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The Spiritual Realism and the Proposal of Holy Communion for the Non-Sacramental Marriages

Realizm duchowy a propozycja Komunii Świętej
dla żyjących w związkach niesakramentalnych

ABSTRACT: The discussion on the proposal of Holy Communion for those living in non-sacramental relationships should be viewed through the prism of spiritual realism. There is a need to sort out the doctrinal facts related to this reality to clarify the subject of discussion and the reality of communion in the metalanguage. It is also necessary to consider the contradictions between the basic idea of communion and the objectification of the Person, which is expressed in the instrumentalization of the Eucharistic Communion. For the realistic and comprehensive approach to the sacraments, it is necessary to be aware of the dimension of the spousal sacramental life. One needs to also reckon with the uninterrupted and unchangeable Tradition. It is necessary to ensure the right use of the terms and *Gospel of the family*. The correctness of the theological discussion requires a real discernment rather than the lobbying for the “already marked path,” omitting even St Paul VI’s *Humanae vitae* or St John Paul II’s *Familiaris consortio* and his entire extensive teaching about marriage and the family. It is also important not to instrumentalize the practice of the “spiritual communion.”

KEYWORDS: spiritual realism, Holy Communion, non-sacramental marriages, dimension of the spousal sacramental life, Tradition, *digamoi*, Gospel of the family, *Humanae vitae*, spiritual communion

ABSTRAKT: Zabierając głos w dyskusji nad propozycją Komunii Świętej dla żyjących w związkach niesakramentalnych, należy przyjąć jako najbardziej adekwatne spojrzenie w kluczu realizmu duchowego. Trzeba uporządkować fakty doktrynalne związane z tą rzeczywistością. Doprecyzować przedmiot dyskusji i rzeczywistość komunii w metaforyce. Koniecznym jest także uzmysłowienie sobie sprzeczności między podstawową ideą komunii a uprzedmiotowieniem Osoby, czego wyrazem jest m.in. instrumentalizacja Komunii eucharystycznej. Dla realistycznego i kompleksowego

podejścia do sakramentów konieczna jest świadomość wymiaru oblubieńczego życia sakramentalnego. Trzeba też liczyć się z nieprzerwaną i niezmienną Tradycją. Należy zadbać o poprawne używanie terminów *digamoi* oraz „ewangelia rodziny”. Poprawność dyskusji teologicznej domaga się rzeczywistego rozeznawania, a nie lobbowania za „już wytyczoną drogą” z pominięciem chociażby *Humanae vitae* św. Pawła VI czy *Familiaris consortio* i całego rozległego nauczania o małżeństwie i rodzinie św. Jana Pawła II. Istotną sprawą jest również nie instrumentalizować praktyki „komunii duchowej”.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: realizm duchowy, komunია eucharystyczna, związki niesakramentalne, wymiar oblubieńczy życia sakramentalnego, Tradycja, *digamoi*, ewangelia rodziny, *Humanae vitae*, komunია duchowa

My intention is to outline important doctrinal facts related to the synodal discussion about Eucharistic Communion for those living in non-sacramental unions, and then to draw attention to a specific methodology of conducting this discussion.¹ Finally, I will recall the way in which spiritual communion has always been understood and practiced in the history of spirituality, in connection with statements made during the Extraordinary Synod, which were not later returned to. Due to the vastness of the subject matter, I limit my study to the time before the publication of *Amoris laetitia*.

The spiritual realism mentioned in the title defines the way in which we reflect on the discussed issue. Spiritual life is a supernatural organism: ideas and actions have their consequences in man. Spiritual realism is therefore essential. Good intentions are not enough, since sincerely and honestly looking for a good, one can unfortunately choose paths that do not lead to it, and furthermore, even turn against it.

Doctrinal facts

Theology is not and cannot be a fossilized set of truths. The theological discussion, however, must not overturn or disregard the existing doctrinal facts. It has long been explained that *aggiornamento* is not an adaptation to the world in its anti-divine meaning (see: Jn 17:6-19). Above all, it is necessary to conduct a theological discussion and not replace it with sociological-psychological observations. Pastoral care comes from doctrine, never the other way around.

¹ The article is based on the author's speech at the 368th plenary session of the Polish Bishops' Conference in Warsaw.

Subject matter of the discussion

Sometimes the vague wording is repeated that some people “fight” for the admission of the “divorced” to Holy Communion. This statement is misleading. It may suggest to those living in separation and to the divorced who have no relationship with another person that they cannot receive the sacraments. To the contrary, the Church even encourages them to receive the sacraments, believing in their healing power.

It’s usually said about “divorced people living in new unions.” This is not a uniform group. Both their attitudes and expectations are different.² Four attitudes can be distinguished. There are those who live in a second union, but do not demand Holy Communion. Often, they have matured inwardly and with honesty to God they recognize that their marriage was valid, and only then did sin split and destroy it. These people

in canonically irregular situations express a desire to be received and guided by the Church, especially when they attempt to understand the rationale of the Church’s teaching. These people recognize the possibility of living in their situation, while relying on God’s mercy through the Church.³

Others, as signalled by the Euro-Atlantic Episcopal Conferences, accept the commitment to live in moderation and adopt the lifestyle shown in the 84th *Familiaris Consortio*.⁴ An interesting example of those who choose this path is the Solitude Myriam Family⁵ movement, present in Canada and the United States.

Unfortunately, a large group has either completely broken contact with the Church, or is in a loose relationship with her, limited to tradition and rituals. They show no interest in sacramental life. There are also those who – to use the religious term – even though they live in adultery, want to receive Holy Communion.

² Cf. Sinodo dei Vescovi. III Assemblée Generale Straordinaria, *Le sfide pastorali sulla famiglia nel contesto dell’evangelizzazione. Instrumentum laboris*, Edizioni San Paolo, Milano 2014 (hereinafter: *Instrumentum laboris* 2014), 93: “On the issue of access to the sacraments, there are various reactions from the faithful divorced and remarried.”

³ *Instrumentum laboris* 2014, 94. All English translations are by WTR unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Cf. The Solitude Myriam Family, <http://www.solitudemyriam.org/> [access: 20.11.2019].

The reality of communion

The term *communion* refers in a similar way to two realities: Eucharistic Communion and conjugal communion.⁶ This fact alone is persuasive and inspiring.

In both cases, communion defines not some activity that is detached from life, but the quality and style of life: the relationship between people, the essence of which is deep unity and mutual interaction. Referring to particular dimensions of human life, we say that communion is one heart, one soul, one daily life and one body. Each of the three elements presupposes the other three. Also the unity of the body presupposes the unity of heart, soul and everyday life.

Christ stated that “the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light” (Lk 16:8). Consider therefore the image of conjugal communion to better understand the meaning of Eucharistic Communion. If a husband said to his wife: “I do not care for what your heart feels, I am not interested in your vision of the world, I do not want to share responsibility for everyday life with you. I just want your body,” we would call him a “cynic and brute,” seeing that he disregards the unity of heart, soul and everyday life. And when someone treats God this way?

