



The family and the values of family life in the science of the Catholic Church – analysis of selected sources

Rodzina i wartości życia rodzinnego w nauce Kościoła katolickiego – analiza wybranych źródeł¹

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Abstract: The aim of this text is to show the place of the family and related values of family life (such as e.g. marriage, child, mother, father, senior citizen), in the Science of the Catholic Church. A qualitative analysis of selected sources has been made, including documents of synods and councils, papal encyclicals and other statements of popes. Some monographs and scientific articles, thematically related to the subject, were also used, including electronic sources. The source materials analysed show the great commitment of the Catholic Church in proclaiming the truth about the family and in shaping the social awareness of its value, as well as the value of marriage as the basis of the family community and of the mother (wife) and father (husband), who are the guardians and guides of the child in life. The Church also draws attention to the value of the child and the need to protect its rights, placing it at the forefront of social and family life, especially sick children, disabled children, children deprived of parental care, victims of war and cataclysms. It attaches great importance to the elderly generation, which acts as a witness to the past and as a source of wisdom for the young, as well as a link between generations and a safeguard for the continuity of the family. Despite the ongoing changes in the Science of the Catholic Church, its constant concern for the family and the values connected with it can be visible.

Keywords: Catholic Church, child, family, marriage, senior citizen

Abstrakt: Celem tego tekstu jest ukazanie miejsca rodziny i związanych z nią wartości życia rodzinnego (takich jak np. małżeństwo, dziecko, matka, ojciec, senior), w nauce społecznej Kościoła katolickiego. Dokonano w nim analizy jakościowej wybranych źródeł, a w tym dokumentów synodów i soborów, encyklik papieskich oraz innych wypowiedzi papieży. Wykorzystano także niektóre monografie i artykuły naukowe, tematycznie związane z podjętą problematyką, z uwzględnieniem źródeł elektronicznych. Poddane analizie materiały źródłowe wskazują na wielkie zaangażowanie Kościoła katolickiego w głoszenie prawdy o rodzinie i w kształtowanie społecznej świadomości jej wartości, a także wartości małżeństwa, jako podstawy wspólnoty rodzinnej oraz matki (żony) i ojca (męża), którzy są opiekunami i przewodnikami dziecka w życiu. Kościół zwraca również uwagę na wartość dziecka i potrzebę ochrony jego praw, stawiając je na pierwszym miejscu w życiu społecznym i rodzinnym, a w szczególności dzieci chore, niepełnosprawne, pozbawione opieki rodzicielskiej ofiary wojny i kataklizmów. Wielkie znaczenie przypisuje pokoleniu seniorów, które pełni rolę świadka przeszłości i inspiratora mądrości młodych oraz ognia łączącego pokolenia i zabezpieczającego trwanie rodziny. Mimo zachodzących zmian w nauce społecznej Kościoła katolickiego, widoczną jest ciągła jego troska o rodzinę i wartości z nią związane.

Słowa kluczowe: dziecko, Kościół katolicki, małżeństwo, rodzina, senior

Introduction

A significant influence on the shaping of the awareness of the family importance and the values connected with family life is exerted in the Polish social reality by the Catholic Church. Through

its Science, it brings the Catholic family model closer and shows the family, marriage and the child as special goods.

The sources of Catholic Science include: Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and Tradition, the rulings of councils and synods, the social papal encyclicals and other statements of the popes and the social rulings of papal congregations, the Code

¹ Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-1Fraczek.pdf>

of Canon Law, papal letters and other statements of the bishops on social issues, the results of the scientific investigations of Catholic scholars and activists (Bełch, 2007, p. 16)².

The family occupies an important place in the Science of the Church. In the history of the Church, the way of understanding the family and marriage has undergone some changes, however, the Science on the family has always emphasized its sacramental dignity, the uniqueness of the spiritual community of all its members and the indissolubility of the marriage union. The truth about the family as a natural community was emphasized (Borutka, Mazur, Zwoliński, 1999, p. 182). The genesis of the Catholic Science on the family and marriage can be found in the Bible. In the Old Testament, marital love and marriage are repeatedly presented as a model and symbol of God's connection with His people (Aubert, 1986, p. 248-254). In the New Testament, the development of science is evident and the religious significance of gender and marriage is emphasised. Despite the different roles of the spouses, their persons are equal in the right to grow, in human dignity and in the Divine Filiation (Borutka et al., 1999, p. 183).

