



Family ties as an essential element of the Catholic family vocation¹

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Stanisław Biały^a ✉

^a Stanisław Biały, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6390-0087>,

Faculty of Family Studies, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland

✉ Corresponding author: s.bialy@uksw.edu.pl

Abstract: In its doctrine on marriage and the family, the Catholic Church focuses on what it means to be (in terms of the vocation to holiness) a good parent, child, grandparent, brother, sister, etc. However, even if the norms, etc., or in other words, the “duties and privileges” promulgated by the Magisterium of the Church in relation to the Catholic family, result from its supernatural origin (described by theology and ethics), it should be emphasized that the very nature of the fact of giving birth to a child (i.e., having offspring), there is an (essential) obligation to protect and promote the family thus created in the world. Accordingly, the “marital and family” norms established for this purpose, a particularly important collection of which can be found in the Code of Canon Law (hereinafter: CIC/83)², cover a very wide range of human existence. It can be said that they begin with determining which related persons are not allowed to marry and end with matters of same-sex relationships or free unions. However, existential situations are so complex and changeable that they often suggest the need for further clarification of previous determinations. This also applies to matters related to kinship. For example, the CIC/83 does not provide a general definition of a Catholic family (i.e., in a single canon). However, such an attempt can be found in the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (cf. nos. 48-49). In particular, when it states that: “By their very nature, the institution of marriage and conjugal love are oriented toward the procreation and education of offspring” (cf. no. 48). The same applies to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (cf. nos. 2201-2206)³, the exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (cf. no. 18), etc. Therefore, it seems that a normative clarification of the concept of the Catholic family, particularly in terms of relationships arising from kinship (e.g., by introducing such a definition into the CIC/83), could help to better understand and further refine pastoral discipline in this area.

Keywords: kinship, canonical doctrine of the Church, marriage, need for normative clarification, vocation of the Catholic family.

Introduction

If the modern family is in crisis (see statistics on relationship breakdowns and modern forms of cohabitation), and if it is disparaged in nihilistic, liberal, left-wing, and other circles, it is primarily as the family that calls itself Catholic (cf. Burkacka, 2017, 61-93). Often, attacks on its concept and institution, as well as on its way of life, take the form of defamatory insinuations, especially when the normative sexual ethics practiced by it (in these environments) are presented as a “culture of rape” (cf. Kuszewska, 2024). However, it must be admitted that in the social sphere, the concept is usually used correctly

and refers to a deep community of life based on spiritual bonds, i.e., built on Christian vocation (i.e., on God’s grace) and on blood ties when it comes to having offspring (Piotrowska, 1996, pp 109-123; Wierzbicki, 2023, pp. 19-53).

However, a particular feature of the changes taking place is that previously, civil law, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 16), understood the family in the classical sense⁴. Its legal basis was the legally contracted marriage between a man and a woman (Kubala, 2017, p. 11). Today, for exam-

1 Article in Polish language: https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/65pl_bial.pdf

2 *Kodeks Prawa Kanonicznego (KPK/83)* [Code of Canon Law]. (1984). Poznań: Pallottinum.

3 *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego (KKK)* [Catechism of the Catholic Church]. (1994). Poznań: Pallottinum.

4 Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland [Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej] states: *Marriage, as a relationship between a man and a woman, family, motherhood, and parenthood are under the protection and care of the Republic of Poland.* This implies that the institutions of family and marriage are closely related, but nevertheless separate.

ple, Polish law does not provide a single, general definition of the family. What is more, *the Family and Guardianship Code* (cf. Article 23 of the Family and Guardianship Code), as well as *the Social Assistance Act* and *the Family Benefits Act*, consider the mere relationship between a woman and a man (marriage), and even cohabitation and running a household (cf. Art. 27 of the Family and Guardianship Code) as sufficient grounds for recognizing such a community as a family (cf. Wójcik-Skwarska, 2013, p. 63-100).