The reification of the person

Synodal discussions on the Communion for those living in adultery resemble those held around *Humanae vitae*.⁷ The supporters of communion make the same mistake: they reify the human person. Instead of a deep interpersonal relationship, Paul VI's commission spoke about rights, difficulties, feelings, social and cultural conditions, understanding people, and about mercy. We observe the same today. The only – huge – difference is that at that time it was the conjugal “communion” that was trivialized, whereas today it is the Eucharistic Communion. At that time what was belittled was the relationship between people, today it is the relationship between people and God. Then the human body was trivialized, as if it were possible to enter into relations with it as if it were a thing. Today, the Body of Christ is reified.

⁶ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Rodzina jako „communio personarum”*. *Próba interpretacji*, [in:] AK 66 (1974), vol. 83(3), pp. 347–361; idem, *Rodzicielstwo a „communio personarum,”* [in:] AK 67 (1975), vol. 84 (1), pp. 17–31.

⁷ Cf. J.-M. Paupert, *Contrôle des naissances et théologie. Le dossier de Rome*, Paris 1967.

When on 24 June 1966 the so-called Papal Commission on Population, Family, and Birth Rate voted 9:5 for contraception,⁸ Cardinal Karol Wojtyła⁹ prepared the Krakow Memorandum.¹⁰ In February 1968, he handed it over to Paul VI. In this text he pointed out that marital communion and the gift of the body in conjugal love can only be understood in a personalistic perspective. The gift of the human body cannot be trivialized, reducing the sense of this gift to sexual needs. In order for sexual intercourse to make sense, it must flow from and lead to a deep and true relationship between people, covering their whole lives. This helped Paul VI – the Peter of those times – make the right decision, against the majority.

In the description of marital conjugal communion presented in the text of Paul VI, one feels the personalism of Karol Wojtyła. This personalism without which also communion with Jesus Christ loses the “truth of the sign.” *Humanae vitae* teaches: “through that mutual gift of themselves (...) [as] two persons (...) perfect one another, cooperating with God” (HV 8). He therefore stresses the mutual self-giving not only of bodies, but of whole persons, the resultant improvement through this communion and the openness to cooperation with God. By applying this text in a manner analogous to Eucharistic Communion, we become aware in the first place of the totality of mutual self-giving as the essence of every communion.¹¹

Another dogmatic truth, which we must not forget, is that in Eucharistic Communion Jesus transforms us into Himself and that the Eucharist builds the Church, that is, a growing sense of responsibility for the Church in the world is also the fruit of Eucharistic Communion. Even more vocal in the

⁸ The whole commission, together with experts, consisted of 57 people. This is the so-called *Majority Report*, which was voted for by the cardinals and bishops. Cf. M. Rouche, *La préparation de l'encyclique 'Humanae vitae.'* *La Commission sur la population, la Famille et la natalité*, [in:] *Paul VI et la modernité dans l'église. Actes du colloque de Rome (2-4 juin 1983)*, Rome 1984, p. 368.

⁹ Cf. J. Grootaers, *Quelques données concernant la rédaction de l'encyclique 'Humanae vitae.'* [in:] *Paul VI et la modernité dans l'église...*, op. cit., p. 390.

¹⁰ Cf. *Memorial Krakowski oraz Wprowadzenie do encykliki 'Humanae vitae.'* J. Turowicz, T. Ślipko, K. Meissner, S. Smoleński, S. Podgórski, J. Bajda (eds.), Poznań 2012, pp. 13–66.

¹¹ We feel the importance of this statement more clearly when we think about how hurtful and destructive the lack of total self-giving is in married life in the long run. Unfortunately, in the postmodern approach to uniting in the body it is becoming increasingly obvious that one can look for sensations and derive satisfaction from them without completely caring about the truth of mutual self-giving. But this is only a warning not to base the spiritual life on such nonsense.

context of synodal discussions about communion are the following words from *Humanae vitae*:

This love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also (...) special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself (HV 9).

Instrumentalization of communion

It must be said that those participants in the Synod of Bishops who demand admission to Holy Communion for those living in adultery act on behalf of those who do not understand the essence of communion, who reify the Body of Christ and are opponents of how *Humanae vitae* treated the human body. They disregard the basic fact that to enter into communion does not only mean to eat the consecrated host, but also to live in true union with Jesus Christ.¹²

Unfortunately, in the opinions quoted in *Instrumentum Laboris* from 2014 there is nothing about the desire for a union with Christ, but only about the problem of availability of the benefit and about one's own perception of exclusion and marginalisation. The texts are unambiguous:

In some countries of Europe and some countries on the other continents, this solution is not sufficient for many people; they wish to be publicly readmitted to the Church. The problem is not so much not being able to receive Communion but that the Church publicly does not permit them to receive Communion. As a result, these believers then simply refuse to consider themselves in an irregular situation.¹³

¹² Cf. CCC 1385: "To respond to this invitation we must prepare ourselves for so great and so holy a moment. St Paul urges us to examine our conscience: 'Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself' (1 Cor 11:27-29). Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion."

¹³ *Instrumentum laboris* 2014, 93.

A good number of responses speak of the very many cases, especially in Europe, America and some countries in Africa, where persons clearly ask to receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. This happens primarily when their children receive the sacraments. At times, they express a desire to receive Communion to feel “legitimized” by the Church and to eliminate the sense of exclusion or marginalization.¹⁴

Think about Christ

What is worrying in the whole discussion is that we are concerned about the well-being of those in sin, and we do not mention at all how Christ feels in “such” communion. Again, the words of the prophet are true: „We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way (...) who would have thought any more of his destiny?” (Is 53:6-8).

Regarding St Paul’s admonition: “Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy” (1 Cor 4:1-2), the following situation must be seriously considered:

In Europe (and also in some countries in Latin America and Asia) the prevailing tendency among some of the clergy is to resolve the issue by simply complying with the request for access to the sacrament. Other members of the clergy, particularly in Europe and Latin America, respond to the matter in a variety of ways.¹⁵

This is by no means a secondary issue, but a question of fidelity to the vocation of the ministers of sacred mysteries. Unfortunately, I have not seen anyone take up the issue yet.

The spousal dimension of sacramental life

The spiritual life, whose “source and summit” is the Eucharist, is not a question of arbitrary legal solutions; we can most deeply understand it from a spousal perspective. It remains obvious to the mystics, whereas in the everyday life of the Church it is underestimated and used reluctantly. Jesus Christ, however,

¹⁴ Ibidem, 95.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 93.

did not propose “practices of piety,” but a union with Him that is tantamount to one’s identification with Him, which in these practices is manifested and deepened. This is how St Paul the Apostle understood it when he spoke about his faith: “yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Ga 2:20).