1. The family in the preconciliar Science of the Catholic Church and in the documents of the Second Vatican Council

The Church of the preconciliar period (before the Second Vatican Council), preferred the Catholic model of marriage and family, referred to today as the "traditional", "patriarchal" family, and this was due to several reasons, which are mentioned by M. Skawińska:

- it was consistent with the interpretation at the time of the teachings of the Old Testament and the Evangelical messages concerning the position

of husband and wife in the family, and with the acceptance of the sacred and religious character of marriage and the family;

- particular emphasis was placed on the indissolubility of the marriage knot, the purity and sanctity of the family. It was pointed out that the value of marriage is defined by three goods: the sacrament, marital fidelity and offspring. The sacrament of marriage determines that the marital union cannot be broken, marital fidelity does not permit adultery, and offspring dictates that children be raised with love and piety;
- the family was treated as a limited and hierarchical structure in accordance with the social doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, which was dominant in this period and recognized by the Church. The husband and father occupied the supreme position in the family community. Wife and children were subordinate to him;
- the family, being not only an element of civil society but at the same time a microstructure of the Church, had a religious function to fulfil, consisting in participation in religious practices and, above all, in giving birth to and bringing up children. This function was the main purpose of marriage and the family, to which all actions of spouses and parents were to be subordinated;
- the husband and father was the main and sometimes the only breadwinner in the family, while the primary task of the professionally unprepared mother was to take care of the home and the children. A woman was to be above all a good wife and mother, submissive and obedient to her husband;
- equality between a man and a woman was accepted in the sphere of dignity, personality, but not in the sphere of fulfilling family functions and duties. Only in one case was it allowed to swap roles in the family in such circumstances when the husband neglected his duties;

2 All the contents quoted in the article are translations from Polish language. The article was translated into English by a professional translation agency.

- the family was placed above the state, which was ascribed the duty to protect life, including unborn children. The state was also supposed to support the family in fulfilling its important educational function (Skawińska, 2001, p. 31-50).

Reassessing, one can say that the family in the pre-conciliar Science of the Church was a value based on the marital union, while the most important aim of marriage was to give birth to and raise children. Among the most important functions of the family was the religious function. The man was the sole breadwinner and head of the household, while the woman fulfilled household and child-rearing duties. Children were an asset for parents to protect, but they had to be obedient to their parents, especially to their father.

Economic and political changes and the democratisation of social structures have led to the devaluation of the traditional family model. A breakthrough in family life occurred when women and mothers started working. The relationship between spouses has changed fundamentally. These changes were rarely reflected in the Science of the Church until the second half of the 20th century. The Science of the Church on marriage and the family was largely defined by the Second Vatican Council (which lasted from 11 October 1962 to 8 December 1965). It brought about a change of emphasis in the interpretation of papal teaching on the family. There has been a change in the approach to the goals of marriage and the mutual position of family members - husband, wife and child. The role of love in marriage and in the family was noticed and emphasised, and the role of women was appreciated (Skawińska, 2001, p. 50-52). The family was defined as the first school of social virtues, and the parents' duty was to create a family atmosphere imbued with love and respect for God and people, which would foster the coherent, social and personal upbringing of children (Second Vatican Council, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, 1968, p. 316). The well-being of the person and society was linked to the well-being of the marital and family community. It was accepted that a deep community of marital life and love is created by the marriage covenant,

i.e. irrevocable personal consent. It was pointed out that marriage was not established only for the purpose of bearing children, but also for the mutual love of the spouses to develop and mature. Marriage was seen as a lifelong union, retaining its meaning and indissolubility, while children were seen as the most wonderful gift of marriage, contributing to the well-being of the parents themselves. It is assumed that the active presence of the father and the home care of the mother are helpful in the upbringing of children, especially in the case of younger children. However, the care a mother gives to her children should not limit her access to legitimate social advancement. The tasks of parents include supporting the younger generations with advice and a listening ear, as well as guiding them in the establishment of the family. It was accepted that the family, in which different generations meet and assist each other in attaining greater wisdom and in combining personal rights with the other needs of social life, constitutes the foundation of society (Second Vatican Council, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, 1968, p. 575 - 582).

