

JOHN PAUL II – THE POPE OF THE FAMILY

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Abstract. Karol Wojtyła, from the very beginning of his episcopal ministry, expressed the conviction that marriage and family are among the most valuable assets of mankind. No wonder that the issues of these two institutions (closely related to each other) remained at the center of his attention as pope. His pastoral concern for marriage and family, as well as his great contribution to promoting them, earned him the title of “Pope of the Family.” This was confirmed by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014 during the canonization of John Paul II. The activity of the Polish Pope in the service of marriage and family covered a wide spectrum: legislation, education and the organizational and administrative sphere. This commitment of the great Legislator, Teacher and Shepherd, lasting nearly 27 years, significantly enriched the existing treasury of the Church in such a socially important field. The testimony of the tireless successor of St. Peter, who recognized that “the family is the cradle of life and love, where man is born and grows” and that “the mainstream of the civilization of love flows through the family.”

Keywords: marriage, family, John Paul II, Pope of the Family

“The happiness of a human, social community as well as Christian community is closely related to successful life of marriage and family community.”¹ This statement contained in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* of the Second Vatican Council seems to clearly indicate the role of marriage and the family that arises on its soil. “The Church, will say sixteen years after the adoption of the above-mentioned document, John Paul II, aware of the fact that marriage and the family are one of the most valuable goods of humanity, wants to teach and help those who, knowing the values of marriage and family, try to remain faithful to them.”²

The future Pope has expressed his conviction that marriage and the family are among the most precious goods of humanity since the beginning of his

¹ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis *Gaudium et spes* (07.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025–115 [hereinafter: GS], no. 47.

² Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica de Familia Christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis *Familiaris consortio* (22.11.1981), AAS 74 (1982), p. 81–191 [hereinafter: FC], no. 1.

episcopal work. Already in the first edition of the pioneering work “Miłość i odpowiedzialność” [Love and Responsibility] (Lublin 1960), the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Krakow at the time states: “The family itself is already a community, a small society on which every great society depends in its existence, e.g. nation, state, Church [...] The family is the most complementary institution, related to the foundations of human existence [...] The family is an institution based on marriage” [Wojtyła 1962, 210]. The problems of marriage and family then remained at the centre of Karol Wojtyła’s attention as Archbishop of Krakow.³

The former Metropolitan of Krakow continued – from the very beginning – his special commitment to promoting a family based on marriage as Bishop of Rome. No wonder that the title “Pope of the Family” was increasingly attributed to him. This was confirmed by Pope Francis in the homily delivered on 27th April 2014 during the canonisation of the Polish Pope, stating: “In the service of the People of God he was the Pope of the Family. He once said himself that he would like to be remembered as the Pope of the Family.”⁴

Concern for the family, which held a special place in the pastoral service of John Paul II, found its expression in his laws, teaching (several significant documents and numerous speeches), as well as in the organisational and administrative sphere.

1. LAWS

The 1983 Code of Canon Law⁵ defines marriage as follows: “The covenant by which a man and a woman form with each other a community of life, directed by its nature to the good of the spouses and to the begetting and rearing of offspring, raised by Christ – between the baptised – to the dignity of a sacrament” (can. 1055 § 1).

Emphasising that marriage is a whole-life community means that it is not a community only in the area of intimate (sexual) life, as has often been thought, but that it is a community also in all other areas of life: social, cultural, spiritual, etc. The whole-life community of the spouses is by its nature directed towards two objectives: the good of the spouses and the birth and education of children. This twofold orientation of the marital community stems from its very nature, i.e. from its very purpose, intended by God. This was

³ See *Małżeństwo chrześcijańskie*, in: *Duszpasterski synod archidiecezji krakowskiej 1972–1979*, vol 1: *Przebieg prac synodalnych. Dokumenty synodu*, Kuria Metropolitalna, Kraków 1985, p. 323–33.

⁴ See <https://misericors.org/kanonizacja-jana-pawla-ii-i-jana-xxii-homilia-papieża-franciszka-27-kwietnia-2014/> [accessed: 29.02.2020].