Analysing the message of the Letter to the Ephesians (5:21-33), we notice that St Paul also mentions the Church’s fundamental sacraments – baptism and the Eucharist – developing a marriage analogy with regard to Christ and the Community of the Church. Similarly, the catechesis of the first centuries of the Church places strong emphasis on the spousal dimension of baptism and the Eucharist.¹⁶ Cardinal Angelo Scola even refers to the conjugal mystery as a perspective in which the entire systematic theology should be built.¹⁷

A continuous and unambiguous Tradition

From the very beginning, the Church has linked the accession to Holy Communion with a life of faith. She had no doubt that she had the right and duty to deny Holy Communion to those living in great and irreversible moral disorder. This is evidenced by the documents of the synods, starting with the first one held in Elvira, through the synods in Ancyra, Arles or Neocaesarea, which took place in 304–319.

One of the main reasons for denying Holy Communion was adultery.¹⁸ Other reasons for not allowing Communion for the rest of one’s life or for

¹⁶ Cf. J. Danielou, *Bibbia e liturgia*, Milano 1965, pp. 254–25, 273; Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, VIII, 4, transl. W. Szoldrski, W. Kania, PSP 15(1), Warsaw 1977, p. 135; Dydim Slepiec [?], *De Trinitate* II, 13; Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Canticum Canticorum*, II, 9; Grzegorz z Nyssy, *Oratio catechetica magna*, XXXVII, transl. W. Kania, PSP 14, Warsaw 1974, p. 179; Jacob of Sarug, after: Un monaco contemplativo, *Dio Amore ci dona la deificazione*, Roma 1990, p. 83; Jan Chryzostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses*, seria tertia (catecheses 1–8), III, 17, transl. W. Kania, *U źródeł katechumenatu*, 1, Lublin 1993, p. 58; idem, *Ad illuminandos catecheses*, seria prima (catecheses 1–4), III, 1, transl. W. Kania, *U źródeł katechumenatu*, 2, Lublin 1994, pp. 39 ff [in the transl.: cat. XI]; Methodius of Olympus, *Convivium decem virginum*, orat. XI, part 2; PG XVIII, 209, III, VIII, transl. S. Kalinkowski, PSP 24, Warsaw 1980, p. 46; Quodvultdeus, *Sermones de symbolo*, I, 6; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretatio in Canticum Canticorum*, PG 81, 128a.

¹⁷ Cf. A. Scola, *Il Mistero nuziale: una prospettiva di Teologia sistemática*, Rome 2002.

¹⁸ For example, the oldest synod that was held in Elvira (304/306): Can. 7: “If a Christian completes penance for a sexual offense and then again commits fornication, he or she may not receive communion even when death approaches;” Can. 9: “A baptized woman who leaves an adulterous husband who has been baptized, for another man, may not marry him. If she does, she may not receive communion until her former husband dies, unless

a certain period are, for example, pimping, marrying one's sisters to a Jew or heretics, marrying the wife's sister after the death of the former, killing a child born from adultery, bestiality, seducing one's fiancée's sister.¹⁹

Methodological notes for discussion

The theological discussion should be guarded against casuistry and should be aimed at studying the revealed truth. In this context, it should be noted that in connection with the extraordinary synod, some tried at all costs to prove their point, referring to known terms or issues, but changing their meaning. This was the case with the concept of *digamoi* and the "Gospel of the family." Likewise, one cannot fail to notice that when Pope Francis mentions the time of discernment, the Synod secretariat and the document of the German bishops writes about the "path already indicated," "based on the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of Pope Francis," suggesting a break with the theological heritage of St John Paul II. There also occurs a criticism of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, specific in that it accuses the encyclical of a lack of personalistic approach in practice.

she is seriously ill;" Can. 10/11: "If a Christian woman marries a man in the knowledge that he deserted his former wife without cause, she may receive communion only at the time of her death;" Can. 64: "A woman who remains in adultery to the time of her death may not receive communion. If she breaks the relationship, she must complete ten years' penance before communing." Cf. *Źródła duchowości małżeńskiej*, t. 3: *Magisterium Kościoła Katolickiego*, 1: *Synod w Elwirze – Leon XIII (306–1879)*, K. Lubowicki (ed.), Krakow 2012, pp. 53–54, 58; cited after: <http://legalhistorysources.com/Canon%20Law/ElviraCanons.htm> [access: 1.03.2020].

¹⁹ Cf. Synod of Elvira: Can. 12: "Parents and other Christians who give up their children to sexual abuse are selling others' bodies, and if they do so or sell their own bodies, they shall not receive communion even at death;" Can. 16: "Catholic girls may not marry Jews or heretics, because they cannot find a unity when the faithful and the unfaithful are joined. Parents who allow this to happen shall not receive communion for five years;" Can. 17: "If parents allow their daughter to marry a pagan priest, they shall not receive communion even at the time of death;" Can. 71: "Those who sexually abuse boys may not receive communion even when death approaches." Cf. *Źródła duchowości małżeńskiej...*, op. cit., pp. 54–55, 59.

Digamoi

Cardinal Walter Kasper in *Appendix II* entitled *The Practice of the Church of the First Centuries*²⁰ and included in his book about the address to the secret consistory claims that there was a practice in the early Church of remarrying during the life of the first spouse. He quotes Giovanni Cereti's²¹ interpretation of Canon 8 of the Council of Nice I (325), which reads:

Concerning those who call themselves Cathari, if they come over to the Catholic and Apostolic Church, the great and holy Synod decrees (...) that they should profess in writing (...) that they will communicate with persons who have been twice married, and with those who having lapsed in.

That is exactly what Cardinal Kasper claims:

On the other hand, mention should be made of Giovanni Cereti (...) on the other hand, Henri Crouzel (...) and Joseph Ratzinger. There can, however, be no doubt about the fact that in the early church there was, according to customary law in many local churches, the praxis of pastoral tolerance, clemency and forbearance after a period of penance [*della tolleranza pastorale, della clemenza e dell'indulgenza*].²²

This is what Rev. Cereti claims in his doctorate (1977).²³ Fr. Crouzel SJ, a renowned authority on patristics, holds an opposite view. In 1971 he published *The Original Church in the Face of Divorce. From the first to the fifth century*. When Rev. Cereti's book was published, he presented in three articles a detailed analysis of the former's scholarly method, exposing material and methodological or even ideological errors in his approach to the issue. Not without significance is the

²⁰ Cf. W. Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia*, Brescia 2014, pp. 59–62.

²¹ For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning that Rev. Cereti (b. 1932) claims that for over 40 years he has been fighting for admission to the sacraments for those living in adultery. In the introduction to his doctorate he ridiculed the fact that the Church considers them sinners. Now he has declared that until his death he will fight to restore married priests to the priesthood. Cf. M. Matzuzzi, *Chi è don Cereti, il prete che tifa per i sacerdoti sposati?*, <http://www.formiche.net/2015/02/22/chi-don-cereti-il-prete-che-vuole-il-via-libera-i-sacerdoti-sposati/> [access: 20.11.2019]; C. Fabrizio, *Il teologo che si batte per i preti sposati: "Vanno riammessi,"* "Corriere della Sera," 20 II 2015, p. 22; cited after: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm> [access: 1.03.2020].

