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GUIDELINES FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE
DIVORCED AND REMARRIED IN CZECHIA AFTER
AMORIS LAETITIA

INTRODUCTION

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of the Holy Father Francis,¹ especially its Chapter Eight, caused a reaction that the Church had not experienced before, although the document did not produce any radical change in the pastoral care of the divorced, which some had expected and some had frowned upon. However, it inspired and imposed certain obligations on those in charge of pastoral care, who use the fundamental experience of ministry and rely upon the moral teaching of the Church today. The post-synodal papal documents are not originally legal documents: their extra-legal nature can be attributed to the fact that, according to the Code of Canon Law,² the synod of bishops is not “resolve” questions that they address (Can. 343 CIC/83). However, *Amoris laetitia*, like other papal exhortations, encourages bishops to draw up various directives or guidelines, including particular norms. Discussions were held in many countries, but not all dioceses or conferences of bishops decided to

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¹ Franciscus PP., Adhortatio apostolica post-synodalis de Amore in Familia *Amoris laetitia* (19.03.2016), AAS 108 (2016), pp. 311-446 [“AL”].

² *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pars II, pp. 1-317 [“CIC/83”].

adopt a specific position, thus implementing the pope's ideas (based on documents prepared by the Synod of Bishops on the Family in 2014 and 2015)³ in their pastoral practice or in their specific legislation. Although the Bishops' Conference of the Czech Republic sparked a discussion among experts,⁴ it failed to lay down any specific and common guidelines. The article addresses the question of how the preparation of guidelines and approach to pastoral care of the divorced in the Czech Republic developed after the publication of *Amoris laetitia* and up to the present day.

1. APPOINTMENT OF AN EXPERT PANEL AND EXPERTS' PROPOSALS

The position of Pope Francis on the divorced (and often civilly remarried) can be best expressed in the words: receive, discern, include, accompany, and foster growth. They create a line of narrative with pope's reflections on the pastoral care of people in difficult or "irregular" situations. More briefly, this necessary practice can be worded as "truth – non-rejection." This point of view should determine the entire domain of pastoral ministry. After the publication of *Amoris laetitia*, in May 2016, the then chair of the Czech Bishops' Conference [CBC], Cardinal Dominik Duka, appointed a group of experts. It consisted of ecclesiastical lawyers and moral and pastoral theologians. They were tasked with preparing grounds for the prospective application of the guidelines contained in *Amoris laetitia* in Czechia. The group was coordinated by Aleš Opatný, a pastoral theologian, and the members were canonists Ignác A. Hrdina, OPraem and Damián Němec OP, pastoral theologian Pavel Ambros SJ and moral theologian Jiří Skoblík. Back then, it was not certain whether the bishops

³ The first (III Extraordinary) session was held between 5 and 19 October 2014; Archbishop Jan Graubner of Olomouc participated on behalf of the Czech Bishops' Conference [CBC]. The second (XIV Ordinary) session was scheduled to 4-25 October 2015; the CBC was represented by Bishop Jan Vokál of Hradec Králové.

⁴ In addition to the meetings of the Economic and Legal Committee of the CBC and a group of experts, November 2018 saw an expert panel hosted by the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice. The panel gathered experts from many theological disciplines and social sciences. Several articles were published in scientific journals afterwards. An example is one of the issues of the *Salve* journal. It addresses the problem from various angles, primarily pastoral or theoretical: *Salve. Amoris laetitia* 1-2/2018.

would want to draft a directive of the entire CBC, directives of individual bishops, a brief “vademecum” for priests, simple recommendations concerning the accompaniment to the divorced, or something else. Cardinal Dominik Duka requested the experts to prepare a working document for the bishops and covering the suggestions contained in Chapter Eight of *Amoris laetitia*.