The Catholic Church does not stand idly by and watch this situation (i.e., the one outlined above) but takes care to ensure that (in matters of marriage and family) norms adequate to its vocation are in force in the form of various types of regulations, recommendations, commands, and prohibitions. We can refer here to the entire Magisterium concerning marriage and family, which is particularly expressed in the 1983 Code of Canon Law (and its amendments) – hereinafter: CIC/83. It was not without reason that Pope Paul IV and then Leo XIV called the family “*the canon of true love between a man and a woman*” (cf. Paul V, 1968; Leo XIV, 2025). Here we find the thesis that it is love, the community of married life, and the birth of a child to parents belonging to the Roman Catholic Church that are the elements that mark the existence of a Catholic family and its mutual rights and obligations. The pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (hereinafter: GS) states that “*The family has its origin in the marital union, which the Second Vatican Council defines as a «covenant».* *In this covenant, a man and a woman «give themselves to each other and accept each other»*” (Second Vatican Council, 1965, no. 48; see John Paul II, 1994, no. 7; Ziółkowska, 2018, p. 17).

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the aim of this analysis is to re-emphasize the importance of those norms in Catholic law that regulate the issue of kinship as the basis for understanding and describing the Catholic family’s calling to holiness. The question is how kinship, having its normative regulations in Church teaching, fits into the definition of the concept of the Catholic family and, thus, into its protection and

promotion. An important reference here is canon 226 § 2 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which justifies the responsibility of parents for the upbringing of their children by nothing other than the relationship of kinship (the gift of life). It states that “parents, because they have given life to their children, have a very important duty and right to raise them” (cf. Pastwa, 2011, pp. 398-408). An additional aspect here is that this canon does not provide any justification as to why it refers (citing the issue of kinship) to the parental duty to provide a Christian upbringing rather than a Catholic one. Ultimately, adequately regulated in CIC/83, the issue of adequately highlighting the duties and rights arising from the fact of kinship is also very important so that the faithful can understand what strictly belongs to them (as a right and as a duty) in today’s culturally changing world. This is particularly important when they find themselves in specific circumstances that pose challenges for them (cf. the situation of impediments to marriage).

1. Kinship and the protection of vocation to holiness in marriage and the Catholic family: some canonical aspects

If the concept of the vocation of the Catholic family (in the ethical and theological sense) remains an essential principle for the realization of love between a man and a woman and their children, and in general, love for God and people, it seems that confirmation of this position in a normative sense should be sought in CIC/83, i.e., where issues such as the following are discussed:

- a. close kinship as an obstacle to marriage.
- b. the right and obligation to bear children in marriage;
- c. the rules of adoption of a child and the effects of such an act;
- d. matters of the legal personality of the child
- e. the obligation to raise a Catholic child as a close relative.

1.1. Close kinship as canonical impediments to marriage

In the legal system of the Catholic Church, certain bonds are considered obstacles (e.g., breaking bonds, etc.) to marriage. They are formulated in such a way as to be closely related to the realization of the goal that the Church associates with the concept of the “sacrament of marriage.” The aim is to protect the good of married life, the health of children, the sanctification of the spouses, the good of the faith of believers, etc. Therefore, if “based on positive divine law, natural law, or for the sake of the public good or the public good combined with the private good, certain persons are considered incapable of entering into marriage” (May, 2017, 37), then the CIC/83 primarily refers to close relatives as such an impediment⁵. Considering the relationship resulting from descent from a common ancestor, it binds persons in the direct line and up to the fourth degree in the collateral line – can. 1091 of the CIC/83 (ibid.: § 4, “marriage is never permitted if there is doubt as to whether the parties are related in any degree in the direct line or in the second degree in the collateral line”). Similarly, there are also regulations when there is a legal relationship, i.e., resulting from adoption – can. 1094 CIC/83 (Góralski, 2012, 9).