²² W. Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia*, op. cit., p. 60.

²³ Cf. G. Cereti, *Divorzio, nuove nozze e penitenza nella Chiesa primitiva*, Arachne, Rome 2014.

fact that when Cardinal Kasper started to rely on the opinions of Rev. Cereti in connection with the present synod, Cardinal Carlo Caffarra published in the Cantagalla Publishing House a book entitled *Divorziati «risposati». La prassi della Chiesa primitiva*,²⁴ containing the above mentioned three articles, in which Crouzel very objectively shows scholarly incompetence and, one by one, disproves the erroneous conclusions of Rev. Cereti. It shows that where there is mention of a second marriage, it is a marriage concluded after the death of the spouse.

In fact, in the first centuries the Church viewed marriage – but also at all human life – much more in spiritual terms.²⁵ As a result, it was only after a few centuries that she allowed the widowed people to marry again. And even when she allowed it, she looked at them with an unfavorable eye. For example, the Council of Neocaesarea (314–319) decides: “A presbyter shall not be at the nuptials of persons contracting a second marriage; for, since the digamist is worthy of penance, what kind of a presbyter shall he be, who, by being present at the feast, sanctioned the marriage?”²⁶

The Gospel of the family

Saint John Paul II developed a methodology for thinking about marriage and family. It can be clearly seen in the structure of *Familiaris consortio*, signalled by the titles of the following chapters: I. Bright spots and shadows for the family today; II. The plan of God for marriage and the family; III. The role of the Christian family; IV. Pastoral care of the family: stages, structures, agents and situations.

In this context, we are accustomed to understanding the terms “Gospel of marriage and family” but also “Gospel of work,” “Gospel of life” as showing the greatness,²⁷ depth and beauty of the real social relations that these realities

²⁴ Cf. H. Crouzel SJ, *Divorziati «risposati». La prassi della Chiesa primitiva*, Siena 2014, p. 110.

²⁵ Cf. W. Myszor, *Chrześcijaństwo wobec świata. Matężństwo i rozwód*, “Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne” 27/28 (1994–1995), pp. 181–202; especially source texts from p. 187.

²⁶ Synod in Neocaesarea (314–319); Can. 7, cf. *Źródła duchowości matężńskiej...*, op. cit., p. 66; cited after: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3803.htm> [access: 1.03.2020].

²⁷ Cf. P. Barbarin, *The Gospel of Marriage. Inauguration of the Academic Year of the John Paul II Institute*, Rome, 28 X 2014, <https://www.evangelium-vitae.org/documents/3743/guetteurs-veilleurs/confrence-du-cad-barbarin-sur-l-evangile-du-mariage--l-institut-jean-paul-ii-de-rome--28-oct-2014.htm> [access: 20.11.2019].

(marriage, family, love, life) carry within themselves from God's will and by His grace.

Cardinal Kasper also entitled his address at the consistory *The Gospel of the Family*, but fills this notion with a completely different context and meaning.²⁸ In fact, there is no mention of the great importance of the family in this text. His reasoning goes another way. Cardinal Kasper says: today the sublime Gospel of a family is difficult to understand because it cannot be understood without faith and faith is waning; there is also a growing number of divorced people who do not live what John Paul II called the "Gospel of the family" and do not see the attractiveness of this "Gospel." It is therefore necessary to think about what should be done to ensure that the Gospel of the family, proclaimed in the Church, does not repel these people – one would like to clarify: those who live in sin – from the community of the Church. When preaching the Gospel, that is, the joyful news of the family, St John Paul II indicated two reasons for joy: the attractiveness of the family in God's intention and God's mercy, which allows to return from sinful ways to the fullness of life with a marital vocation. Cardinal Kasper preaches the "other" Gospel. Since doctrine must not be changed, pastoral practice must be changed. Since many are not interested in conversion, official documents related to synods do not deal with marriage and family, but with the wounded. Instead of calling for conversion so that sinners may experience mercy, he offers mercy that guarantees everyone's well-being.

This understanding of the "Gospel of the family" can be seen clearly in the *Instrumentum Laboris of the Extraordinary Synod*. The first part of this document is entitled: *Communicating the Gospel of the Family in Today's World*. We can observe, however, that both the faithful and the shepherds are unfamiliar with the teachings of Scripture and Church documents about marriage and family; and if they do, they do not accept it. However, no thought is given to how to rectify this fatal culpable ignorance, but it is proposed to refer to marriage only in terms of the work of creation. Incidentally, this is an impoverishing concept introduced by Luther. Although the fourth chapter of the first part of this *Instrumentum Laboris* is entitled *The Family and the Vocation of the Person in Christ*, it presents a sociological and psychological picture of family life that has little to do with theology.²⁹ Also, the paragraph entitled *In the Image of the Trinitarian Life* has been trivialized.³⁰

²⁸ Cf. W. Kasper, *Il Vangelo della famiglia*, op. cit. It was first published on March 1, 2014 in the Italian daily "Il Foglio" under a much more appropriate title: *Biblia, eros i rodzina*.

²⁹ Cf. *Instrumentum laboris* 2014, 31–49.

³⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 35.

Declaration by the German Bishops' Conference

This line is also followed by the document of the Permanent Council of the Bishops' Conference of Germany entitled *Theologically-responsible, pastorally-appropriate ways of assisting remarried divorcees. Reflections of the German Bishops' Conference in preparation for the Synod of Bishops*,³¹ adopted on 24th June and published on 24th November 2014.

This extensive text (34 pages in print) refers in footnotes to the above-mentioned Cardinal Kasper's address. With regard to the current Magisterium and pastoral practice it states:

The assurance that faithful who have had a civil divorce and remarried continue to belong to the Church (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, no. 84; *Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 29) conflicts with non-admission to the sacraments, and is regarded by those concerned as an exclusion and as an elementary expression of being unreconciled. This clash climaxes in the call for these people to share in the celebration of the Eucharist whilst at the same time banning them for life from taking sacramental communion. Particularly faithful who are practicing and closely involved with the parish consider the obligation to celebrate the Eucharist only inwardly is as unreasonable if it is required permanently, as is the case with remarried divorcees. They do not understand why a deviation, in an admittedly major aspect, from the Church living arrangement for which they at least do not bear sole responsibility justifies being excluded from sacramental communion for life. Many pastors themselves do not know what to do because they cannot provide any pastoral remedy to these situations which is accepted with an honest conscience by the faithful concerned and at the same time is in accord with the Church's current doctrine. Such situations frequently lead to priests acting against the instruction of the Church because they do not consider it to be possible to apply it in pastoral practice. This promotes divisions within the Church, both between priests and bishops, but also between the priests themselves.³²

³¹ Cf. *Theologisch verantwortbare und pastoral angemessene Wege zur Begleitung wiederverheirateter Geschiedener. Überlegungen der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz zur Vorbereitung der Bischofssynode*, [in:] *Die pastoralen Herausforderungen der Familie im Kontext der Evangelisierung. Texte zur Bischofssynode 2014 und Dokumente der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz*, Arbeitshilfen, no. 273, pp. 42–76.