Among a number of other pastoral proposals, steps had already been taken to create common guidelines for the CBC in line with the provisions of *Amoris laetitia*: Priests should “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop. Useful in this process is an examination of conscience through moments of reflection and repentance. The divorced and remarried should ask themselves: how did they act towards their children when the conjugal union entered into crisis; whether or not they made attempts at reconciliation; what has become of the abandoned party; what consequences the new relationship has on the rest of the family and the community of the faithful; and what example is being set for young people who are preparing for marriage. Sincere reflection can strengthen trust in the mercy of God which is not denied anyone” (AL 300).

In cooperation with the CBC’s Commission for the Doctrine of the Faith, the team completed a working document for bishops, based on which the final common position of the CBC was to be agreed. The document was submitted to the bishops at the July 2016 plenary meeting of the CBC in Velehrad. However, the bishops were not able to agree on the final text of a common directive. In the autumn of 2016, the Czech translation of *Amoris laetitia* was ready, but no official position or guidelines of the CBC were communicated to the public. However, the expert group were orally instructed to continue their work, following the instructions gathered at the CBC’s plenary session. In January 2017, Libor Botek, an officialis of the Olomouc Ecclesiastical Tribunal, decided to contribute to the discussion through Damián Němeca, a member of the expert team. He drew the bishops’ attention to the need to formulate practical guidelines for the Czech Church; he even submitted his own proposal. It consisted of 12 points and identified ordinary and extraordinary solutions. In Botek’s view, the preferred solution should be to examine the validity of a previous marriage by an ecclesiastical tribunal or to have the pope to dissolve it in favour of the faith (*privilegium petrinum*) or by a dispensation from

a marriage that was not consummated (*super rato*) and subsequent convalidation of the existing matrimony before the Church. If a tribunal failed to prove the nullity of marriage or the proceedings were not even initiated due to obvious uselessness (e.g. the absence of witnesses and other evidence), and even the dispensation of the Holy Father were not an option, for persons who: (a) lead an active spiritual life in a parish or other spiritual group, (b) show remorse for the breakdown of their marriage, (c) sincerely desire to participate in the sacraments because they are aware of the need for Christ's help to save any values left after they had failed in life, their pastor (or spiritual director) might consider whether it would be appropriate to allow them to access the sacraments. It would be the diocesan Bishop to appoint a coordinator from among the clergy of the diocese to decide which priests would be offering this extraordinary pastoral opportunity, or the bishop would decide himself. The consent to access the Sacrament of Confession and the Sacrament of the Eucharist by a person living in a marriage that is invalid for the Church should be understood as an extraordinary pastoral instrument, to which there is no right. Dr Botek justified the need to prepare the guidelines by the fact that priests were familiar with *Amoris laetitia*, but there was a risk that they would apply it at their own discretion, and that pastoral practice would vary greatly from one location to another. For that reason, the practice required to be harmonized through a directive. The expert group accepted this proposal as one of the foundations of their work. Aleš Opatrný, the group coordinator, penned the final report and submitted it to the bishops.

In September 2017, the expert group (after the CBC again failed to reach a common position, and no common guidelines were prepared in practice) agreed that the discussion must continue, and that it was too early to draw "definitive conclusions." Priests and other pastoral workers should be encouraged to accompany the divorced and remarried to assist them through the divorce process or attempt to revive their shaken faith. A system of diocesan "advisers to the divorced" was recommended or, alternatively, a brief set of guidelines should be put in place. Moreover, the faithful should probably be encouraged to help "re-integrate" the divorced with the Church, so that at least some of them may be able to "hate divorce and love the divorced" (following the inspiration of St Augustine's "Condemn those who err, love those who err"). The question was whether a directive regulating the sacramental life of the divorced and remarried