2. The family as a value and values connected with it in the documents of the 2nd Polish Plenary Synod and in the teaching of John Paul II

A great contribution to shaping the social awareness of the family value was made by the Second Polish Plenary Synod (held from 8 June 1991 and lasting until 11 June 1999). The synod resolutions were approved by the Holy See on 22 December 2000 by the Congregation for Bishops. They took effect on 28 February 2001 (Tymosz, 2005, p. 341-342). Referring to many documents of the Church, the Second Polish Plenary Synod presented the Science of the Church on marriage and family. It drew attention to the issues of human corporeality, as well as sexuality, responsible parenthood, the right to life, preparation for marriage and family and the tasks of the family. Expressing their concern for the family value, the participants of the Second Polish Plenary

Synod, in the documents they had prepared, wrote that already after World War II, state institutions as an instrument of ideology tried to take over the educational functions of the family, lower the authority of parents and spread liberal models of life disregarding moral and ethical principles. Other threats included: the dissemination of amoral behaviour patterns by the media and the ubiquitous presence of television, which divides rather than unites family members; material and housing problems; migration and economic emigration; the undermining of the position of the husband and father in the family as a result of unemployment, alcoholism and drug addiction. Also noticed were the issue of undervaluing marriage and the wrong understanding of love and the lack of responsibility for the spouse, the increasing number of divorces, as well as people living in so-called free relationships and the neglect of parenthood (Second Polish Plenary Synod, Working Documents, 1991, p. 292-301).

An expression of the Church's concern for the good of the family is also the appeal of the Second Polish Plenary Synod to the state authorities to recognize the fundamental value of the family for the proper development of social life in the country and to conduct pro-family social and economic policies, especially in the sphere of work, housing and services. The Synod also appealed to those responsible for culture and the social media to create and disseminate a positive image of the family and to oppose demoralisation and anti-family propaganda. The legislator also called on local authorities to cooperate with parishes in organising leisure time for children and young people. He proposed that local authorities cooperate in establishing or activating institutions preparing for life in marriage and the family, family counselling and assistance to families (Second Polish Plenary Synod, Working Documents, 1991, p. 304-307).

The importance of the family as a social value, as well as values related to the family, was particularly strongly emphasized in the teaching of John Paul II. Pointing to the rank of the family, the Pope wrote: "Among these many ways, the family is the first way and for many reasons the most important. It is the universal way, remaining each time a special

way, unique and unrepeatable, just as each man is unique". (John Paul II, 1994, p. 3-4). In an Apostolic Exhortation addressed to the people of Europe, John Paul II pointed out: "In every case it is necessary to encourage, assist and support individual families and their associations so that they may play their rightful leading role in the Church and society, and to strive to ensure that individual states and the European Union pursue a real and effective family policy" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 91)

John Paul II included among the basic tasks of the family: "forming a community of persons, serving life, participating in the development of society, participating in the life and mission of the Church" (Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II on the Tasks of the Christian Family in the Modern World *Familiaris Consortio*, No. 17). In marriage the Pope saw a value unique to the family community, for he wrote: "marriage is the foundation of the wider family community, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are directed towards the bearing and rearing of offspring, in which they find their culmination". (*ibidem*, no. 14). "The <communion> of spouses gives rise to the <community> that is the family" (John Paul II, 1994, p. 16). John Paul II also spoke on the role of husband and wife and father and mother in the family community. Turning his attention to marital relations he explained: "Within the communion-community of marriage and family, men are called to live in awareness of their gift and their role as husband and father" (Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II ... *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 25). "Love for a spouse who has become a mother and love for children are the natural way for a man to understand and realize his fatherhood" (*ibidem*, no. 25). "The absence of the father causes psychological and moral imbalances and considerable difficulties in family relations, as does (...), the abuse of the preponderance of male authority, which humiliates the woman and does not permit the development of healthy family relations" (*ibidem*, no. 25). On the other hand, referring to responsible parenthood, John Paul II stressed that: "Responsible parenthood concerns directly that moment in which a man and a woman,

