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Abstract of the doctoral dissertation: *The Friends of the Bridegroom Community as an Environment for the Formation of Lay Catholics: A Pastoral-Theological Study*

The history *Friends of the Bridegroom Community* dates to July 2, 2010, when the founding group, consisting of three married couples from Ożarów Mazowiecki and two Pallottine priests, decided to officially establish the community and include the communities formed because of the evangelizations carried out. The Community draws particularly from the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti, the experience of the Schools of New Evangelization and Ignatian spirituality. The name of the community refers to the Old Testament office of the Friend of the Bridegroom associated with the nuptial ceremony, and to the person of St. John the Baptist, who performed this role mystically in relation to Jesus Christ - the Bridegroom of the Church. The beginnings of *the Community of Friends of the Bridegroom* are associated with Ożarów Mazowiecki, while a particular time of numerical growth, the creation of formation materials and the organization of structures fell on the period associated with Lublin. There the official center of the Community was established, along with an office.

The Friends of the Bridegroom Community, which is the subject of the dissertation, is one of the of the new communities that effectively carry out the mission entrusted to the whole Church. In doing so, it considers contemporary socio-cultural and religious challenges characteristic of 21st century man. Its activities are aimed at adults and constitute a Catholic evangelization and formation environment. The Community is part of the trend of new evangelization communities, which are the fruit of the post-conciliar vision of the Church *communio*.

The first chapter describes the foundations of *the Friends of the Bridegroom Community*. Its sources are listed: the spirituality and concept of evangelization and formation of St. Vincent Pallotti; the charismatic experience of the original Community, founded in 2004 and forming until 2010 in Ożarów Mazowiecki; the formation experience of St. Andrew's School of Evangelization. As a result of the analysis of these sources, the features of the original charism of the Community were extracted. The history of the Community's development from 2004, through 2010, to 2024 was also systematized and edited. In this way, the probable causes and consequences evident in the changes in development dynamics and emphasis characteristic of each stage in the formation. Finally, the personnel and territorial-administrative structure of



the community, which has been developed over the years, is presented, mapping the structures of the Catholic Church and the Society of the Catholic Apostolate.

The second chapter details and discusses the theological foundations of formation in this Community, which have never been developed before. Based on an analysis of source materials and theological literature, the christological, pneumatological and ecclesiological foundations of formation were demonstrated. The vocation of Christians to the priestly, prophetic and royal mission in the world is shown. The role of the sacraments of Christian initiation, enabling both the attainment of ever-deeper union with Christ and the fuller realization of Christ's threefold mission, was also presented. The necessity of receiving and cooperating with the Holy Spirit, who leads to the sanctification of man and equips him for the mission of evangelization, was then emphasized. Understood in this way, the Christological and pneumatological foundations lead to the establishment of a *communio*, whose members are characterized by equal dignity, diversity, unity and mission.

The third chapter presents the goals of lay formation in *the Friends of the Bridegroom Community*. The Community considers its goal to lead its members to growth in holiness, the natural manifestation of which is a mature evangelization *ad intra* and *ad extra*, consistent with the consistent with the state vocation. In assisting its members to achieve this, formation leads to three intermediate goals: imparting the fundamentals of spiritual life, which bring the already baptized into a personal relationship with God and provide tools for deepening it; leading members to form a new humanity; and training evangelizers.

The fourth chapter discusses the methods and means used in the formation of the laity in the Community. The author's methods and means of basic formation used in the Community are presented first. Next, methods and means of complementary formation, implemented irregularly, according to the needs of local communities, regions or provinces, are presented. Finally, formation tools borrowed from other communities were discussed.

The purpose of the last chapter was to evaluate and indicate the prospects for the development of the community as a formation environment for lay Catholics. Its characteristics as a formation environment were systematized, and potential directions for development were brought out, proposing appropriate changes.

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