could be issued. The expert group proposed the following approach: to review the current approach to the divorced and remarried (civilly) in each diocese; to review pastoral programmes for the divorced, which were being developed or had already been tested; to ensure, in an appropriate manner, that each diocese offered its priests a “refresher” concerning information in the three areas which had surfaced in the discussions and had proven extremely important: as regards morals, the imputability of sin; as regards spiritual accompaniment, specific conditions for non-directive accompaniment of persons who find themselves in irregular situations; as regards morals and spiritual accompaniment, to adhere to the principle of succession (and not the gradation of legal norms!), introduced by St John Paul II and still applied by Pope Francis. Finally, a text implementing *Amoris laetitia* should be published. As the similar text of the German bishops, it would address the question of access to the sacraments for the divorced and remarried, but it would not depart from other issues related to matrimony and family life. The CBC insisted on postponing the beginning of this process by one year. However, after a year, no further action was taken. The bishops did not invite the experts to a meeting. The group discontinued their work and was dissolved in 2018.

2. OPINIONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE CZECH POSITION

During their operation, the Czech group of experts gathered insights and experience concerning Chapter Eight of *Amoris laetitia* from several other bishops’ conferences and a number of cardinals. They sought inspiration when developing their own text. According to the bishops of Argentina, pastoral accompaniment must be a *via caritatis* exercise. This process does not necessarily end with access to the sacraments, but it does not rule out such an option altogether. First, when both the divorced and remarried decide to observe continence, or when it is acknowledged that there are obstacles thereto that alleviate the sense of responsibility and guilt, the general consent to access the sacraments is rejected. Emphasis is also laid on conscience and personal examination of whether some facts exist in the context of divorce that would make access to the sacraments truly offensive. The German position on Chapter Eight is marked by ut-

most accuracy, which is typical of Germans. Generally, “yes” to access to the sacraments is rejected while, following the pope’s view, no one should be “condemned or excluded permanently.” Spiritual accompaniment and the role of conscience are highlighted. Access to the sacraments is deemed possible in some cases, not only when observing complete continence. In Austria, whose bishops have not yet issued any joint statement or guidance, Cardinal Schönborn says that he anticipates a longer discussion and gradual acceptance of ideas contained in *Amoris laetitia*, yet he rejects definitive solutions and both laxism and rigorism. Canadian bishops have also failed to issue clear guidelines while insisting on a firm “no” with regard to access to the sacraments by the divorced and remarried if they are still alive and in a second marriage. In Slovakia, the Bishop’s Conference held a symposium⁵ where communion of the divorced and remarried was acknowledged in communion with the Church, yet access to the sacraments should only be possible for the re-married who live “like brother and sister.” Discussion of experts in Poland was brief.⁶ Based on that, the Polish Bishops’ Conference, at the 379th Plenary Meeting in Janów Podlaski and Siedlce held on 8 June 2018, adopted The Pastoral Guidelines for the Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*. The text emphasizes the need for the ministry of brides, spouses, families, and individuals living in irregular unions, according to the pastoral criteria proposed by Pope Francis: acceptance, accompaniment, discernment, and integration. The document does not address the question of the Holy Communion for persons living in a non-sacramental marriage.⁷ Based on these guidelines, individual dioceses established the pastoral care of the divorced, “vademecum,” etc. [Kućko 2020, 197-219].

Another inspiration for the Czech solution was the positions of two cardinals. The opinion of Cardinal Müller, former Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, who initially avoided statements on *Amoris laetitia*, stressed that the document should be interpreted in line with the Magisterium’s earlier statements. Later, he expressed a dissenting view

⁵ Conference, *Posolstvo Amoris laetitia a pastoračné perspektívy na Slovensku*, Bádín, 12.11.2016.

⁶ See Góralski 2016.