⁵ *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pars II, p. 1–317 [hereinafter: CIC/83].

emphasised by the Second Vatican Council when it noted that “marriage has been endowed by the Creator with various goods and purposes” (GS 48) and that “mutual love between spouses must be adequately expressed, developed and matured” (GS 50).

The good of the spouses, towards which marriage is directed, consists in the spouses helping each other in every area of the community of life, in developing and perfecting their personalities in terms of human values, shaped in union with Christ, that is, in the search for holiness. It can be said to be the individual goal of marriage, the heart of which is the marital love of the parties.

The last element of the definition of marriage relates to the sacramental dignity of this relationship. Referring to the statement in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (no. 48), the Legislator adds that “in Christian marriage the spouses are furthermore strengthened by a special sacrament and, as it were, consecrated to the duties of their state and dignity” (can. 1134 CIC/83). The descriptive definition of marriage presented above is supplemented in a way by can. 1056 CIC/83 listing two essential attributes of this relationship: unity (or exclusivity) and indissolubility.

2. TEACHING

2.1. The Creators idea for marriage and family and the need to resist attempts to contest this idea

First of all, it should be made clear that marriage and the resulting family are essentially inseparable realities [Sefrano Ruiz 2000, 94–96]. For the importance of a truly marital union between a man and a woman is revealed in the function of the family they intend to establish. And *vice versa*: the family is constituted by virtue of marriage, and therefore the same relationship between the spouses is by nature a truly family relationship [Errázuriz 2016, 29–30]. The fundamental idea in the field of marriage and family was taken up by John Paul II on many occasions. He emphasised above all that marriage and the family are institutions of natural law, and its features are inscribed in the very existence of a man and a woman (FC 11–12).

Noting that in todays world there is an ever decreasing sense of the natural and religious meaning of marriage, both in personal and public life, when not only the qualities and purposes of this union are called into question, but even the value and usefulness of the institution of marriage itself, and when the number of de facto unions, even between persons of the same sex, is on the increase, John Paul II considers it necessary to recall, not only to the followers of the Church, but also to all concerned with true human progress, certain

principles fundamental to humanity which safeguard the dignity of every human being (FC 11–12).

As the focal point and also the basic element of these principles, the Pope considers the correct concept of love between two persons of the same dignity, but different and complementary in their sexuality. He therefore notes that, in accordance with the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council (GS 49), which is also taken into account in the post-conciliar codes of canon law (CIC/83 and the Code of Canons of Oriental Churches⁶), effective love of another, permeated by a sincere desire for his good, is not to be confused with mere affection or psychical and physical attraction (FC 11).

“The total gift of the body, proclaims the papal apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* of 22th November 1981, would be a hypocrisy if it were not the sign and fruit of full personal devotion” (FC 11).

In the light of these principles, assumes the Roman Bishop, it is possible to establish and understand the essential difference between a simple de facto union, even if it arises out of love, and marriage, in which love “translates” into obligation: not only moral, but also strictly legal. The spousal relationship, mutually undertaken by the parties, subsequently strengthens the love from which it is derived, fostering its permanence in relation to the partner, the children and the community itself. With these principles in mind, how wrong it is to give same-sex unions the character of “marriage.” This is opposed first of all by the objective impossibility of realising the fruit of marriage through the transmission of life, in accordance with the Creators design for the very structure of human existence. Besides, the obstacle here is the lack of possibility for that interpersonal complementation and perfection intended by God, both on a physical and biological level and on a strictly psychological level, between man and woman. In this perspective, love is not an end in itself, and is not reduced to the bodily union of two beings, but is a profound interpersonal relationship which reaches its culmination in full mutual self-giving and in cooperation with God the Creator, the ultimate source of all new human existence.⁷

Referring to the theme of any attempt to deviate from the natural law inscribed by God in the nature of the person, the Holy Father notes that attempts are made to justify it by the freedom available to man. However, this is a mere excuse. For every believer knows that freedom is a great gift which God has made in his generosity and goodness, a gift which must be properly understood and which must not be an obstacle to human dignity.⁸

⁶ *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (18.10.1990), AAS 82 (1990), p. 1045–353.