joining together <as one flesh>, can become parents” (John Paul II, 1994, p. 35). The Pope pointed out the special value of the child and pointed out that: “In the family, a community of persons, special care must be given to the child; a profound respect for his personal dignity must be developed, and his rights must be served with reverence and generosity. This applies to every child, but it becomes particularly important with regard to the young child, the child in need of complete care, the sick, suffering or handicapped child” (Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II ... *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 26). The Pope drew attention to the fact that many children are deprived of family warmth. “Sometimes their family is simply absent: parents, absorbed in other matters, leave their children to themselves. In some cases, the family does not even exist: as a result, thousands of children have no home other than on the street and can count on no one but themselves. Some of these street children die a tragic death. Others are led to take drugs, or even to trade and prostitution, and are often drawn into criminal organisations (...). A community that rejects children, marginalises them or forces them to live in hopeless situations will never know peace”. (John Paul II, 2007, p. 779). John Paul II warned that: “no country in the world, no political system can think of its future except through the vision of those new generations who will take over from their parents the manifold heritage of values, tasks and aspirations both of their own nation and of the whole human family” (Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II... *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 26). The Pope also dealt with issues related to the role of ageing people in the family, he saw their contribution to the development of this environment. He attributed to me the fulfilment of the precious mission of witness of the past and of inspiring wisdom for the young and for the future and explained “the life of older people helps us to be aware of the hierarchy of human values; it shows the continuity of generations (...). Older people also have the charism of transcending the barriers between generations before they exist”. (ibidem, no. 27). Seniors bring extremely valuable values to the family, they make it possible to perceive many issues in a deeper way, they unite the past with

the future in the present, and their experience gives confidence to the younger generation and builds its sense of security.

Externalizing his concern for the family, the Pope appealed: “Indeed, no one should know peace until the problem of poverty, which plagues families and individuals, has found a proper solution. Poverty is always a threat to the social order and to economic development (...)” (John Paul II, 2007, p. 780). “As the first cell of society, the family has the right to expect every assistance from the State in order to fulfil its proper mission. State laws should express concern for the best possible living conditions for the family and help it fulfil its tasks. In the face of an ever-increasing tendency today to legitimize those substitutes for marriage, that is, forms of union which, because of their essential characteristics or their deliberate lack of permanence, can in no way express the family or serve its good, it is the duty of the State to support and protect the authentic institution of the family (...). It sometimes happens that, for lack of adequate resources, young married couples are forced to postpone the decision to have a family or even to abandon it, while families living in poverty cannot participate fully in the life of society or are pushed to its margins altogether”. (John Paul II, 2007, p. 780). Speaking about human behaviour that harms marriage and the family, the Pope stressed that “The first abnormal situation is the so-called ‘trial marriage’, which many people today would like to justify by attributing certain advantages to it. Human reason itself suggests the impossibility of accepting it, indicating how unconvincing it is to <experiment> on human persons whose dignity demands that they be always and exclusively the object of loving endowment without any limitation of time or other circumstances” (Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II... *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 80).

3. The family in the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI continued the work of supporting the family initiated by John Paul II. He proclaimed the necessity of caring for the family, so that it could

be what it should be in its essence and identity. He stressed that it is an important element of the Church's mission towards the world and humanity. He was involved in promoting the truth about the value of marriage and family and invited to reflection all those who cared about the good of the family based on the union between a man and a woman (Proniewski, 2012, p. 31). Pope Benedict XVI argued that the family based on marriage is the heritage of humanity, a fundamental social institution, a vital cell and a pillar of society, which applies to both believers and non-believers. The Pope taught that in today's world, where some ambiguous concepts of man, freedom and human love are spreading, we cannot stop reminding the truth about the family. He also noticed other problems of the modern family - the increasing number of separations and divorces, which tear the unity of the family apart and create many problems for children, who are the innocent victims of such situations (Benedict XVI, 2006, no 8, p.18).

Benedict XVI called for support for the family, for closer cooperation between family and school, and advocated such a process of education in which, apart from imparting knowledge, there would also be a place for promoting a Christian image of man and society (Benedict XVI, 2006, no. 2, p.13). He stressed that the family needs a home, work and proper remuneration for work, as well as a school for children and health care. He pointed out that society and those in power should try to help the family, because depriving it of these essential resources endangers its well-being. He also recognised the role of the mass media in educating society and showing the importance of the family in human life, in providing information on its problems and rights (Benedict XVI, 2008, no. 1, p. 45).