⁷ *Wytuczne pastoralne Konferencji Episkopatu Polski do adhortacji „Amoris laetitia”*, “Akta Konferencji Episkopatu Polski” 30(2018), pp. 83-90.

on the bishop's interpretation of the pope.⁸ He referred to Pope John Paul II's still-valid conclusion contained in the Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*. It said that divorced persons who remarried and wanted to participate in the sacraments must commit themselves to observing continence. Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, the retired President of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts and professor of canon law, voiced an opinion [Coccopalmerio 2017] that the Church might admit to the Sacrament of Confession and to the Eucharist those faithful who live in an irregular union but meet two fundamental conditions: they desire to change this situation but are not able to. It is evident that these fundamental conditions must be subject to a careful and directive discernment of an ecclesiastical authority (not subjective one but leaving enough room for communication with a priest). Cardinal Coccopalmerio also notes that it may be "necessary" or "at least very useful to install such a ministry in the diocese," so that the bishop "might offer relevant advice or give special consents of admission to the sacraments in such cases." The summary report drawn up by Aleš Opatrný, coordinator of the Czech expert group, also included several other opinions. Based on these (and not only) suggestions, the individual members of the expert group submitted their proposals, first separately and then in the summary report. The expert group also considered the opinion of Rocco Buttiglione contained in one of his publications in Italian. The author looked at some controversies associated with *Amoris laetitia* [Buttiglione 2017].

3. FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT THE DECISION OF THE CBC AND THE REACTION OF THE BISHOP OF PLZEŇ

Even the worldwide celebration of the Year of the Family in the Church, announced by Pope Francis⁹ for 19 March 2021 to 26 June 2022,

⁸ *Wypowiedź kardynała Müllera nie tylko na temat interpretacji adhortacji Amoris laetitia*, <https://onepeterfive.wpengine.com/cardinal-muller-it-is-impossible-for-mortal-sin-to-coexist-with-sanctifying-grace/> [last access: 23.05.2023].

⁹ Papa Francesco annuncia l'Anno Famiglia Amoris laetitia, Angelus 27 dicembre 2020, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/angelus/2020/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20201227.html [last access: 23.05.2023]: Among the aims of the Year of the Family was to have a look at the ways in which the message of the 2016 exhortation was put into practice in the various domains of the universal Church and of the

which abounded in pastoral initiatives in Czechia, did not cause the subject of the divorced and remarried to be revisited. The Czech bishops did not take the opportunity to frame a unified and common position on the matter, either. It is not clear whether it was a mistake of the expert group or of the CBC; perhaps, proper communication and coordination were lacking.

This situation (failure to find a common solution) has remained unchanged in the Czech and Moravian dioceses until today, yet with one exception. Bishop Tomáš Holub of the Diocese of Plzeň decided to take action on his own. In the spring of 2023, he issued a pastoral letter in his diocese in which he decided to entrust the diocesan Missionaries of Mercy with the task of accompanying spiritually the sisters and brothers of the local communities who had experienced a painful breakdown in their marriages and were now living in a new relationship. The accompaniment should begin as from the first Sunday of Lent of 2023, in the spirit of the urgent recommendation of Pope Francis. The bishop also shared more precise information and practical guidelines¹⁰ as a follow-up to his pastoral decision. In an interview,¹¹ Bishop Holub explained his intention. He referred to AL 300 and bishop's responsibility. He outlined the several months of preparations in the diocese and his wish that the Missionaries of Mercy (and not pastors who know their parishioners), whom he entrusted with the process of discernment, assisted the divorced on their way to re-integration into the Church. The reason for relying on the missionaries was apparently the bishop's desire to achieve a unity of opinion and a similar approach that he himself could adopt as the diocesan bishop. In Bishop Holub's view, the possibility for former spouses to live in a new relationship "like brother and sister" does not hold true for everyone. However, in his directive, the bishop says that first "adequate measures" should be sought (the matrimonial process in an ecclesiastical tribunal, etc.). If this solution

particular Churches; Tomáš Holub, *Pastýřský list Milosrdenství pro rozvedené ze dne 22.02.2023*, https://biskupstviplzen.blob.core.windows.net/cms/ContentItems/13412_milosrdenstvi-pro-rozvedene/520-2023-pastyrsky-list-biskupa-tomase-26-2-2023-1.pdf [last access: 27.05.2023].