³² These statements are preceded by the following: "A growing number of faithful who have had a civil divorce and remarried consider their failure and their guilt as lying in the process of separation from their first partner, and less in the taking up of a new union (...). They

“Path already indicated”

The wording that recurs in the documents and in the speeches of Cardinal Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod, and Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, is remarkable. How is it to be understood if the Synod is to be a time of communal discernment? The process of spiritual discernment has its established principles. Regardless of which, they refer to a “path already indicated.” Such a statement can be found in the introduction to the new survey in *Lineamenta* for the Ordinary Synod.³³

This expression repeats the press release of the last German Bishops’ Conference³⁴ announced on 26th February 2015. In its seventh point we read:

Therefore, it should be avoided that the responses of the Bishops’ Conferences “are formulated according to the schemes and perspectives of a pastoral ministry that is purely doctrinal, which would not respect the conclusions of the Extraordinary General Assembly and thus distract their reflection from the

consider authentic penance and repentance to lie not in cancelling the current married life. Rather, they relate Jesus’ call to repent (cf. Mk 1:15) and to avoid sin (cf. Jn 8:11) to a good and better way of living in the second civil marriage (...). By taking up a new union, and particularly on concluding a civil marriage, the partners have assumed moral obligations towards their new partner and any children, and these must not be disregarded (...) marital co-habitation without a sexual union appears to many of those concerned to be morally questionable.”

³³ Cf. *Questions Aimed at a Response to and an In-Depth Examination of the Relatio Synodi*, Preliminary Question Applicable to All Sections of the Relatio Synodi, Questions for Part I. Listening: The Context and the Challenges of the Family. “The path of renewal delineated by the Extraordinary Synod is set within the wider ecclesial context indicated by Pope Francis in his Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, namely, starting from ‘life’s periphery’ and engaging in pastoral activity that is characterized by a ‘culture of encounter’ and capable of recognizing the Lord’s gratuitous work, even outside customary models, and of confidently adopting the idea of a ‘field hospital,’ which is very beneficial in proclaiming God’s mercy. The numbers in the first part of the Relatio Synodi are a response to these challenges and provide a framework for reflecting on the real situation of families. The proposed questions which follow and the reference numbers to the paragraphs in the Relatio Synodi are intended to assist the bishops’ conferences in their reflection and to avoid, in their responses, a formulation of pastoral care based simply on an application of doctrine, which would not respect the conclusions of the Extraordinary Synodal Assembly and would lead their reflection far from the path already indicated.”

³⁴ Cf. *Pressebericht des Vorsitzenden der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Kardinal Reinhard Marx, anlässlich der Pressekonferenz zum Abschluss der Frühjahrs-Vollversammlung der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz in Hildesheim am 26. Februar 2015: 7. Bischofssynode in Rom im Oktober 2015*, pp. 7–8.

already indicated path (*Lineamenta* S 22). We bishops, in spite of all the disputed issues, must broaden our horizons and renew the proclamation of the Gospel of the family.

Based on the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of Pope Francis

In Cardinal Kasper's address during the Consistory, in *Instrumentum Laboris 2014* or *Instrumentum Laboris 2015* there is almost no mention of St John Paul II's teaching on marriage and the family. In his canonization homily he was called "Pope of the Family," but the magnum opus of his pontificate does not exist in consciousness and does not serve the modern Church.

In the already quoted communication from the assembly of the German bishops, point seven – referring to the introduction to the new survey published in *Lineamenta 2015* – reads: "In responding to the questionnaire, it is important to be guided by the pastoral perspective that the Extraordinary General Assembly initiated on the basis of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of Pope Francis."

When we raise this problem, it is not because he is our fellow countryman. The reason is much more serious: in the most complete collection of documents on marriage and family *Enchiridion Familiae*³⁵ edited by Prof. Augusto Sarmiento, the teaching of John Paul II accounts for almost half of all documents that have appeared on this subject throughout the history of the Church. Ignoring this teaching, we are reversing the theology of marriage and family dozens of years back.³⁶ We are depriving it of its most outstanding and fruitful achievements. Saint John Paul II shows the ethos of marital and family life. Insufficiently aware of this ethos, we will be condemned to discussions about *praxis*, which – contrary to the good intentions of the discussants – will not be able to serve marriage and family adequately.

To understand what the theology of marriage and family without John Paul II would be, it is enough to familiarize oneself with the book by Fr. Bernard Häring CSsR entitled *Matżeństwo w dobrej obecnosci*, published in 1966 as the fifth volume in the monumental series *Nauka Chrystusa*. We will not find in it the well-known – and seemingly necessary – discourse to which we are

³⁵ A. Sarmiento, *Enchiridion Familiae*, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra S.A. (EUNSA), 2004. Electronic version: <http://www.enchiridionfamiliae.com/index.php> [access: 20.11.2019].

³⁶ Cf. B. Häring, *Matżeństwo w dobrej obecnosci*, Poznań 1966.

accustomed by St Paul VI and St John Paul II and Benedict XVI. This book is essentially based on sociology.

Criticism of *Humanae vitae*

We can also find in this book – it must be clearly stated – a lack of understanding for the encyclical *Humanae vitae*.³⁷ Kasper notes that “in the first part the [encyclical] shows marriage in a surprisingly new way, as a doctrinal document of the Church, seeing it as a personal union.” He continues, however, to accuse Paul VI of biologism, as if the personal could exist without any rules and without taking into account the truth of *body language*.³⁸

The topic returns in Cardinal Kasper’s speech during the secret consistory.³⁹ As in 1977, he also insists in this introduction to the extraordinary general assembly about the family, that defining morally acceptable methods of regulating conception is a lack of respect for the spouses concerned. He calls it impersonal treatment. In this way he repeats exactly the thesis from the discussion on *Humanae vitae*.⁴⁰ He construes the Church’s widely recognized statements about responsibility for life⁴¹ and the right to plan conception in

³⁷ For the sake of completeness, it must be remembered that the German Bishops’ Conference practically opposed the teaching of *Humane vitae*. One month after the announcement of this encyclical, the German bishops published (August 30, 1968) the so-called *Königstein Statement*, which can still be found on the official website of the German Bishops’ Conference. Then a problem arose with issuing the confirmations of medical check-ups by Catholic clinics, which could be used for abortion. John Paul II sent a letter on this matter on September 21, 1995 and another on January 11, 1998; on February 26, 1998. Vatican Radio quoted Cardinal Marx: “We are not a branch of Rome. Each episcopate is responsible for pastoral care in his own cultural circle. We cannot wait for the Synod to tell us how to shape our family ministry,” http://pl.radiovaticana.va/-news/2015/02/26/niemcy_episkopat_o_zbli%C5%BCaj%C4%85cym_si%C4%99_synodzie_o_rodzinie/1125871 [access: 20.11.2019].