Pope Benedict XVI also saw the dangers of depreciating the value of marriage and family in the media, spreading egoism and axiological chaos (Benedict XVI, 2006, no. 3, p.18). He warned against the consequences of secularisation of life and legislation violating the fundamental rights of the family. He pointed out the dangers connected with the promotion of alternative concepts of marriage and family, distorting nature and alien to national cultures (Benedict XVI, 2006, no. 1, p. 31).

4. Pope Francis's concern for the family and the values of family life

The constant concern for the family and the values of family life can also be seen in the teaching of Pope Francis. "The pontificate of Pope Francis falls in a particularly difficult period of existence for the Catholic family and a very demanding one when it comes to the Church's pastoral care of the family. On the one hand, more and more visible are the expectations of liberal circles concerning the relaxation of Church discipline, if only with regard to divorce, admitting people living in non-sacramental unions to Holy Communion, the increasingly weakened condition of the Catholic family manifested in a wave of hatred, egoism, departure from God; on the other hand, the desire to live in love, in accordance with the commandments and with the natural vocation of man to happiness, the desire to establish a family in a sense of security, acceptance and love" (Sobczyk, 2016, p. 201).

Pope Francis stresses that the sacrament of marriage is the foundation on which the family is built, gives married love permanence and strength to overcome crises. He points out that family love involves all persons, including children to the elderly. He teaches that a society that abandons children and marginalises the elderly undercuts its roots and obscures its vision of the future (Francis, 2013, p. 28-29).

He has presented many of the problems associated with the functioning of the family in his teaching during the so-called "Wednesday catechesis". It shows his concern for the family and the values associated with it - marriage, motherhood and fatherhood, the value of children and seniors.

Speaking about the value of marriage, Pope Francis pointed to its true meaning and explained that it is an act of faith, love and the beginning of a family community. He argued that: "it is not simply a ceremony held in a church, with flowers, costumes, photographs. Christian marriage is a sacrament which takes place in the Church and also builds up the Church, giving birth to a new family community (...). The sacrament of marriage is a great act of faith and love: it testifies to the courage to believe in the

beauty of God's creative act and to live a life of love that urges us always to go further, beyond ourselves and even beyond our own family. The Christian vocation to unconditional and measureless love is what, by the grace of Christ, also constitutes the basis of the free consent on which marriage is based". (Francis, *Marriage Requires Courage*).

On the other hand, referring to the value of motherhood and the role of the mother in human life and society, the Pope proclaimed: "Every human person owes his life to his mother and almost always also owes her a great deal in his further life, in terms of human and spiritual formation. However, although the mother is highly praised in symbolic terms - there are so many poems, so many beautiful things said about the mother in poetic language, but she is little listened to and little supported in daily life, and her central role in society receives little recognition. In fact, mothers' willingness to sacrifice themselves for their children is often exploited in order to "save" on social expenses (...). It also happens in the Christian community that mothers are not always valued enough, that they are not listened to enough (...). Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of selfish individualism (...). A society without mothers would be an inhuman society, because mothers are always able to bear witness to their tenderness, their devotion, their moral strength, even at the worst moments". (Francis, *Hymn to Mothers*).

Just as important as the role of the mother is, in Pope Francis' view, the role of the father. The Pope explained that: "Every family needs a father (...). The first need is therefore precisely this - for the father to be present in the family. That he be close to his wife, to share everything, joys and pain, hardships and hopes. And to be close to his children as they grow: when they play and when they toil, when they are carefree and when they are fearful, when they speak and when they are silent, when they are bold and when they are afraid, when they make mistakes and when they get back on track; the father must be present, always. Present is not the same as controlling! Fathers who are too controlling destroy the personality of their children and do not allow them to grow up (...). A good father knows how to wait and how to forgive, from the bottom of his heart.

Of course he can also discipline firmly: he is not a weak, submissive or sentimental father. The father who knows how to discipline without humiliating is the one who knows how to protect without sparing himself." (Francis, *What the Father teaches*).