Furthermore, considering the effects of Catholic marriage, there are other norms that the Church derives from the fact that the persons concerned are related. This is a matter of children of legitimate descent – can. 1137 CIC/83; a person legally recognized as the father – can. 1138 § 1 and § 2; legalization of offspring – can. 1139; 1140; 1161 § 1 CIC/83 (see Góralski, 1997, 45-55). The same applies to affinity – can. 1092 CIC/83. It does not

derive from blood ties, but from marriage, yet its line and degree are determined according to the line and degree of kinship. Such a (legal) relationship is, in principle, lifelong. Neither divorce nor the death of one of the parties breaks the bonds created (in this way) between the two families (Woźnicki, 2016, 191-210). Another (similar) issue is spiritual kinship (it concerns relationships resulting from baptism). It appears in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (cf. can. 811 § 1)⁶ as an impediment to marriage. This is important when entering into mixed marriages (Nowicka, 2011, pp. 247-271).

The element that unites all these normative solutions provided by the Magisterium of the Church is not a desire to hinder the conclusion of marriage, but a desire to care for the spiritual well-being of the spouses, parents, children, relatives⁷, etc. This task is also served by the norm that “*children of legitimate origin are those who were born at least 180 days after the marriage was contracted or within 300 days of the dissolution of the marriage*” – can. 1138 § 2 CIC/83. A similar dimension (i.e., protecting the dignity of children) can be seen in the provision that “*children of illegitimate origin acquire legitimacy through the subsequent marriage of their parents, valid or presumed, or through a rescript of the Holy See*” – can. 1139 CIC/83. Furthermore, it is important that kinship is always determined from the child’s mother, in accordance with the principle that “*the mother is always known*” (Pochopień, 2024, pp. 32-33). In the case of children whose parents cannot be determined, the principle that the mother and father of the child are invented applies. “*Usually, John is entered as the father and Anna as the mother*” (ibid.; cf. Struzik, 2019, pp. 248-252).

5 The point is that a relative is someone who has a common origin (genetic or formal, e.g., as a result of adoption) and shares a family bond – this can be a direct relative (parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren) or an indirect relative (siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins) – or, in the colloquial sense, a “soul mate.” This is someone with whom we feel a deep, spiritual connection and therefore feel a sense of responsibility.

6 *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (CCEO) [The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEC)]. (1990). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

7 For the sake of precision, it should also be noted that the relationship between a child and a parent is a first-degree direct kinship, resulting from descent from a common ancestor (one birth). The civil-legal (as well as canonical) significance of this fact is that parents are the legal representatives of the child (parental authority); that the closeness of direct kinship (parents/children) is of key importance in marriage and statutory inheritance.

1.2. The right and obligation to have children within marriage

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church, dignity and holiness (etc.), which constitute the essential content of the Catholic family vocation, are linked to the fact that the intimate life of spouses should be directed towards the procreation of children. The point is that the sexual acts that spouses should be capable of performing are intended to enable them to conceive offspring. In other words, marital acts are understood here as (human) sexual activity that is “*intrinsically capable of conceiving a child*” (unity of the body), can. 1061 § 1 CIC/83 (Czujek, 2015, p. 430).

This obligation does not apply to couples who cannot have children due to infertility or other valid reasons. The opposite is true when the obstacles are psychological in nature, i.e., when they cause the spouses to be sexually impotent. According to can. 1084 § 1 CIC/63: “*a prior and permanent inability to perform the conjugal act, whether on the part of a man or a woman, whether absolute or relative, renders the marriage invalid by its very nature*” (Stawniak, 2021, pp. 85-111). If the impediment of incapacity is doubtful, whether the doubt is legal or factual, the marriage should not be prohibited, nor should it be declared invalid while the doubt persists (cf. can. 1084 § 2 CIC/83).