³⁸ Cf. W. Kasper, *Il matrimonio cristiano*, pp. 20–21.

³⁹ The translation of the address into Polish (without footnotes) was published by “Tygodnik Powszechny.”

⁴⁰ Cf. Mr. Rouche, *La préparation de l’encyclique ‘Humanae vitae.’ La Commission sur la population, la Famille et la natalité*, [in:] *Paul VI et la modernité dans l’église...*, op. cit., pp. 367–369.

⁴¹ In the Bible, fertility is not a purely biological fact. Children are the fruit of God’s blessing, and it is God’s power manifesting itself in history and in the future. The blessing in creation follows the promise of Abraham’s offspring (Gen 12:25; 18:18; 22:18). And so the vital power that caused fertility, which the ancient people worshipped, is intertwined with the intervention of God in history. God puts the future of the people and the existence of

such a way⁴² is if God were not the only Lord (*Signore*) and owner (*Padrone*) of life. Meanwhile, the Council Constitution *Gaudium et spes* 51 by no means teaches that God renounces being the only Lord of life for the sake of man, but that he has invited man to cooperate. When it comes to conception planning, the right to plan is not the same as the admissibility of all methods, including contraception.

“Paul VI’s 1968 encyclical *Humanae vitae* on responsible parenthood can be interpreted on the basis of its general personal approach and thus in a complete manner. The same applies to *Familiaris consortio* 29 and 31 ff.”⁴³

Nihil novi

The same publishing house that issued *The Gospel of the Family* published also Cardinal Walter Kasper’s *Christian Marriage* in 2014.⁴⁴ The publisher describes it on the fourth page of the cover as a short treatise on marriage, which presents the theological context of the consistory. However, one can quickly find out that the main part of the book is a reprint from 38 years ago,⁴⁵ whereas the appendix *Making the Church a reality in marriage and family. Reflections on the sacramentality of marriage* was written 48 years ago, in 1967.⁴⁶ Thus,

mankind into the hands of man and woman. Words about responsible parenthood have a deeper meaning than those usually attributed to them. They mean that God entrusts the responsibility of man and woman to the most precious thing he can offer, namely human life.

⁴² They can responsibly decide on the number and timing of their children. They must do so with a sense of responsibility to God, respecting the dignity and goodness of the partner, also taking responsibility for the welfare of children, the future of society, respecting the nature of man (GS 50). From this, it is not casuistic, but a meaningful precept, for the concrete realization of which responsibility is entrusted to a man and a woman. They are given responsibility for the future. The future of humanity passes through the family. Without a family there is no future, but an ageing population. Western societies are now facing this danger.

⁴³ W. Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia*, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁴ The title uses the term “Christian” and not “Catholic,” although this is important because Protestants do not recognize the sacramentality of marriage. The author is aware of the fundamental difference between “Christian” and “Catholic” marriage. Cf. W. Kasper, *Il matrimonio cristiano*, Brescia 2014, p. 153.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 6. In the last sentence of the introduction, the Author dedicates the book to his mother for her 75th birthday. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Cf. W. Kasper, Appendix 1: *La realizzazione della chiesa nel matrimonio e nella famiglia. Riflessioni sulla sacramentalità del matrimonio*, [in:] *idem, Il matrimonio cristiano*, Brescia 2014, pp. 102–139.

in *Christian Marriage* we find the texts of a 33–34 year old theology lecturer, which, if they explain the context of Cardinal Kasper’s speech at the secret consistory, it is only in the sense that they testify that he is fighting today for ideas that were rejected 38–48 years ago. The main text of the book was published in 1977, nine years after the encyclical *Humanae vitae*. I have analyzed the literature quoted in this book. Firstly, it is almost exclusively in German. Secondly, it almost entirely dates back to 1962–1975, so it appears that in 2014 the publisher advertises a book written half a century ago which ignores the teachings of John Paul II and the 1980 Synod on marriage and family.

Spiritual communion

In connection with the discussions on Eucharistic Communion for the divorced living in new unions, a proposal of spiritual communion, understood as a kind of substitute, appeared at the extraordinary synod. It is obvious that it is necessary to lead the divorced to a closeness with God and deepen it. However, it is necessary to maintain a precise terminology and to speak of “living with God,” “living in the presence of God,” “living close to God,” “developing intimacy with God,” “being in the Church” etc., as FC 84 does. These and similar terms underline the personalistic reality of communion as a real relationship and not just a detached practice. On the other hand, “spiritual communion” is a “technical” term from the theology of spiritual life, which in the unchanging tradition of asceticism and mysticism has an unambiguous, universally accepted meaning. Fr. Tomasz Nawracała⁴⁷ and Fr. Grzegorz Strzelczyk⁴⁸ precisely define the terms. Not even *Amoris laetitia* mentions “spiritual communion”! Karol Wojtyła’s words fit perfectly into this situation: “After all, the world can’t be fiction at any point – the inner world even less so than the outer world. (...) The world cannot rely only on the metaphorical – the inner world even less so than the outer world.”⁴⁹

This creates an internal contradiction of teaching. On the one hand, we justify the refusal to admit to the sacraments divorced persons who have

⁴⁷ Cf. T. Nawracała, *Komunia duchowa a duchowe pragnienie komunii*, <http://mateusz.pl/mt/tn/tomasz-nawracała-komunia-duchowa-a-duchowe-pragnienie-komunii.htm> [access: 20.11.2019].

⁴⁸ Cf. G. Strzelczyk, *Komunia duchowa nie jest rozwiązaniem dla rozwiedzionych w ponownych związkach*, <http://gosc.pl/-doc/3749290.Komunia-duchowa-nie-jest-rozwiazaniem-dla-rozwiedzionych-w> [access: 20.11.2019].

⁴⁹ K. Wojtyła, *Promieniowanie ojcostwa*, [in]: idem, *Poezje i dramaty*, Krakow 1999, p. 265.

entered into new unions because they “objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist” (SC 29; cf. FC 84), and at the same time we tell them about the spiritual communion which, in the Church’s Tradition, is closely linked to Eucharistic Communion, constitutes its spiritual deepening and is no more than an expression of unity in love with Christ.

“Spiritual communion” on the synods of Pope Francis about the family

Cardinal Walter Kasper, who has long been in⁵⁰ favour of allowing the divorced living in second unions to receive Communion also introduced the topic of “spiritual communion” in his address at the secret consistory preceding the announcement of the Synod of Bishops about marriage and family. He claimed:

We were warned by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as early as 1994 when it decided – and Pope Benedict XVI repeated this at the 2012 International Family Meeting in Milan – that divorced persons in second unions *cannot receive sacramental communion, but can receive spiritual communion*. Of course, this does not apply to all the divorced, but to those who are spiritually disposed to do so.⁵¹

In this way, the impression was created that “spiritual communion” for the divorced was something obvious both for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Benedict XVI.