Recognising the problems of modern families due to the lack of a father's presence in the family, the Pope argued: "We must be more careful. The absence of the father figure in the lives of children and young people causes emptiness and injuries that can be very serious. As a result, the deviance of children and young people can largely be attributed to this phenomenon as a lack of example, a lack of a guide with authority in everyday life. The sense of orphanhood that many young people live is much deeper than we think" (Francis, *On the role of the father in the lives of children and young people*).

Pope Francis also pleaded for the protection of children and their rights, and pointed out the value of the child in the life of the family and society. During a catechesis he preached: "Many children are rejected from the beginning, they are abandoned, robbed of their childhood and future. Some - as if to justify themselves - dare to say that it was a mistake to give birth to them. This is disgraceful! Let us not blame our children, please! Children are never a 'mistake'. Their hunger is not a mistake, just as their poverty, their fragility, their abandonment - so many children are abandoned on the streets - is not a mistake; nor is their ignorance or lack of skills - so many children do not know what school is. At most, these are reasons to love them more, more generously. What use are solemn declarations of human rights and children's rights if we then punish children for the mistakes of adults? (...). (...) Every marginalised, abandoned child who lives on the street, begging and eking out a living in various ways, without school, without medical care, is a cry that rises up to God, accusing the system created by us adults. And unfortunately, these children fall prey to criminals who exploit them in disgraceful trade and other kinds of business or who prepare them for war and teach them violence. And also in so-called rich countries, many children experience dramas that leave deep marks in them,

because of the crisis of the family, the educational vacuum and the sometimes inhuman living conditions". (Francis, *Children are never a mistake*).

The Pope also drew attention to the social value of senior citizens, representatives of the third generation, so often marginalised today because of the prevailing fashion for youth, fitness and external beauty. He argued that "thanks to medical progress, life has become longer: but society has not become 'roomier' for life! The number of elderly people has increased considerably, but our societies have not reorganised themselves sufficiently to make room for them with proper respect, truly taking into account their frailty and dignity. As long as we are young, we tend not to think about old age as if it were a disease (...). Yet the elderly are a resource, they cannot be ignored (...). Older people are abandoned, and not only in terms of material deprivation. They are abandoned because of a selfish inability to accept their limitations, which reflect our limitations, because of the many difficulties they have to overcome today in order to survive in a civilisation that does not give them the opportunity to participate, to express themselves or to be a point of reference, according to a consumerist model that assumes that only the young can be useful and enjoy life. Instead, these elderly people should be for society as a whole a treasury of wisdom for our people!(...). Where there is no reverence for the elderly, there is no future for the young". (Francis, *Older People Are Us*).

In October 2013, Pope Francis announced his decision to convene a Synod on the family. An Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held from 5-19 X 2014, followed a year later by an Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops from 5-24 X 2015. As a result of these deliberations, Pope Francis signed the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* on 19 March 2016.

5. Extraordinary and Ordinary General Assembly on the family and the teaching of Pope Francis in the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*

The Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which met in Rome in October 2014 and was dedicated to the family, was a pastoral synod, not a doctrinal synod. This was already indicated by the title of the deliberations – "Pastoral challenges related to the family in the context of evangelisation". The aim of the synod was not to develop a new doctrine on marriage and the family, but to reflect on how to help contemporary marriages and families, especially Christian ones, so that they can preserve their identity and fulfil their tasks today (Olczyk, 2016, p. 59).

Among the problems discussed that families face were unemployment and poverty, which do not encourage young people to marry, as well as the secularisation of life and the depreciation of the value of marriage, the increasing number of divorces, separations, the diminution of the value of the child, discrimination against women, but also selfish individualism and the commercialisation of the body. It was recognised that the crisis of marriage and the family has its source in a crisis of faith and attention was drawn to the need for committed implementation of family pastoral care. Attention was drawn to the need to accompany separated, abandoned and divorced persons, victims of violence, to the implementation of pastoral care for reconciliation and mediation. Emphasis was placed on the need to renew the formation of priests, deacons, catechists and other pastoral workers (*Relatio Synodi* of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly).

The 2014 synod described the situation of marriage and the family, not shying away from difficult or morally questionable situations either. However, describing them did not mean accepting these controversial trends. Issues of divorce, remarriage, free unions and partnerships, and homosexuals were addressed. It was pointed out that there was no basis for comparing or assuming analogies between homosexual relationships and the family, but that

persons with such inclinations should be treated with respect (Relatio Synodi of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly).