¹⁰ Tomáš Holub, *Diecézní směrnice: Proces rozlišování možnosti přijímání svátostí manžely žijícími v neregulárním svazku za doprovázení diecézního biskupa a misionářů milosrdenství*, "Příloha ACEP" 3/2023, https://biskupstviplzen.blob.core.windows.net/cms/ContentItems/13412_milosrdenstvi-pro-rozvedene/proces-rozlisovani-moznosti-prijimani-svatosti-manzely-1.pdf [last access: 27.05.2023].

¹¹ Idem, *Rozhovor o milosrdenství* (17.04.2023), <https://www.bip.cz/rozhovoremilosrdenstvi> [last access: 27.05.2023].

proves ineffective, the process of discernment should take place under the guidance of a missionary of mercy. After discernment, the bishop decides whether to permit access to the sacraments, although they do not necessarily need to be administered. Another obstacle may be when partners do not wish to take up the process of discernment. The bishop has an opinion that the process cannot be carried out in the spirit of *Amoris laetitia* for only one of the partners. Ways need to be sought to involve both parties in the discernment process, in which God plays a central role. This may require time and an innovative approach, as well as the kindness on the part of the Church. Another problem may be the acceptance or lack thereof by the community of parishioners where the divorced reside. Bishop Holub says that the parish and its pastor participate in the entire pastoral journey along with the couple. In order to ensure their acceptance in the parish at any time, they should be given a chance to be invited to the Eucharist again. If the pastor or the parish community are not prepared to accept the decision to allow a divorced or civilly re-married church-goer to partake in the Eucharist, there may be an exception that the Eucharist will be accessed elsewhere but not in a specific parish.

4. THE PLZEŇ DIRECTIVE

In his directive, the Bishop of Plzeň set out a procedure for handling matters of the divorced and remarried in his diocese. First, he lays down “general rules.” In the process of discernment, the proclamation of the Gospel message is paramount; it will enliven and renew the personal encounter of the spouses and the living Jesus Christ (cf. AL 58). Moreover, it is always important to encourage people to reveal their conscience to God. Therefore, “examination of conscience” suggested in AL 300 is useful, especially for the divorced and remarried in relation to “how they acted towards their children” or the abandoned party. Through this reflection, the divorced should become aware of their relationship with God and the Church and how they can strengthen these relationships. At the same time, the directive says that the aim is not necessarily to be admitted to receive the sacraments. Focus may be on other forms of participation in the life of the Church: greater presence in the parish community, participation in prayer or reflection groups, various types of ministry in the

Church, etc. (cf. AL 299). Five specific Missionaries of Mercy in the diocese (Gunther Ecklbauer, OMI, Vlastimil Kadlec, OMI, Augustin Kováčik, OPraem., Štěpán Rob, Bogdan Stepień, OSPPE) will be entrusted with the task of accompaniment for a period of five years. The process of discernment provided for in the directive can be initiated no earlier than five years after a civil divorce (exceptionally three years after the divorce if the bishop so consents). Before this period expires, it is obviously possible and proper to accompany the spouses spiritually; they should be assisted in handling the grief of divorce and helped in other ways to live with Christ; their acceptance in the local community of the faithful should be fostered, however this cannot be a process of discernment yet.