In fact, it is not true that Pope Benedict XVI spoke about “spiritual communion” in Milan on June 2nd, 2012. The Pope spoke about spiritual union with Christ but did not refer to the term “spiritual communion.” To quote these words precisely: when the Brazilian couple talked about the disappointment of the divorced living in a second union that they could not receive the sacraments, the Holy Father said:

Even without the *physical* reception of the sacrament we can be united with Christ in His Body. To give them this understanding it is important that they really find the possibility of living the faith, with the Word of God, with the

⁵⁰ Cf. P.J. Cordes, *La comunione spirituale. L'Eucaristia per tutti*, Cantagalli 2015, p. 12.

⁵¹ W. Kasper, *Il vangelo della famiglia*, op. cit., p. 47.

community of the Church, and that they can see that their suffering is a gift to the Church because it is also a service to all, in defense of the stability of love, of marriage, and that this suffering is not only a physical and mental anguish but also a suffering in the community of the Church, for the great values of our faith.⁵²

Anyway, there is a provision in the final account of the extraordinary synod: “Some [synod] fathers have maintained that divorced persons living in new unions or cohabitation can successfully receive spiritual Holy Communion.”⁵³

It should be remembered, however, that in addition to those who were obviously wondering whether the practice of spiritual communion could not be an option for divorced persons living in second unions, there were those who turned it into an argument for their admission to sacramental communion: “Other fathers have wondered [that if ‘spiritual communion’ is proposed, then] why these people cannot receive sacramental communion.”⁵⁴ They showed in this way that they know perfectly well what “spiritual communion” is: that it assumes real communion. However, this is precisely the reason for not using the term in this context.

“Spiritual communion” in a 1994 document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Theoretically, however, the problem exists. In the text cited by Cardinal Walter Kasper, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith⁵⁵ actually uses the term “spiritual communion.” First, it clearly and unambiguously reminds us that Eucharistic Communion is impossible:

Members of the faithful who live together as husband and wife (*more uxorio*) with persons other than their legitimate spouses may not receive Holy Communion.

⁵² Benedict XVI, *Szczęśliwe dzieciństwo każdemu z nas daje przedsmak raju. Rozmowa z uczestnikami spotkania rodzin podczas Święta Świadectw*, 2 June 2012, “L’Osservatore Romano,” Polish version 7–8/2012, p. 21.

⁵³ Sinodo dei Vescovi. III Assemblea Generale Straordinaria, *Le sfide pastorali sulla famiglia nel contesto dell’evangelizzazione. Relatio Synodi*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141018_relatio-synodi-familia_en.html (hereinafter: *Relatio Synodi 2014*) [address: 20.11.2019], 53.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the reception of Holy Communion by the faithful who are divorced and living in new relationships* of 14 September 1994, 6.

Should they judge it possible to do so, pastors and confessors, given the gravity of the matter and the spiritual good of these persons (10) as well as the common good of the Church, have the serious duty to admonish them that such a judgment of conscience openly contradicts the Church's teaching (11). Pastors in their teaching must also remind the faithful entrusted to their care of this doctrine.

Then, exchanging various possibilities of deepening the intimacy with God, he also mentions spiritual communion:

This does not mean that the Church does not take to heart the situation of these faithful, who moreover are not excluded from ecclesial communion. She is concerned to accompany them pastorally and invite them to share in the life of the Church in the measure that is compatible with the dispositions of divine law, from which the Church has no power to dispense. On the other hand, it is necessary to instruct these faithful so that they do not think their participation in the life of the Church is reduced exclusively to the question of the reception of the Eucharist. The faithful are to be helped to deepen their understanding of the value of sharing in the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass, of spiritual communion [*comunione spirituale*] (13), of prayer, of meditation on the Word of God, and of works of charity and justice.

It should be stressed, however, that in the entire Magisterium of the Church this is the only use of the term in such a context, and it is a misuse. If we only give a cursory look at the reference number 13 placed immediately after the phrase "spiritual communion," we see authors of great authority, but when we look at the quoted texts, we have to conclude that they show irrefutably that there is no basis for talking about "spiritual communion" for the divorced living in a second union. Clearly and unquestionably, they relate to spiritual experience on a completely different level. Here are the texts in the mentioned footnote.

At the beginning, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recalls its own document, written eleven years earlier, the *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Questions concerning the Minister of the Eucharist* (6 August 1983, III/4). Even a cursory reading of this passage shows that it does not speak in the slightest about "spiritual communion" for those who are divorced in a second union, but on the contrary, it speaks about Catholics mature in the faith who, for reasons beyond their control, cannot receive the sacraments:

Individual faithful or communities who because of persecution or lack of priests are deprived of the holy Eucharist for either a short or longer period of time, do not thereby lack the grace of the Redeemer. If they are intimately animated by a desire for the sacrament and united in prayer with the whole Church, and call upon the Lord and raise their hearts to him, by virtue of the Holy Spirit they live in communion with the whole Church, the living body of Christ, and with the Lord himself. Through their desire for the sacrament in union with the Church, no matter how distant they may be physically, they are intimately and really united to her and therefore receive the fruits of the sacrament; whereas those who would wrongly attempt to take upon themselves the right to confect the Eucharistic Mystery end up by having their community closed in on itself.

Then the text of St Theresa of Ávila was quoted. This one teaches how to prepare for and experience Eucharistic Communion so that it embraces the physical and spiritual reality in man:

I have written at length about this, although, when writing of the Prayer of Recollection, I spoke of the great importance of our entering into solitude with God. When you hear Mass without communicating, daughters, you may communicate spiritually, which is extremely profitable, and afterwards you may practise inward recollection in exactly the same way, for this impresses upon us a deep love of the Lord. If we prepare to receive Him, He never fails to give, and He gives in many ways that we cannot understand. It is as if we were to approach a fire: it might be a very large one, but, if we remained a long way from it and covered our hands, we should get little warmth from it, although we should be warmer than if we were in a place where there was no fire at all. But when we try to approach the Lord there is this difference: if the soul is properly disposed, and comes with the intention of driving out the cold, and stays for some time where it is, it will retain its warmth for several hours, and if any little spark flies out, it will set it on fire.⁵⁶

At the end, the footnote refers to the text of St Alphonsus Maria Liguori of the *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary*, without any particular details. It can be assumed that this is the paragraph entitled “spiritual communion,” which is meant, and which reads in its entirety as follows:

⁵⁶ Teresa of Jesus, *Way of Perfection*, 35, 1; cited after: <https://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/-wayofperfection.pdf> [access: 1.03.2020].