In the final report of the Ordinary Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father Francis on 24.10.2015, both the problems and the importance of the family are presented. In it we read that: "The family, the fundamental human community, is painfully aware of its weakness and fragility in today's cultural and social crisis. Nevertheless, it shows that it can find the courage to confront the inadequacy and insufficiency of institutions with regard to the formation of the person, the quality of the social bond, and the care of the most vulnerable. It is therefore particularly necessary to appreciate the real strength of the family in order to support its fragility. This strength lies essentially in the fact that the family is capable of loving and teaching love. No matter how wounded a family may be, it can always grow by starting from love" (Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father Francis, p. 13).

The Synod emphasized that the family is the most important human community, a school of humanity, love and the foundation of society. Kinship relations within it shape the conditions helpful for raising children, transmitting values, building and strengthening intergenerational ties. The family, however, needs the support of the state through the design and implementation of appropriate pro-family policies that would ensure its dignified existence (Final Report..., p. 13-15).

The Synod referred to the value of the child, the woman, the man and the ageing person in the family. Speaking of the value of children it accepted that: "They must come first in family and social life, and be a priority for the pastoral activity of the Church" (Final Report..., p. 21). It stressed the key role of women in the life of the family and society and insisted on the need to protect the dignity of women, who in many countries of the world are discriminated against and abused, and are victims of violence (Final Report..., p. 22). On the other hand, referring to the importance of the father, the Synod accepted that: "The absence of the father seriously marks family life, the upbringing of children and their integration into society. His absence can be physical,

emotional, cognitive and spiritual. This absence deprives children of an adequate model of paternal attitude". (Final Report..., p. 22-23). Speaking on the elderly, the Synod stressed that one of the most serious and urgent tasks of the Christian family is to protect the elderly, to guard the links between generations in order to transmit the faith and the fundamental values of life. Grandparents are the link between the generations and ensure the psychological and emotional balance by passing on traditions and customs, values that allow the recognition of family roots (Final Report..., p.16-17).

It is important to emphasize that by showing the vocation and mission of the family, the synod wants to help all families. It referred to the various situations of contemporary marriages and families. It did not ignore the problem of divorced spouses who have entered into civil marriages again. However, it did not resolve the issue of admitting them to Holy Communion (Dyduch, 2017, p. 79).

The post-synodal apostolic exhortation "Amoris laetitia" contains the results of the work of the two synods on the family presented above. Its official announcement took place on April 8th, 2016. It is a comprehensive document, consisting of 9 chapters, which refers in its content, among other things, to the final documents of the two assemblies, as well as the teaching of Pope Francis' predecessors and his own catechesis on the family and the values associated with it.

In it, the Pope emphasized the importance of the good of the family and the fact that it plays a key role in building the future of the world and the Church. He also presented the ongoing anthropological and cultural changes affecting all aspects of human life and contributing to the humanization of family life (Exhortation Amoris laetitia 32 - hereafter referred to as Al), but also bringing with them certain dangers, such as: tensions caused by the individualistic culture of possession, the attitude of distrust, arrogance, slipping into comfort, avoidance of obligations. The Pope pointed out that the freedom of choice for which people so often clamor can be an opportunity to cultivate in oneself what is noblest, but if noble goals and discipline are lacking, it becomes a reason for living alone or in concubinage (Al 33).

He explained that it is easy to confuse true freedom with the idea that everyone judges as they see fit and that there are no superior truths, values, or principles. Sometimes the above-mentioned dangers spill over into the family and make it a passable place where we go when it is convenient for us, when we want to assert our rights or fulfill some need. And when they affect the marriage they become a disturbance of its stability. It is very interesting that on the one hand people today fear loneliness and want protection and fidelity, and on the other hand there is a growing fear that they will be trapped in a relationship that will limit them in achieving their own aspirations (Al 34).

Pointing to the essence of the marriage, the Pope explained that marriage transcends any passing fad. Its essence is rooted in the very nature of the human person and his social character. It entails a series of duties that flow, however, from love itself, which is capable of risking the future (Al 131). Engaging with another person in an exclusive and definitive way always entails certain risks and challenges. However, to refuse to take on such responsibility is selfish, self-interested, and unable to see the rights of the other person (Al 132).