Therefore, if (in accordance with can. 1098 CIC/83) the infertility of the spouses “*neither prevents the marriage from being contracted nor renders it invalid*” (cf. can. 1084 CIC/83 § 3) (see Pietrzyk, 2021), the situation is different when there is a positive act of will excluding the possibility of having children (arising either before or at the time of marriage). Such a situation renders the sacrament invalid (cf. can. 1101 § 2; can. 1055 § 1; can. 1096 § 1 CIC/83). This would be a simulation of marital consent, an act incompatible with the essential purpose of marriage, misleading the other party (Góralski, 2005, 55-68). On the other hand, marriage is considered consummated “*if the spouses have undertaken a marital act capable of procreation in a human way*”: can. 1061 § 1 CIC/83 (see Sztymiler, 2000, pp. 103-122).

One of the fundamental rights of a child, as a member of a Catholic family, is to be conceived as an expression of mutual love between spouses and the result of their mutual gift to each other. Furthermore, the child has the right to know about their own identity, resulting from the requirement for spouses to conceive a child: *ex proprio coniuge*. “Parents have a shared responsibility to accept their conceived offspring, and when it comes into the world, it gains the right to belong and have its place in the family” (Błasiak, 2010, p. 134). Thus, it is not possible to speak of a «right to have a child», but only of the possibility of becoming a parent through the right to engage in sexual acts within marriage (Grochowina, 2013, p. 56). In Catholic doctrine, a child is treated as a “gift from God,” and thus the concept of a “right to a child” is an incomprehensible contradiction of this fact (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2024, nos. 48-49; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1987). In certain situations, this would authorize procedures and techniques such as *in vitro* fertilization, surrogacy (surrogate motherhood), cloning, sex change, contraception, or abortion (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2024, nos. 48-49). Moreover, this would lead to a complete relativization of marital and parental ethics. In other words, if it is said that “a child has a right to parents,” etc., this means that it has a right to be loved by its father and mother, i.e., to be accepted by them with the dignity of nature and supernatural vocation.

The question of conceiving a child (i.e., understood as the duty of procreation) should be accepted in a spirit of generosity (i.e., nobility of heart). According to the encyclical *Humane vitae*, procreation (in the first place) should be dependent on positive conditions, i.e., on the existing possibilities of the spouses to conceive and raise a child. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* expresses this as follows: “Parents, trusting in God’s providence and cultivating a spirit of sacrifice, give glory to the Creator and strive for perfection in Christ when, with a sense of noble, human, and Christian responsibility, they fulfill the task of procreation (Second Vatican Council, 1965, no. 50; cf. Zakrzewska and Zakrzewski, 2014, p. 324). In second place should be those

conditions that are objective obstacles. The principle is as follows: if there are “just reasons for introducing intervals between successive births, resulting either from the physical or psychological conditions of the spouses or from external circumstances” (Paul VI, 1967, no. 16; Machinek, 2018, p. 25).

Another aspect that comes within the scope of kinship (i.e., in addition to subjective dignity) is that if a child is entitled to detailed legal protection from the moment of conception, the law grades the resulting responsibility depending on who the person is and what their relationship to the child is. This understanding is supported by the regulation contained in Book VI of the Code of Canon Law/83. It is entitled “Offenses against human life and liberty.” According to its provisions, “whoever causes an interruption of pregnancy, after the effect has occurred, is subject to excommunication by the force of law” (can. 1398). This means that, in the first instance (i.e., due to the blood ties that have been formed), the responsibility for bringing the conceived child to birth lies with the parents: the father and mother. Similarly, when they decide to have an abortion. Only then do the doctor, nurse, pharmacist, etc., as those without whom the abortion could not take place, become responsible (see Biały, 2018, p. 63-78). It seems that this is also the reason why, in Church doctrine, abortion is not treated as a means of regulating the number of children in a family, nor as a woman’s right to choose whether she wants to have a child or not (cf. Gębka, 2018, pp. 147-167).