⁷ Giovanni Paolo II, *L'allocuzione alla Rota Romana del 21 gennaio 1999*, AAS 91 (1999), p. 625.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 626.

Driven by the need to decisively disavow ideas and views opposed to the concept of marriage derived from the Creator's plan, John Paul II regards as "dangerous and insidious attacks" any attempt to deny the irreplaceable value of the family based on marriage. In an address to participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family on 4th June 1999, he said: "Even false alternatives to the family are proposed and demanded to be recognised by legislation. However, when laws that should serve the family as the basic good of society turn against it, they become a dangerous agent of destruction."⁹

2.2. The goals of marriage

As mentioned above, marriage is for the good of the spouses and for the birth and education of offspring (can. 1055 § 1 CIC/83). These two goals, closely related to each other, create unity in multiplicity. The well-being of the spouses means that they help each other in every area of life and take care to build up a community of love; in fact, the latter task implies the realisation of the former.

The theology of conjugal love outlined in the perspective of the biblical "beginning," allows the characteristic features of such love to be recognised in full light. According to John Paul II, conjugal love is above all fully personal. This is determined by the radical commitment of the spouses, i.e. in the spheres of spirituality, sensuality and affection (FC 13). *Amor coniugalis*, aiming at deeply personal unity, "not only unites one body, but forms one heart and one soul" (FC 13).

The Holy Father's statement is significant that an adequate understanding of conjugal *communio personarum* is the perception of it *in Trinitate*, that is, according to the measure of the "image of God" [Styczeń 1981, 50]. In the apostolic brief on the Dignity and Vocation of Women, *Mulieris dignitatem* of 15th August 1988, the Successor of St. Peter writes: "The God who makes himself known to people through Christ is a unity of the Trinity: unity in communion. In this way, new light is also shed on that likeness and image of God in man mentioned in Genesis."¹⁰

In the Letter to Families, the Holy Father discusses the topic of demanding love. Love is true when it creates the good of people and communities and when it is able to give this good to the other people. At the same time, it is

⁹ See https://www.jp2w.pl/42833/O/W_obronie_rodziny_i_jej_praw (html) [accessed: 05.03.2020].

¹⁰ Ioannes Paulus PP. II, *Litterae apostolicae de dignitate ac vocatione mulieris Anno Mariali vertente Mulieris dignitatem* (15.08.1988), AAS 80 (1988), p. 1653–729, no. 7. See Pastwa 2007, 66–67.

demanding, especially for those who are open to Evangelisation. Demanding love is at the heart of the family.¹¹

With regard to procreation, the Holy Father presents spouses as co-workers in the love of God the Creator, recalling – following the Encyclical *Humanae vitae* of Paul VI of 25th July 1968 – that “conjugal love must be fully human, exclusive and open to new life.”¹²

In the Letter to Families, the Pope reminds us that man cannot fully find himself except “through the gratuitous gift of itself”. Conjugal communion becomes parental communion through the gift of love. The new man, born in marriage, appears as a gift, “he is the Creator’s first gift to creation” (GrS 11). The genealogy of a person is inscribed in the genealogy of a family. A child, however, as the Holy Father notices, means the new difficulties and new needs and costs for parents. So there maybe a temptation of not to have a child. The child, however is a gift for parents and siblings – “the gift of life becomes a gift for the ones who gave the life” (GrS 11).