The discernment proper should begin with the aid of the local pastor or priest whom the couple has approached. Having determined (and possibly having consulted the diocesan tribunal) that the process (even briefer) for the declaration of the nullity of marriage is not possible or does not lead to nullity, the priest will share a list of Missionaries of Mercy with the couple and will encourage them to approach one of them on their own. The cleric can also help them contact a missionary or even accompany them during the first meeting. If this is not possible, the couple may speak directly to the missionary (for example, because of the pastor's refusal to allow them to enter the path of discernment). The missionary should first consider (or consult) the possibility of declaring the marriage invalid. The missionary meets the spouses to hear them. He will welcome them to listen with attention. He will show them the motherly face of the Church. He will accept their sincere intentions and good will to dedicate their whole life to the light of the Gospel and to perform of works of mercy (cf. AL 306 and AL 312). If the way of common discernment appears attainable, the missionary organizes another meeting with the spouses. They continue the dialogue and reflect on the spouses' previous and present relationship. The missionary helps them discern and identify both the objective situation (e.g. the validity or nullity of their previous marriage) and their subjective attitude, readiness to repent, forgive, heal and grow in love for God and neighbour (cf. AL 305). The process of discernment, conversion, and following the path of faith spans at least one year and four meetings. If during the process of discernment the three recognize that the spouses accompanying each other have openness to life in the grace of God, have the ability to grow in grace, and show the desire to receive the Eucharist (cf.

AL 301-303), the missionary submits a written recommendation to the bishop to seek his consent to the spouses' access (as an instrument of growth and grace) to the Sacraments of Confession and the Sacrament of the Eucharist (cf. AL 336 and 351). If the missionary does not propose this solution, he must meet with the bishop and explain his position. Next, he meets the spouses and they all meet the diocesan bishop to discuss the question of discernment. Having read the opinion of the missionary and having spoken to the spouses in person, the bishop decides to implement a permanent "work of mercy," – namely to enable them to access the sacraments. The bishop communicates the positive decision to the competent pastor. The pastor must announce it in the parish while accompanying the parish community in growing in a spirit of understanding and acceptance; he must not create confusion with regard to the Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. The ecclesial community is an instrument of mercy that is "unmerited, unconditional, and gratuitous" (AL 297). In exceptional cases to be decided by the bishop, especially if conflict situations can be foreseen, it may be appropriate to organize access to the sacraments in private or in another parish. If the bishop does not allow spouses to access the sacraments, their pastor, possibly with the help of a Missionary of Mercy, should enable them to participate in the life of the local community and provide different ecclesial services adequate to their situation (cf. AL 297 and 299). Finally, all those involved should be encouraged to let themselves be guided step by step through prayer and personal interaction, "in the context of a pastoral discernment filled with merciful love, which is ever ready to understand, forgive, accompany, hope, and above all integrate" (AL 312). On its website, the Diocese of Plzeň links to a resource that contains other similar directives (however, the target website lists all directives provided for under Chapter Eight of AL, without distinguishing between solutions and including those that discuss the existing practice, e.g. the possibility of accessing the sacraments if sexual continence is observed, etc.).¹² The bishop and personnel of the Diocese of Plzeň gave some interviews, and the topic was on social media, but the assessment of the Plzeň practice (e.g. how many of the faithful have chosen this path or whether the bishop has allowed anyone to access the sacra-

¹² List of links: <https://agas.cz/clanek.php?id=1621> [last access: 27.07.2023].

ments in this way) is not yet known. Neither official nor unofficial statements of other bishops have been aired in the Czech mass-media to date.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no common and uniform directive or guidelines of the Bishop's Conference of the Czech Republic with regard to the divorced and remarried in the Church. The procedure has remained the same as before the publication of *Amoris laetitia*. The ecclesiastical tribunals first examine whether a marriage can be declared null or the procedure of dissolution of marriage can be resorted to. Divorced and remarried persons who cannot apply for a declaration of nullity of marriage, and their case cannot be settled by virtue of the pauline or petrine privilege, may commit to living together like brother and sister from a certain age (usually around 65 or if there are medical considerations to do so); next, they can participate in the sacraments. The practical approach in each diocese, including of the person who makes the decision, differs. For example, in the Archdiocese of Olomouc, the matter is entrusted to the officialis of the ecclesiastical tribunal at the request of the pastor of interested parties whose civil marriage cannot be convalidated. The pastor may comment on the situation and if he considers that the consent does not cause scandal among the faithful, the applying parties are granted consent to access the sacraments without any limitations place- and time-wise. Paradoxically, the reason for which the officialis from Olomouc advocated the creation of guidelines (to mitigate the risk that priests would apply them in different ways, at their discretion, and ecclesial practices would differ) and the absence of decision of the bishops have resulted in one of the bishops, who issued a diocesan directive for his diocese in 2023, beginning to apply *Amoris laetitia* in his own way. It is too early to assess this situation. However, the Diocese of Plzeň has a relatively small number of active Catholics, and the local diocesan tribunal does not examine too many matrimonial cases. But even the bishop's directive provides that first ordinary means of resolving the situation of the divorced must be exhausted, and only then steps can be taken to consider other ways. The Bishop of Plzeň points out in the directive that the aim is not necessarily to ensure that the divorced and newly remarried be able to participate in

