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THE FAMILY AND HUMAN ECOLOGY: HAVING REGARD FOR THE NATURE OF FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Summary: The idea of a “human ecology” is gaining ever more significance in the human sciences, where it indicates an interdisciplinary approach to the relation between human beings and their environment. It is important, however, to remember that the expression “human ecology” also has a significant history in the documents of the Catholic Church, beginning with Pope Paul VI. It was Pope John Paul II who identified the *family* as the first and fundamental structure of a human ecology. It is therefore important to protect family relationships, since the person’s genealogy is inscribed in them. The present essay argues that to guard family relationships, one has to guard human sexuality as the power by which human beings are conceived and inserted into the familial network. For persons, the lines of origin and descent have a tremendous significance and any practice that renders these lines ambiguous is unecological from a human perspective. Ultimately it is a question of rediscovering indissoluble marriage as the context that alone is capable of providing the proper human environment for the conception, birth and education of new human beings, because here alone there is clarity about who is whose.

Keywords: Human ecology, family relations, lines of origin and descent, kinship, marriage, John Paul II.

I. “Human Ecology” in the Papal Magisterium

The idea of a “human ecology” is gaining ever more significance in the human sciences, where it indicates an interdisciplinary approach to the relation between human beings and their environment.¹ It is not unusual for universities to have departments or schools of human ecology.² Dedicated journals have

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¹ For an introduction to “human ecology” in this sense, cf. for instance: Robert Dyball and Barry Newell (Dyball, Newell, 2015).

² For instance, the University of Austin, Texas: <https://he.utexas.edu/>, or Cornell University in New York: <https://www.human.cornell.edu/>.

existed for decades now.³ Although human ecology is expressly said to be interdisciplinary, the disciplines that interact in this field, from biology and genetics to sociology and demography, have in common that they are all based on the scientific method. When the expression “human ecology” makes its appearance in some more recent ecclesial documents or papal discourses, it is introduced into a more philosophical and theological context. One might suspect that ecclesial discourse here is simply appropriating for its own purposes a fashionable term that originally belongs to a different conceptual universe. It is important, however, to remember that the expression “human ecology” does have a significantly long history in the documents of the Catholic Church. While, evidently, the Church cannot credit herself for having invented the term, the first mention of a “human ecology” in a papal discourse nonetheless dates back all the way to 1973, which is when *Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal* just went into its second year and the Society of Human Ecology was still eight years away from being founded. (Cf. Borden, 2008, pp. 95–108)

Now what is the meaning that the different popes had in mind when they spoke of a “human ecology”? In his discourse of November 7, 1973, which marks the first mention of the term, St. Paul VI denounces what he considers a widespread sexual exhibitionism: “We cannot conceal our painful amazement at the indulgence, indeed at the publicity and propaganda, so ignobly widespread today, for what contorts and contaminates spirits, with pornography, immoral shows, and licentious exhibitions. Where is the human ‘ecology’?”⁴ Hence, the context in which he used the term had to do with human sexuality and thus also with marriage and the family.

Much more recently, Pope Francis introduced the expression into his Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, where he first links it to the moral law in general. We read: “Human ecology ... implies ... the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature.” (Francis, 2015, n. 155) He then continues in a sense that is similar to the one given by Paul VI inasmuch as he relates the expression to a particular regard for the body and the meaning of sexual difference and thus to the field of human sexuality in general: “Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different.” (Francis, 2015, n. 155)

³ Cf. for instance the quarterly *Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, which published its first issue in 1972, or the *Human Ecology Review*, published semi-annually by the Australian National University Press, which first came out in 1993.

⁴ “E non possiamo tacere il nostro doloroso stupore per l’indulgenza, anzi per la pubblicità e la propaganda, oggi tanto ignobilmente diffusa, per ciò che conturba e contamina gli spiriti, con la pornografia, gli spettacoli immorali, e le esibizioni licenziose. Dov’è l’«ecologia» umana?” (Paul VI, 1973).

Before Francis, Pope Benedict XVI, too, made use of this notion on a number of occasions, most notably in his Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*⁵ and in his speech to the German Bundestag in Berlin on September 22, 2011, where he states: “There is also an ecology of man. Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself.” (Benedict XVI, 2011)

And yet, for the purposes of our present topic, which relates human ecology to the family, it will be most convenient to take a closer look at St. John Paul II’s 1991 Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, which dedicates three entire paragraphs to the notion of human ecology and thus is to date the ecclesial document that discusses the idea in the most elaborate way. It also explicitly relates human ecology to the family. Raising the ecological question, John Paul II claims that at “the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 37) Essentially the error is that of forgetting that creation is God’s gift and that human persons are but cooperators in the work of creation. Instead of remembering God as the giver of every good and perfect gift, “man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 37)

II. Family Relations as Fundamental Structure of a Human Ecology

From the problem regarding the *natural* environment, the Polish pontiff moves on to what he considers the even more serious issue of the destruction of the *human* environment. Here, according to him, “too little effort is made to *safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic ‘human ecology.’*” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 38) What is the meaning of safeguarding the moral conditions of a human ecology that he has in mind? First of all it means to remember the gift character, not only of the Earth and the natural environment, but of oneself and all other people: “Man too is God’s gift to man.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 38) Properly to accept and cultivate this gift, the human person must “respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 38) Thus, there are, according to John Paul II, *structures* for a human