The topic of responsible parenthood has been presented extensively, John Paul II reminds in the encyclical of Paul VI *Humanae vitae*, at the Synod of Bishops in 1980, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, and in in Structures of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Donum vitae*. By proclaiming the teaching contained in these documents, “the Church teaches the moral truth about responsible parenthood and defends it in the face of the contrary trends of the present day” (GrS 11)¹³

When it comes to parenting, Pope Wojtyła is definitely in defense of life. It regards as dangerous and reprehensible any legislation that promotes the deprivation of life of the unborn. “No human legislator, he states, can say: you are allowed to kill, you have the right to kill, you have the right to kill or even you should kill” (GrS 21). After all, God says categorically: “Do not kill.” The civilisation of love, as he will say another time, means rejoicing, among other things, that “man is born into the world” (J 16, 21). It also means “rejoicing in the truth” (1 Kor 13, 6). The civilisation of love is opposed by a civilisation that results in a consumerist and anti-natalist mentality. This is a serious threat to the family (GrS 13).

With regard, in turn, to the upbringing of offspring, the Holy Father points out that it is a process in which the mutual communion of persons is revealed in a special way. It is a two-way bestowal of humanity and a form

¹¹ Idem, *Litterae Familiis datae ipso volvente sacro Familiae anno MCMXCTV Gratissimam sane* (02.02.1994), AAS 86 (1994), p. 868–925 [hereinafter: GrS], no. 13.

¹² Paulus PP. VI, *Litterae encyclicae de propagatione humanae proles recte ordinanda Humanae vitae* (25.07.1968), AAS 60 (1968), p. 481–503, no. 9–12.

¹³ John Paul II, *Homilia w czasie Mszy św. odprawionej dla rodzin* (Szczecin, 11.06.1987), in: *Jan Paweł II. Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny: 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1997. Przemówienia, homilie*, ed. J. Poniewierski, Znak, Kraków 1997, p. 455.

of apostolate, for the educator “gives birth” in a spiritual sense [Luber 2004, 56–66]. Through education, parents participate, states John Paul II, in Gods “paternal and yet maternal pedagogy” [ibid.].

In Article 5 The Charter of the Rights of the Family of the Holy See, approved by John Paul II on 22nd October 1983, recognises the right of parents to bring up their children (in accordance with their religious and moral convictions) as a primary and inalienable right, since it flows from the fact of the transmission of life.¹⁴

2.3. Essential attributes of marriage and the sacramentality of marriage for the baptised

As stated in can. 1056 CIC/83, the essential qualities of marriage are unity and indissolubility. John Paul II reminds us that the essential qualities of marriage are inherent in the very existence of that union, without being in any way external to it. The reinforcement of these qualities in Christian marriage through the sacrament, as stated in the canon referred to, rests on the foundation of natural law. Omitting the latter would not allow one to understand the redemptive work and the glorification of marital reality by Christ.

The Holy Father pays special attention to the attribute of the indissolubility of marriage, stressing that the good of indissolubility is the good of marriage itself. It is therefore completely wrong to claim that this quality has been imposed by human law; the latter’s task is only to explain and defend the natural law itself, which is always a liberating truth.¹⁵ “Rooted in the personal and total endowment of the spouses and required for the good of the children, the indissolubility of marriage, states the Pope of the family, finds its ultimate truth in Gods intention expressed in Revelation: God wills the indissolubility of marriage and gives it as a fruit, as a sign and requirement of the absolutely faithful love which He gives to man and which Christ the Lord nourishes for His Church” (FC 20).

With a view to questioning the indissolubility of marriage, the Pope states: “To those who in our time find it difficult or impossible to be bound to one person for life, and to those who hold views distorted by a culture that rejects the indissolubility of marriage and even ridicules the spouses’ commitment to fidelity, it is necessary to recall anew the joyful message of the absolutely binding power of that conjugal love which finds its foundation and its strength in Jesus Christ” (FC 20).

¹⁴ Carta dei Diritti della Famiglia presentata dalla Sante Sede a tutte le persone, istituzioni ed autorità ed autorità interessate alla missione della famiglia nel mondo di oggi (22.10.1983), “Communicationes” 15 (1983), no. 2, p. 140-52 [hereinafter: Carta dei Diritti].

¹⁵ Giovanni Paolo II, *L’allocuzione alla Rota Romana del 1 febbraio 2001*, AAS 93 (2001), p. 362.