the sacraments. No doubt, it is good news that the bishop is interested in the divorced and explores different avenues to assist them (since there is no consensus of the CBC in place). Still, the announcement of the Plzeň directive triggered a mass-media reaction of the Czech Church. However, the official position of the bishops have not yet been presented. Time and practice will show how feasible this solution will be (or how complex it will occur to those involved). In my opinion, it would be advisable for the CBC, and not only in the aftermath of the Plzeň directive, to formulate, as it was in Poland, specific and uniform guidelines. I am convinced that it would also be very positive to highlight other aspects and ideas of Pope Francis contained in *Amoris laetitia* as they may enrich matrimonial relations but for now have not been so strongly exposed, e.g. the idea of the good of the spouses. *Amoris laetitia* provides a unique and holistic view of conjugal values and follows marriage in its growth dynamics.¹³

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¹³ See Botek 2019, 29-41. The article attempts to explain the meaning of the concept of the good of the spouses and how it has been shaped in the case-law of the Roman Rota (as baseline requirements for the validity of marriage) as well as its broader take as contained in *Amoris laetitia* (as the maximum which spouses should seek in marriage).

**Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried
in Czechia after *Amoris laetitia***

Abstract

The article summarizes the Czech way of searching and creating possible guidelines of the Bishops' Conference or directives of individual bishops after the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* of Pope Francis. It discusses the establishments of a commission of experts, refers to foreign opinions that inspired the commission in its work, and outlines the lack of consensus among the bishops. Thus, the Bishops' Conference failed to draw up uniformed guidelines on the subject. One of the bishops (the Diocese of Plzeň), after some time of searching for a solution, finally issued his own diocesan directive in the spring of 2023, the content of which is also presented in the text of the article.

Keywords: *Amoris laetitia*; Bishops' Conference of the Czech Republic; discernment; accompaniment; irregular situations; directive of the Diocese of Plzeň

**Wytyczne dla duszpasterstwa osób rozwiedzionych i osób żyjących
w nowych związkach małżeńskich po *Amoris laetitia* w Republice Czeskiej**

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia czeski sposób poszukiwania i tworzenia wytycznych konferencji biskupów lub dyrektyw poszczególnych biskupów po opublikowaniu posynodalnej adhortacji *Amoris laetitia* papieża Franciszka. Opisuje utworzenie komisji ekspertów, podsumowanie zagranicznych opinii, które zainspirowały komisję w jej pracy oraz brak konsensusu wśród biskupów. W związku z tym w Czechach nie powstała jednolita instrukcja konferencji biskupów, a jeden z biskupów (diecezji pilzneńskiej), po pewnym czasie poszukiwania rozwiązania, wiosną 2023 r. wydał własną dyrektywę diecezjalną, której treść również została przedstawiona w tekście artykułu.

Słowa kluczowe: *Amoris laetitia*; Konferencja Episkopatu Czech; rozeznawanie; towarzyszenie; sytuacje nieregularne; wytyczne diecezji pilzneńskiej

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