For the same reason, the Catholic Church also demands from the state, as a coexisting institution, similar protection for the good of individual members of the Catholic family, i.e., the good of the relationships created by the conception of a child. In view of the above, a believer, on the basis of canon 19 and in relation to canon 22 of the Code of Canon Law/83, if he or she has an obligation to take into account the regulations of state law, should first know when and

why it is good and when it is bad. This applies, for example, to the Act on the Ombudsman for Children⁸. It states that “a child is every human being from conception to the attainment of majority” (Article 2(1)). Furthermore, the Ombudsman for Children is obliged to protect the rights of children, in particular “the right to life and health protection” – Article 3(2) (1) (Act of January 6, 2000, on the Ombudsman for Children, 2000, No. 6, item 69).⁹

1.3. Norms regarding the adoption of children and the protection of kinship rights

The concept of dignity and vocation of the Catholic family also includes the issue of child adoption, which has its canonical dimension in the case of such phenomena as adoptive or foster families. According to canon 110 of the Code of Canon Law/83, children who have been adopted in accordance with civil law “are considered to be the children of the person or persons who have adopted them” (Szczot, 2019, pp. 2534-2536). Pope John Paul II understood this to mean that “physical infertility can provide spouses with an opportunity for another important service to human life, such as adoption” (John Paul II, 1981, no. 14).

These are forms of child care that do not raise fundamental social doubts as to their concept and the main functions they perform, “although they are quite diverse” (Kuryłowicz, 2011, p. 36). According to the Charter of Family Rights, the following are considered forms of family care: adoption, family-type children’s homes, and foster families (Charter of Family Rights 1983, 39)¹⁰. They differ in that a child is placed in an adoptive family on a permanent basis, while a foster family or children’s home offers temporary care. This means that “in cases where biological parents cannot do so” (Sitarz, 2019, p. 239), children should be provided with the best possible conditions for their stay and development. The condition here is that no attempts should be made to replace the existing bonds between children and their natural parents.

8 Ustawa z dnia 6 stycznia 2000 r. o Rzeczniku Praw Dziecka [Act of 6 January 2000 on the Commissioner for Children’s Rights]. (2000). *Dziennik Ustaw*, No. 6, item 69. <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20000060069>

9 Ustawa z dnia 6 stycznia 2000 r. o Rzeczniku Praw Dziecka [Act of 6 January 2000 on the Commissioner for Children’s Rights]. (2000). *Dziennik Ustaw*, No. 6, item 69. Retrieved from <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20000060069>

10 Holy See. (1983, October 22). *Charter of the rights of the family*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19831022_family-rights_en.html

It is important to note that adoption is synonymous with taking a child into the family and granting them all the rights and responsibilities that come with it. This is in line with the anthropological principle that “*in the genealogy of the person recorded there is a family genealogy*” (John Paul II, 1994, no. 11). The point is that by encouraging adoption, the Church indicates that an adopted child should be treated in such a way that they can feel like a child born into the family. “*Regardless of blood ties, true paternal and maternal love is also ready to accept children from other families, providing them with everything they need for life and full development*” (John Paul II, 1995, no. 93). “*Motherhood is not only a biological reality, but has many different manifestations*” [...] “*Adoption is one of the most generous forms of motherhood and fatherhood*” (Francis, 2016, no. 178). The civil legal act (in Poland) that contains regulations on adoption is the above-mentioned *Family and Guardianship Code*, which in Articles 114-127 regulates the conditions for adoption, the entities that can adopt and be adopted, as well as indicates its types and possibilities for possible termination. The adoption procedure is regulated by Articles 154-175b of the *Act on Family Support and the Foster Care System* (see Krajewska, 2025, p. 152).