By Christ's will, the natural marriage of the baptised was raised to the dignity of a sacrament. In Christian marriage, the legislator states in can. 1134 CIC/83, that the spouses are strengthened by a special sacrament and, as it were, consecrated to the duties of their state and dignity.

The question of the sacramental nature of baptised marriage was addressed by John Paul II in an address to the Roman Rota on 1st February 2001.¹⁶ He pointed to the fact that since the Second Vatican Council there have been attempts, often incompatible with tradition, to strengthen the supernatural dimension of marriage with theological, pastoral and juridical proposals, such as the one requiring faith for marriage.

In addressing this last issue, the Holy Father recalls at the very beginning of his Pontificate, after the Synod of Bishops in 1980 dedicated to the family, he discussed the matter in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, when he pointed out: "Among the sacraments, marriage has the characteristic which distinguishes it from the others, that it is a sacrament of a reality already existing in the economy of creation, that it is the same matrimonial covenant established by the Creator «from the beginning»" (FC 68).

Requiring faith, a condition that goes beyond the mere intention to marry according to God's plan taken "at the beginning," would not only create the serious dangers indicated in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (unjustified and discriminatory judgements or doubts about the validity of already contracted marriages, especially by baptised non-Catholics), but could also inevitably lead to the separation of marriage between Christians and other people. This, in turn, would be profoundly contrary to the true meaning of God's design, according to which it is created reality that is the "great mystery" in relation to Christ and the Church.¹⁷ The same problem was addressed by John Paul II in his allocution to the Roman Rota of 30th January 2003. And here he makes it clear that raising by Christ the natural reality to the dignity of a sacrament did not in any way change its nature.¹⁸

2.4. Relationships in the family

The family, the basic unit of social life, is a community that includes spouses and children, and often other people. Members of the family community should strive to ensure that their mutual relations are proper.

John Paul II sees the need for the co-creators of the family to be inspired by the "law of selflessness" which, "respecting and strengthening in everyone and in everyone personal dignity as the only reason for value, takes the form

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 353–65.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 364–65.

¹⁸ Giovanni Paolo II, *L'allocuzione alla Rota Romana del 30 gennaio 2003*, AAS 95 (2003), p. 393–97. See Góralski 2008, 92–108.

of cordial openness, encounter and dialogue, disinterested readiness to serve, generous service and profound solidarity” (FC 43). The strengthening of an authentic and mature community of persons in the family is an irreplaceable school of social life, teaching the establishment of wider social contacts in a spirit of respect, justice, dialogue and love. Recalling the statement of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (no. 52), the Holy Father notes that “in the family, different generations meet and help each other in achieving fuller wisdom in life and in reconciling the rights of individual people with the requirements of social life” (FC 43). In the family, in this *communio personarum*, “a whole set of interpersonal references emerges: spousal, fatherhood-motherhood, sonship, brotherhood” (FC 15).

The Polish Pope draws attention to the value and importance of the multi-generational family although there is a contemporary tendency to limit family ties only to two-generation relationships; it is not conducive to sharing the common good. Against this background, the words of the Pope sound bitter: “There is little human life in our modern families” (FC 10).

Deploring the high number of divorces, the conflict in many families, the prolonged separation of spouses when one of them goes abroad, the closing of many families around their own affairs, the lack of openness to others, the disappearance of the true family bond, the lack of love between parents and children and the abuse of alcohol by some members of the family, the Holy Father calls for “forming people in love, practising love in all references to our neighbours, so that love embraces the whole community.”¹⁹

2.5. The mission of the family in the Church

Each person in the family “is born and gradually, through education, is introduced into the human community, but also through baptismal rebirth and education in faith is introduced into the family of God, which is the Church,” we read in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (no. 15). “The Church finds in the family, born of the sacrament, her birthplace and the place where she enters into human generations and where they enter into the Church” (FC 15).

Every Christian family, says the document, is called to build up the Kingdom of God by participating in the life and mission of the Church. The ties that bind the Church to the Christian family make it “a kind of Church in miniature (the domestic Church) and make it a kind of living reflection and historical presentation of the mystery of the Church” (FC 49).²⁰

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Homilia w czasie Mszy św.* (03.06.1991), in: *Jan Paweł II. Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny*, p. 616.