As in all the following visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament a spiritual Communion is recommended, it will be well to explain what it is, and the great advantages which result from its practice. A spiritual Communion, according to St Thomas, consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, and in lovingly embracing Him as if we had actually received Him. How pleasing these spiritual Communion are to God, and the many graces which He bestows through their means, was manifested by our Lord Himself to Sister Paula Maresca, the foundress of the convent of St Catherine of Sienna in Naples, when (as it is related in her life) He showed her two precious vessels, the one of gold, the other of silver. He then told her that in the gold vessel He preserved her sacramental Communion, and in the silver one her spiritual Communion. He also told Blessed Jane of the Cross that each time that she communicated spiritually she received a grace of the same kind as the one that she received when she really communicated. Above all, it will suffice for us to know that the holy Council of Trent greatly praises spiritual Communion, and encourages the faithful to practise them. Hence all devout souls are accustomed often to practise this holy exercise of spiritual Communion. Blessed Agatha of the Cross did so two hundred times a day. And Father Peter Faber, the first companion of St Ignatius, used to say that it was of the highest utility to make spiritual Communion, in order to receive the sacramental Communion well. All those who desire to advance in the love of Jesus Christ are exhorted to make a spiritual Communion at least once in every visit that they pay to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and at every Mass that they hear; and it would even be better on these occasions to repeat the Communion three times, that is to say, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. This devotion is far more profitable than some suppose, and at the same time nothing can be easier to practise. The above-named Blessed Jane of the Cross used to say, that a spiritual Communion can be made without anyone remarking it, without being fasting, without the permission of our director, and that we can make it at any time we please: an act of love does all.⁵⁷

In the light of these texts, it must be stated that the 1994 document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith uses the term “spiritual communion”

⁵⁷ A.M. Liguori, *Visite al SS. Sacramento ed a Maria SS.ma*, [in:] idem, *Opera Omnia Italiane*, S. Brugnano CSSR (ed.), Biblioteca Digitale IntraText, <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITASA0000/-P3HF.HTM> [access: 20.11.2019]; cited after: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Eucharist/blessed-sacrament.htm> [access: 1.03.2020].

to refer to the divorced living *more uxorio* in second unions in an unauthorized manner.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis* 55

It is also unsubstantiated to refer to the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* 55 by Pope Benedict XVI, who speaks there about “spiritual communion” for those who can receive the sacraments. First, in the first part, he speaks of *actuosa participatio*,⁵⁸ and then he shows the meaning of “spiritual communion” in relation to Eucharistic Communion:

Clearly, full participation in the Eucharist takes place when the faithful approach the altar in person to receive communion. Yet true as this is, care must be taken lest they conclude that the mere fact of their being present in church during the liturgy gives them a right or even an obligation to approach the table of the Eucharist. Even in cases where it is not possible to receive sacramental communion, participation at Mass remains necessary, important, meaningful and fruitful. In such circumstances it is beneficial to cultivate a desire for full union with Christ through the practice of spiritual communion, praised by Pope John Paul II and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life.

Pope Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum caritatis* 55 recalls John Paul II’s last exhortation, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 34. There, St John Paul II reminds us of a dignified approach to Eucharistic Communion and does not mention spiritual communion for the divorced living in a second union. The context explains very extensively that receiving Holy Communion presupposes a communion of the whole life with God and the Church.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “In their consideration of the *actuosa participatio* of the faithful in the liturgy, the Synod Fathers also discussed the personal conditions required for fruitful participation on the part of individuals. One of these is certainly the spirit of constant conversion which must mark the lives of all the faithful. Active participation in the eucharistic liturgy can hardly be expected if one approaches it superficially, without an examination of his or her life. This inner disposition can be fostered, for example, by recollection and silence for at least a few moments before the beginning of the liturgy, by fasting and, when necessary, by sacramental confession. A heart reconciled to God makes genuine participation possible. The faithful need to be reminded that there can be no *actuosa participatio* in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ’s love into the life of society,” *Sacramentum caritatis* 55.

⁵⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 34–37.

The use of the term “spiritual communion” in this context is inappropriate. In the unchanging tradition of asceticism and mysticism, the term has an unambiguous, universally accepted meaning. In a strict sense, “spiritual communion” is the practice recommended to those who can enter into Sacramental Communion, and only because of a lack of a priest or an inability to reach him.⁶⁰ The relationship between spiritual communion and sacramental communion exists even in the consciousness of those who are in favour of communion for the divorced in second unions.⁶¹

From a pastoral point of view, it is appropriate and even necessary to encourage those who cannot enter into sacramental communion to develop a personal, intimate relationship with God. However, this relationship cannot be referred to as “spiritual communion.” Spiritual communion is a practice that is accessible to every person to the extent that he or she truly lives in communion (or union) of all life with God. It is therefore inconsistent to speak of “spiritual communion” in the context of seeking a kind of “substitute” for Eucharistic Communion for the divorced living in renewed relationships. From a formal point of view, therefore, this term should not be used in the context of the lives of those who cannot attend the sacraments (including divorced people living in second unions) because it would distort its meaning and give the impression that it is a substitute.⁶²

Summary

When discussing the proposal of Holy Communion for those living in non-sacramental unions, one should take the most appropriate view within the aspect of spiritual realism. First, we need to bring order to the doctrinal facts related to this reality; to clarify the subject of discussion and the reality of communion in the metalanguage. It is also necessary to realize the contradiction between the basic idea of communion and the reification of the

⁶⁰ Cf. L. de Bazelaire, *Communion spirituelle*, [in:] *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire...*, vol. 2, col. 1294–1300.

⁶¹ Cf. *Relatio Synodi 2014* 53.

⁶² On March 15, 2017, KAI reported that in Kalisz, “the Jesuits have begun pastoral work consisting of regular meetings and Masses during which there will be a spiritual communion,” transl. after: <https://ekai.pl/kalisz-jezuita-o-andrzej-lemiesz-zostal-duszpasterzem-zwiazkow-niesakramentalnych/> [access: 20.11.2019]. This is a misunderstanding. It darkens the unambiguous meaning of spiritual communion and, above all, treats it as a substitute for Eucharistic Communion, which is a doctrinal error.

Person, which is expressed, among other things, in the instrumentalization of Eucharistic Communion. For a realistic and comprehensive approach to the sacraments, it is necessary to be aware of the spousal dimension of sacramental life, which has been present in the Church since the first centuries. In order to avoid arbitrary statements, it is also necessary to reckon with the uninterrupted and unchangeable tradition that exists in the Church that Holy Communion is inaccessible to those living in non-sacramental unions.

Methodological correctness is also an important element of the ongoing discussion. Care should be taken to use the terms *digamoi* and “Gospel of the family” correctly. It should also be remembered that the discussion and declarations themselves do not create theological facts. The correctness of the theological discussion demands a real discernment, not lobbying for the “path already indicated” or proceeding “on the basis of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of Pope Francis” without, for example, ignoring the *Humanae vitae* of St Paul VI or *Familiaris consortio* and all the extensive teaching about marriage and the family of St John Paul II.

It is also important not to trivialize or instrumentalize the practice of “spiritual communion,” which has an unequivocal place in the Church’s spirituality, and always aims not to belittle the experience of communion, but to deepen it. It is therefore necessary to follow up on the theological truth.

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