1.4. The legal personality of a child as the personality of a person due to them from birth

Legal subjectivity is (primarily) the ability of a person to be the subject of rights and obligations. According to the Magisterium of the Church, every human being possesses such subjectivity from the moment of conception, and it is called natural. However, those who receive Holy Baptism acquire so-called specific legal capacity. Accordingly, if in CIC/83 the legislator draws attention to the child's right to life, to the sacraments, to a Catholic upbringing, etc., these rights are based on natural legal personality as well as on specifically ecclesiastical personality, when, for example, baptism enrolls the child in the community of the Church – can. 96; 97 § 2 (Sitarz, 2019, p. 85).

Moreover, a person can obtain legal capacity on the basis of their desire and their salvific faith, which gives them access to participation in the salvific mission of the Church. Thus, for example, catechumens have the right to baptism and ecclesiastical burial – can. 206 CIC/83 (Korzyński, 2016, p. 21). Legal capacity acquired in this way cannot be lost or taken away from someone for any reason.

Therefore, legal subjectivity is a norm that allows the Church, in the face of new and old threats to the human family, and in particular when it comes to the decline in births, to conduct pastoral care “*promoting the dignity of every human person*” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2024, no. 59), thereby building a culture of love, life, and fertility in Catholic families, in place of a culture of death and nihilistic passivity or infertility, and same-sex unions.

1.5. The obligation to provide a Catholic upbringing to a child as a close relative

The canonical norm reads as follows: “*Parents have the most important duty and the primary right to provide, according to their abilities, for the physical, social, cultural, moral, and religious upbringing of their children*” – can. 1136 of the CIC/83. When it comes to religious education, the legislator strictly refers to the child's right to receive a Catholic education. This right stems primarily from canons 793-995 codified in Book (III) of the Code of Canon Law/83, entitled: “*Catholic Education*.” The legislator stipulates here that “*parents and those who take their place have a duty and at the same time a right to choose the means and institutions by which, taking into account local conditions, they can better provide for the Catholic education of their children (can. 793 § 1)*” (Sitarz, 2019, p. 95). And if they fail to fulfill this obligation, there are appropriate criminal sanctions.

This is a characteristic expression for understanding the importance of family ties and the rights and obligations arising from them, as well as for defining the concept of a Catholic family. It refers to a relationship of dependence that is unambiguous when the question is asked: why parents? Why not the state or grandparents or even more distant relatives, etc. (cf. Biały, 2024, p. 363). The point is that the

parental relationship is the first and most appropriate space for building authority, trust, and love (i.e., relationships resulting from kinship). Therefore, it is not surprising that the CIC/83, in canon 226 § 2, specifies this as follows: “Parents, due to the fact that they have given life to their children, have a very important duty and right to raise them; that is why it is primarily the responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian upbringing of their children, in accordance with the teachings of the Church” (Biały, 2020, pp. 21-32).

In other words, it is the Catholic family, understood as a special community of life, i.e., one that is called to holiness, that can provide these guarantees (related to the good of the child), i.e., to ensure the child’s well-being, understood here as an adequate, integral, Catholic upbringing and Catholic personal development. For this reason, it is called the first and very important social unit (cf. Mierzejewski, 2011, pp. 123-140).

Conclusions

The current doctrine of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church considers those elements that define the Catholic family as a community of life between a man, a woman, their children, and other relatives who are called to holiness to be immutable and particularly important. It requires that such a community be based on sacramental marriage, which is conditional on the fulfillment of a whole set of conditions, such as that the parties be baptized (in the Catholic Church) and wish to have and raise Catholic offspring. This is specifically reflected in CIC/83.

In other words, the dignity of the Catholic family is associated with its natural structure, i.e., the question of who constitutes it, and then offspring (i.e., kinship), but also the Christian vocation, which has a supernatural dimension. For this reason, the Catholic family is most often referred to as the “domestic church,” but also as a complex socio-religious phenomenon (i.e., as the basic social unit). Thus, it is an entity that is very sensitive to all social, religious, moral, and other changes and situations, requiring

promotion and protection. It is not without reason that the 1965 pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* spoke of “promoting the dignity of marriage and the family” (cf. GS 47-48). Hence, the Church constantly reminds us that free unions, cohabitation, etc., do not (and cannot) constitute an institution such as the Catholic family (Pontifical Council for the Family, 2000).