²⁰ John Paul II, *Czym jesteś rodziną chrześcijańska. Przemówienie Ojca świętego 8 października 1994 roku*, in: *Jan Paweł II, Rodzino, co mówisz o sobie? Dokumenty i przemówienia papieskie*

Opening the World Meeting of Families in Rome on 8th October 1994, John Paul II began with a powerful question: “Family, Christian family: what are you ?” And then he said: “We find the answer already in the beginnings of Christianity, in the apostolic period: «I am the domestic Church». In other words: I am a little Church, a Church at home.”²¹ And he added: “The Church and the family come from the same sources. They have the same origins in God: in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”²²

It is the Mother-Church, according to the Pope, that gives birth to, educates and builds the Christian family, fulfilling towards it the salvific mission received from Christ. On the other hand, the Christian family “is so much a part of the Church’s mystery that it becomes, in its own way, a participant in the salvific mission of the Church herself” (FC 50) [Styczeń 1987, 119–20].

John Paul II stresses that the Christian family, the center and heart of the civilisation of love, is called to a living and responsible participation in the mission of the Church; its participation in this mission should take place in a communal way, so the spouses-parents and children should serve the ecclesial community – through conjugal and family love. This participation is expressed and realised in the prophetic, priestly and royal mission of Jesus Christ and his Church (FC 50) [Dec 1994, 7–14].

The family’s participation in the prophetic mission is realised in receiving and proclaiming the God’s Word, which implies their obedience to faith [Góralski 2015, 42–44, 47–54]. By carrying out these duties, the family becomes an evangelising community. Spouses-parents are called to a special evangelisation testimony to be “the conscience of family culture and active subjects in building an authentic humanism of *familie*” (FC 7). Participation in the royal mission should be expressed in serving the other man. The Christian family, enlivened and sustained by the new commandment of love, lives with hospitality, respect and service to every human being. This is to be done primarily “inside and for the good of marriage and the family, through the daily effort of creating an authentic community of people, the foundation of which is and nourished by an internal communion of love” (FC 64). Thanks to the love of the family, the author of *Familiaris consortio* emphasises, the Church should take on a more family character, becoming more human and fraternal (FC 64).

w *Roku Rodziny*, Wydział Duszpasterstwa Rodzin Kurii Metropolitalnej „Czuwajmy”, Kraków 1995, p. 234. See also Pastwa 2015, 103–105.

²¹ John Paul II, *Czym jesteś rodzino chrześcijańska*, p. 234.

²² *Ibid.*

2.6. The mission of the family in the secular community

The family, which is a community of persons, this smallest unit of social life, is “the basic institution for the life of every society” (GrS 17). By virtue of its nature and vocation, the family, “far from going into its shell, opens itself up to other families and to society, taking up its social task” (FC 42). “As a community of love and life, it is a community most strongly «grounded» and in its own way a sovereign community, although at the same time it is a multi-dependent community” (GrS 17). The Charter of Family Rights emphasises that the family, a natural union, is “primary in relation to the state or any other community” (Carta dei Diritti, Introduction, point D).

As John Paul II points out in his Letter to Families, a family-institution expects society to recognise its identity and to accept its own social subjectivity (GrS 17). Social recognition can only be given to the marriage through which “a man and a woman form a community of life with each other, directed by their nature towards the good of the spouses and towards the birth and raising the offspring” (can. 1055 § 1 CIC/83).

When it comes to family sovereignty, which is ultimately in the foundation of marriage and conjugal fertility [Carrers 2012, 919], it should be recognised by all institutions, both social and ecclesiastical. Neither the Church nor the state can create any family relationship, because their power is limited to recognising the sole right of the spouses (sovereign decision) to establish the family and all family relationships.