Pope Francis calls today's culture a "culture of temporariness," accompanied by people moving quickly from one emotional relationship to another, entering into and maintaining interpersonal relationships calculated to obtain benefits or services. Many young people postpone their marriage for reasons such as: economic; educational; spreading ideology that diminishes the value of marriage and family; experience of failure by other marriages and families; fear of losing freedom and independence and being reduced to an institutional and bureaucratic creation (Al 40). These are also determinants of marital crises that destabilize the family and contribute to separation and divorce, negatively affecting not only the adults but also the children and society as a whole. These failures give rise to new relationships that further complicate family situations (Al 41). In addition, rampant social consumerism, the sexual revolution, global policies pointing to overpopulation, among others, contribute to a decline in fertility rates, as well as demographic troubles for societies (Al 42).

An important problem Pope Francis has also pointed out is that many children are born into incomplete families, or into extended or transformed family environments in which their welfare is not always protected. Children who experience violence, sexual abuse, and abandonment are particularly at risk and must be cared for without fail (Al 45). Many children are rejected from the start, robbed of their childhood and future. What is the use of solemn declarations of human rights and children's rights if we then punish children for the mistakes made by adults. If a child is born into unwanted circumstances, the parents, or other family members, should do everything in their power to accept it as a gift from God and take responsibility to welcome it with openness and love (Al 166). Help, the pope writes, is also needed for children with disabilities and their families who face unexpected difficulties in reorganizing family life and new situations that sometimes surpass their previous experiences and financial capabilities. Such families need to be cared for carefully, since they offer to the Church and to society a living witness of fidelity to the gift of life (Al 47).

The Pope recognized the importance of parental roles - that of mother and father. The mother is the strongest antidote to the spread of selfish individualism. She can bear witness to tenderness, devotion, moral strength. She also often conveys the deepest sense of the practice of religion (Al 174). The father, on the other hand, helps the child to understand the limits of reality, facilitates the exit into the wider world, encourages effort, struggle. The father, with his masculine identity, is as necessary as maternal concern (Al 175).

Pope Francis pointed to the role that the senior generation plays in the family. He wrote that there are cultures that relegate the elderly to the margins of life (Al 192). He also strongly opposed euthanasia. He gave special recognition to the activities of associations, family movements, and church institutions that support seniors. (Al 48).

The Pope also referred to pastors and spoke of the challenges they face and reminded them that the family is not the object but the subject of evangelization and stated that priests often lack adequate formation to address the complex problems of mod-

ern families (Al 200). He said there is a need for an evangelization that pays attention to cultural, social, political and economic conditions and protects families from discrimination, poverty, exclusion and violence (Al 201). According to the Pope, the psychological and emotional formation of seminarians should be improved and the family should be more strongly involved in the preparation for the priesthood (Al 203).

Every passage of the exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” reveals Pope Francis’ great concern for the family and the values associated with it - marriage, parenthood, the value of the child and the elderly person. Above, only selected problems are presented and the pope’s indications are approximated. The president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, V. Peglia, wrote: “The Apostolic Exhortation is not simply aimed at creating a new pastoral strategy towards families. It demands much more from everyone - clergy, monks and laity - namely, the elaboration of a new way of being Church in the world” (Paglia, 2017, p. 11-22).

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Conclusion

The ongoing socio-cultural transformations influence the functioning of individuals and entire societies. They shape new lifestyles and the climate of interpersonal relations. One of the most important environments, because it influences a human being from the first days of his/her life, is the family. It is not an ordinary environment, it is a community in which we experience support not only informational or material, but also emotional and spiritual. It is a particularly important value, because it is in the family community that comprehensive human development takes place. The family also creates space for the realization of other important values such as: marriage, child, parenthood. The analysis of the content of the above presented sources indicates that there are certain changes in the Science of the Catholic Church regarding the family, but also its continuous involvement in the activities for the benefit of the family and the values related to it. The Church recognises its contemporary problems and does not avoid very difficult issues, nor does it reject anyone, but tries to care for and provide the necessary help to people caught up in complex life situations.

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