The norms concerning kinship (apart from those contained in CIC/83) are also spread throughout the Magisterium of the Church and have varying doctrinal weight. For example, impediments to marriage due to kinship are set forth in CIC/83 can. 1091-1092, and norms for the adoption of a child, apart from can. 111 § 1, etc., are found in CCC 2374-2379. Also important in this regard are the provisions found in the Charter of the Rights of the Family, Article 4f, the exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, No. 41; the encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, no. 93, and the Letter to Families *Gratissimam sane*, no. 22. They specify normative obligations, but also explain in their own way why and when issues of kinship require clarification.

It should also be added that there are other documents in the Magisterium of the Church (not included in this analysis) that explain and point to the evil of practices that indirectly affect the dignity of the Catholic family, and in this case, the dignity of kinship relations. Although this was not the subject of this analysis, it is worth emphasizing that these issues concern heterologous *in vitro* procedures (cloning), surrogacy, sex change, adoption of children by homosexual couples, etc. Important norms on these issues can be found in: Instruction *Donum vitae*, part II, no. 2; the encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (cf. nos. 37-38); the instruction *Dignitas personae* (cf. nos. 17, 28-29); the declaration *Dignitas infinita* (cf. nos. 48-50; 60); the Charter of the Rights of the Family (cf. art. 4b-c), etc.

In light of the current Magisterium of the Church, it seems that the thesis can be made that founding a Catholic family means creating a community based on sacramental marriage, living together, having children, and sharing responsibility, thus creating irreversible, valuable bonds. The key aspects of establishing such a family are the decision to live together, have

children, and take responsibility for spouse and children. This shared life means living together, dividing responsibilities, and building everyday life. It means support, i.e., creating security, mutual appreciation, and psychological and material assistance. It means planning as conscious decisions about the future.

Therefore, in the sense of “the needs postulated by the author of this analysis,” what comes to the fore is that CIC/83 does not contain a canon that provides a general definition of the Catholic family. For example, it should be understood in the generational sense (i.e., in terms of kinship) and ritual. That is, it is (primarily) formed by parents and their children; that is, a man and a woman who are baptized in the Catholic Church and realize God’s call to holiness in the Roman Catholic (or, more broadly, Catholic) rite. That all other obligations, e.g., sacramental ones, regarding the institution of marriage and family, are established on this basis¹¹, for example, the notion that “the family arises from marriage” (including the relationships that constitute the extended, multigenerational family). Importantly, CCC no. 2202 provides some clarification on this issue, i.e., through the concept of the Christian family and the obligation of Christian upbringing.

The same is true in the constitution *Gaudium et spes* nos. 47-48, in the exhortation *Familiaris consortio* no. 18. Therefore, it can be seen that in a broader, i.e., theological and ethical context, “the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, in describing the nature of the family, defines this concept and specifies its structural elements” (Banaszak, 2014, p. 401).

A particularly sensitive aspect (in normative terms) is the possibility of the so-called *blessing of homosexual unions*, granted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (cf. the declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, Vatican, December 18, 2023). This poses another ethical and canonical challenge (i.e., requiring adequate clarification in CIC/83), even if (according to the Holy See’s declaration) it is not an attempt to equate such a union with a Catholic family, but merely an act of blessing people in a relationship (and outside of worship). The point is that in the context of kinship, i.e., a recognized element constituting the principles of striving for holiness, it is important that people living in such an irregular (homosexual) relationship are not able to procreate (without the intervention of biotechnology, etc.) offspring, i.e., enter into natural and spiritual relationships resulting from blood ties in a sanctifying manner.

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¹¹ This would make it possible to establish in a normative sense whether a family where parents are baptized in the Catholic Church, but living „still” without marriage, is already a Catholic family.

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