In the Letter to Families, John Paul II notices that there is an almost organic bond between the family and the nation or ethnic group, and its basis is primarily participation in culture. Parents also bear children for the nation, so that they can be members and can participate in its historical and cultural heritage. From the very beginning, the identity of the family appears to a certain extent on the foundation of the identity of the nation to which the family belongs. By participating in the cultural patrimony of the nation, the family contributes to the specific sovereignty that flows from its own culture and language. Not only the nation but also each family finds its spiritual sovereignty through culture and language. The family is very organically united with the nation, and the nation with the family (GrS 17). “John Paul II will say in Nowy Targ on 8th June 1979: the nation depends on what the family is like, because man depends on it.”²³

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, John Paul II notes that although the family and society complement each other in the function of defending and developing the good of all people and of every human being, “society, or more precisely the state, should recognise that the family [according

²³ John Paul II, *Homilia w czasie Mszy św.* (08.06.1979), in: *Jan Paweł II. Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny*, p. 161.

to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council – W.G.] is «a community enjoying its own and original right»²⁴ and therefore that it is strictly obliged to respect the principle of subsidiarity in relation to the family” (FC 45). Public authorities, as per the following document, convinced that the good of the family is an irreplaceable and indispensable value in the community of citizens, should do everything possible to secure all aid – economic, social, pedagogical, political, cultural – necessary for the families, so they could meet their responsible tasks in a dignified way” (FC 45).

The Letter to Families further emphasises that the family is at the centre of all these problems and tasks: to relegate it to an assigned and secondary role and to remove it from its position in society would seriously harm the true growth of the whole social substance (GrS 17).

The Charter of Family Rights states that “public authorities should recognise and promote the dignity, legitimate independence, intimacy, integrity and stability of each family” (Carta dei Diritti, Introduction, Article 6a) and in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of 30th December 1988, John Paul II emphasises that Christians should make sure that the family, which is “the first place of «humanisation» of a person and society,” is aware of its own identity and becomes more and more an active and responsible promoter of its own development and participation in social life.²⁵

2.7. Family Ministry

Recognising the need for the Ministry, the presence of the Church to support the family, John Paul II devotes much attention to the Family Ministry. In his speech at the opening of the Synod of Bishops on 26th September 1980, John Paul II said that “it is the family that gives life to society. After all, it is there, where the core of humanity of every human being on earth is formed through the great work of education.”²⁶ It is therefore up to the Ministers to make every effort to ensure that the spouses consider it a special task to guard this love, fidelity and honesty and all the goods that flow from it for the spouses themselves and for society.²⁷

The area of the Family Ministry is the subject of the fourth part of the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, where it speaks successively

²⁴ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Declaratio de libertate religiosa *Dignitatis humanae* (07.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 929–46, no. 5.

²⁵ Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica post-synodalis de vocatione et missione Laicorum in Ecclesia et in mundo *Christifideles laici* (30.12.1988), AAS 81 (1989), p. 393–521, no. 40.

²⁶ Idem, *Przemówienie na otwarcie Synodu Biskupów* (26.09.1980), in: *Jan Paweł II o małżeństwie i rodzinie 1978–1982*, Warszawa 1983, no. 5.

²⁷ Idem, *Homilia podczas Mszy św. dla Rodzin* (12.10.1980), w: *Jan Paweł II o małżeństwie i rodzinie 1978–1982*, p. 18–21.

about the stages of the Family Ministry, its organisation, employees and special circumstances. With regard to the stages of the Family Ministry, the Holy Father first indicates preparation for marriage – further, closer, immediate (FC 66). Then, on the basis of this preparation, he gives indications regarding the wedding rite, evangelisation of baptised non-believers (FC 68) and the Family Ministry of married couples (FC 69).

The papal teaching on the latter issue seems particularly significant here, where the need for multiple support of young families is emphasised, which “in the context of new values and new responsibilities are more exposed than others, especially in the first years after the wedding, to possible difficulties, such as those related to adapting to a common life or the birth of children” (FC 69). When it comes to the organisation of the Family Ministry, the Author of the Exhortation draws attention to the necessity to create the structures of this Ministry, which should include: the church community, in particular the parish, Christian families and associations of families for families (FC 70–72) [Kamiński 2013, 295–308].

