently until improvement is seen (Żychliński, 1911a, pp. 67–89; 1911b, pp. 119–131).

Fr. Żychliński’s primary parenting advice was to vigilantly watch over and protect children from evil, which he considered the foremost duty of parents (Żychliński, 1911a, pp. 51–66; 1911b, pp. 132–135). He cautioned that children could inherit their mothers’ addictions and bad habits formed during pregnancy. Consequently, he advised Christian mothers to lead virtuous lives while pregnant to earn God’s grace. He also recommended that children should not be nursed by “immoral women” to prevent them from adopting undesirable behaviors (Żychliński, 1911b, pp. 135–142). This concern extended to caregivers, whose corrupting influence could be significant (Żychliński, 1917b, pp. 23–25).

He advised Christian mothers to become acquainted with their adolescent daughters’ friends and understand their moral principles. If a friend posed a threat to religious life or displayed conduct incompatible with Christian morality, mothers should sever the acquaintance (Żychliński, 1916, pp. 15–16). Maintaining Christian values in a morally lax environment was crucial to him. Therefore, he advocated avoiding books, theatrical performances, or films with content that conflicted with Christian morality (Żychliński, 1916, pp. 18–25). He also emphasized the importance of nurturing the purity of children’s morals (Żychliński, 1917b).

## Recommendations on Fathers’ Parenting Duties

Fr. Żychliński criticized fathers for not being involved in the religious upbringing of their children. He pointed out that fathers often did not care whether their children attended religious lessons, followed religious practices, had a catechism and prayer book, or spoke Polish. He also noted that fathers failed to reprimand their children for disobeying their mothers and allowed behaviors that the mother had forbidden (Żychliński, 1916, p. 14; 1917a,

pp. 5–7). As a solution, Żychliński recommended that fathers take an active role in teaching their children the basic tenets of the faith, so they could “judge everything as the faith teaches and commands” and follow its instructions in every aspect of life (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 22–23). He believed that fathers, who often spent whole days away from home, should ensure that their wives handled religious education, and once the child reached age 10, ensure regular attendance at religious instruction with a priest, both at school and church.

Żychliński stressed that fathers should inspire a love of religious instruction in their children through their own example and by emphasizing its importance. This included buying necessary books for religious education, ensuring the child diligently acquired knowledge, and completed their homework, despite financial constraints (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 26–28). He also urged fathers to work on getting their children into the habit of regularly listening to church and catechetical sermons and to see to it that the sermons were not “unintelligible speech, but ... a true, redemptive light” for them. To achieve this, fathers should attend sermons themselves, or stand in for their wives, and brief their children on the content of church teachings (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 30–33). He also recommended providing children of all ages with books that convey religious truths, either by buying them or borrowing them from the parish library. Reading these books was meant to cultivate piety, broaden knowledge of the faith, and encourage actions in line with one’s conscience, while provoking “revulsion and disgust towards the follies and excesses of youth” (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 33–34).

Another task for fathers was to admonish their wives to monitor their children’s misbehavior, avoid indulging their every demand or whim, and thereby prevent them from becoming too spoiled (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 37–41). According to Żychliński, taming evil inclinations also involved fathers demanding unconditional, blind obedience from their children and punishing them severely for any disobedience (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 41–42). One way to fulfill this duty of religious upbringing was to ask children in groups, after returning from work, about their behavior during the day to see if they had committed any “sins and excesses” (Żychliński, 1917a, p. 43).

He also urged fathers to set a good example for their children by saying morning and evening prayers, attending church services, receiving the sacraments, talking about God and the duties of children, and following the Decalogue and Church commandments. He stressed that a father’s bad example can undermine all the mother’s parenting efforts and the good example she sets, and that the older the children are, the more they need their father’s example (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 48–50). Another recommendation was to guard children from sin, following the principle: “the salvation of the child is most important” (Żychliński, 1917a, p. 58). The clergyman advised that caring parents should choose an occupation for their child that would not lead to moral corruption (for example, a boy showing greed and a desire to get rich should not become a merchant) (Żychliński, 1917a, p. 60).

He also recommended that fathers protect their children from moral corruption, and stressed that the most effective way to do so was through religious upbringing. This approach involved teaching values like piety, obedience, righteousness, chastity, temperance, frugality, devotion to the faith and the Church, and respect for authority. According to Żychliński, a child raised with these principles would likely associate with pious peers

at school and avoid opponents of the Church in college (Żychliński, 1917a, p. 62). He believed that “a child who has received a proper religious upbringing will almost never become completely corrupt.”

Żychliński outlined several remedies for complete moral corruption: a devoted confessor, the prayers of the mother, and the example of a pious father (Żychliński, 1917a, p. 63). He also suggested early warnings against moral danger, seeking moral guidance outside the home through Catholic societies, maintaining frequent and meaningful correspondence with children, visiting those at risk, and bringing them back into the parental home when necessary (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 64–83). Parents should be motivated by their responsibility before God and the understanding that a father’s happiness is tied to raising his children in a religious manner (Żychliński, 1917a, pp. 89–93).

## Conclusion

Fr. Boleslaw Żychliński believed that religious upbringing was the most important aspect of education. In his view, it ensured not only the attainment of eternal life with God but also earthly happiness, which he primarily equated with having a clear conscience resulting from avoiding grave sins. His educational guidelines also included moral and social education. He believed that parents are responsible for religious upbringing and assigned them similar responsibilities and educational guidelines. He thought that the main burden of upbringing fell on the mother, while the father’s role was to support and monitor his wife’s fulfillment of her parental duties.

Żychliński advised that upbringing should begin from the earliest stages of life and place particular importance on “upbringing in faith.” This mainly involved fostering piety and zeal in religious practices, observing the Decalogue and Church commandments, participating in religious lessons, and reading the lives of saints. Beyond instilling faith, he recommended educating children to perform good deeds. He believed that the most effective method of upbringing was to set a good example, both for young children and adolescents. He also advised limiting children’s independence and defiance, demanding obedience, not spoiling them, and, as a last resort, punishing them for deliberate misdeeds. However, he cautioned against punishments that were merely an outlet for the punisher’s emotional tension.

One of Żychliński’s key educational principles was to shield children from content incompatible with Christian morality, which they might encounter in books, movies, theater shows, or through peers and employers who behave indecently. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining the purity of young people’s thoughts and behavior. His advice was mainly supported by the teachings of the Church fathers and biblical quotations, often from the Old Testament, which highlighted God’s strictness and justice rather than love. However, he did encourage love for all people. Fr. Żychliński’s educational principles, whether agreed with or questioned, provide valuable material for discussions on contemporary education.



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