With regard to the Family Ministry workers, the aforementioned papal document, first of all, indicates bishops and priests, and then monks and nuns, lay specialists and recipients and workers of social communication (FC 73–76).

Finally, when it comes to the Family Ministry in difficult cases, the former Archbishop of Kraków refers to the category of people and families who – for various reasons – need more care and support, e.g. “ideologically divided” families, elderly spouses, mixed marriages or people in “abnormal” situations (trial marriage, real free relationships, Catholics only married by civil marriage, separated and divorced, who have not remarried, divorced, who entered into a new relationship), deprived of a family (FC 77–85).

3. ACTIVITY IN THE ORGANISATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SPHERE

Apart from the activity of the Holy Father in the legislative and teaching spheres, it is not difficult to notice his involvement also in the organisational and administrative area.

Bearing in mind the need for a more thorough and institutional treatment of the family and its affairs, John Paul II established the *motu proprio* *Familia a Deo instituta* of 9th May 1981, a new organ of the Roman Curia: the Pontifical Council for the Family²⁸ which replaced the Paul VI Committee for the Family established on 11th March 1973 [Kukołowicz 1985, 53].

²⁸ Ioannes Paulus II, *Litterae apostolicae motu proprio datae Pontificium Consilium pro Familia constituitur* *Familia a Deo constituta* (09.05.1981), AAS 73 (1981), p. 441–44.

By virtue of *Pope Francis motu proprio Sedula Mater* of 15th August 2016²⁹ The Pontifical Council for the Family became part of the newly created Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life (it was headed by Archbishop K.J. Farrell). The Council was responsible for transmitting the Church's teaching on marriage and the family, initiating and coordinating Ministerial activities for the family, animating Catholic associations related to the family and defending human life, and cooperation with non-Catholic pro-family organisations [Kamiński 2013, 296]. Members of this authority of the Roman Curia have formed the core of the Holy See's delegation to international conferences on the family, presenting there the Christian vision of marriage and the family and defending it against "ideological attacks by circles that in various ways try to undermine their value" [ibid.].

A significant form of promoting the family were the World Meetings of Families organised by the Pontifical Council – on the initiative of John Paul.³⁰ It was also on the initiative of the Polish Pope that the Institute for the Study of Marriage and the Family at the Pontifical Lateran University, founded on 13th May 1981, was created, later transformed by Francis (19th September 2007) into the Theological Institute for the Study of Marriage and the Family.

FINAL REMARKS

The most succinctly presented activity of Pope John Paul II in the sphere of his pastoral care for the family (based on marriage) seems to clearly indicate how extraordinary this commitment was and how rich it brought. Concern for this basic social unit, deeply lying at the heart of the great Humanist, made itself felt in every possible level of his activity: legislative, teaching and administrative. This creative and tireless activity of the great Legislator, Teacher and Shepherd, lasting almost 27 years, immeasurably enriched the existing treasury of the Church in such a socially important field. Imbued with the idea of Christian personalism and firmly embedded in the tradition of Mediterranean culture, the axiological "project" of emphasizing human dignity, promoting the dignity of the human body, shaping virtues and character as well as education for freedom and love, addressed to the Christian family, can be considered timeless. The integral connection of the "civilization of love" with the institution of the family, which is the "center and heart" of this civilization, allowed "the Pope from a distant country" to assume that the family is "the first way of the Church." The relationship of the civilization of love shown by him

²⁹ Franciscus PP., Litterae apostolicae motu proprio datae *Sedula Mater* quibus Dicasterium pro Laicis, Familia et Vita constituitur (15.08.2016), AAS 108 (2016), p. 963–67.

³⁰ See <https://stacja7.pl/ze-swiatek/swiatowe-spotkania-rodzin-maja-juz-ponad-20-lat/> [accessed: 14.03.2020].

with the “community of persons,” which is the family, enabled him to state that “the family is the cradle of life and love, where man is born and grows” and that “through the family flows the mainstream of the civilization of love.”

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