⁵ “There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: *when ‘human ecology’ is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits.*” (Benedict XVI, 2009, n. 51)

ecology, the first and fundamental of which is the *family*. Here, the pope writes: “man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it means to be a person. Here we mean the *family founded on marriage*, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 39)

To his mind, there are a number of factors that pollute the human environment created by the family. Among them is the tendency to consider oneself and one’s life “as a series of sensations to be experienced rather than a work to be accomplished.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 39) The moral subject that has fallen prey to what some call emotivism (Cf. A. MacIntyre, 1981) lacks the freedom to make lasting commitments and hence the capacity to create “the proper conditions for human reproduction” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 39): a stable relationship and the idea of children as the fruit of this relationship. Today, in fact, people increasingly “consider children as one of the many ‘things’ which an individual can have or not have, according to taste, and which compete with other possibilities.” (John Paul II, 1991, n. 39) The tendency is that children are no longer seen as the crowning fulfillment of a spousal relationship, as Vatican II still had it,⁶ but rather as the object of a private, individual desire, not necessarily linked to a relationship with another person.

If the family is indeed the first and fundamental structure of a human ecology, then it will be useful to analyze this structure and also to individuate a number of practices that “pollute” it and others that sustain it. If, when speaking about the *natural* environment, we say that an excessive carbon dioxide emission, overexploitation of natural resources or the littering of plastic bags are un-ecological practices, we may ask whether there are not analogous practices regarding the *human* environment, and particularly its basic structure, namely the family. And if the striving for sustainable development and carbon neutrality along with the use of renewable sources of energy are practices that are ecological for the natural environment, are there perhaps analogous positive practices for safeguarding and promoting the human environment?

If we define the family as a particular system, a network of specific kinds of relations, then to study it means to study family relationships, and to assess the effects of certain practices on the family is to ask about their effects on family relationships. Now what is distinctive about family relationships? How are they different from other sorts of relations that we entertain, with friends or colleagues, for instance? What is peculiar to family relations is that they are by definition

⁶ “By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown.” (Second Vatican Council, 1965, n. 48)

unconditional relations of kinship based on descent or on a particular kind of irrevocable promise.⁷ Hence, John Paul II can say that “bound up with the family is the genealogy of every individual: *the genealogy of the person.*” (John Paul II, 1994, n. 9) The long genealogies of the Old and the New Testament express something quite fundamental. To us, as human beings, as human persons, it is important to know where we are coming from. Our origin matters to us. Other living beings do not seem to show interest in this question, but to us, as persons, it matters to know who our father and our mother or our grandparents are and also who the people are to whom we are connected by some common ancestor. Who are our ancestors in the direct line of descent (one speaks here of lineal consanguinity) and who are the people with whom we are related by collateral consanguinity, through common ancestors? These questions matter to us.

It is peculiar to human beings as persons that kinship can be instituted not only by consanguinity, but also by a particular kind of promise, which will have to be of a kind that is functionally equivalent: as consanguinity is an objective biological fact that gives rise to an *unconditional* and *irrevocable* personal relationship, so the promise that gives rise to a non-consanguineous family relation has to be unconditional and irrevocable: It has to take the form of an oath instituting a covenant. In the context of family relations, there are fundamentally two kinds of these promises: the act of adoption⁸ and marital promises. By the legal act of adoption or by entering into the marital covenant, people, though not of the same blood, nonetheless become kinsfolk.⁹ And through marriage in particular, it is not only two individuals that unite but two

⁷ Godbout notes how family relationships are unconditional, inasmuch as they are not chosen: “The family imposes a significant limit on one’s freedom: we do not choose the individuals who make up the family network – our parents, brothers, or sisters. [...] When people are asked what it is, today, that makes the family important to them, what makes family ties special, they say it is their unconditional nature.” In the examples just given, this unconditionality is based on consanguinity. But Godbout proceeds to point out that at least in the past, “the founding nucleus of the family – the couple,” too, was “joined by an unconditional relationship, ‘for better or worse,’” in other words, by a definitive and irrevocable promise. (Cf. Godbout, 1998, p. 33–34)

⁸ “The bond of procreation can be replaced, with respect to its personal meaning, by adoption.” (Spaemann, 2006, p. 70)

⁹ “Marriage and adoption are specific manifestations of the concept of covenant, which, at root, is the establishment of kinship relations and obligations between non-kin.” (Hahn, 2009, 341 n. 25). Hahn is commenting here on Frank Moore Cross: “In Israel, contrary to many primitive band or tribal societies, the legal compact of marriage introduced the bride into the kinship group or family. This is the proper understanding of Genesis 2:24: ‘Therefore a man will abandon his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and [the two of them] will become one flesh.’ Flesh refers not to carnal union but to identity of ‘flesh,’ kinship, ‘bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.’ Obviously, offspring of the marital union will be of one flesh; what is asserted is that the covenant of marriage establishes kinship bonds of the first rank between spouses. Adoption of sons or daughters is another means of engrafting non-kin or distant kin into the lineage”. (Moore Cross, 2000, pp. 7–8)

entire families who are now related through them. Family relations, instituted through descent or promise, inscribe the person into a particular kind of genealogy, which is crucial for his or her identity. The family is a web of relationships in which all members have their particular place: to be son or daughter of, husband or wife of, father or mother of, brother or sister of, uncle or aunt of, niece or nephew of...

III. The Pollution of the Human Environment: Ambiguity in the Lines of Descent

According to the French cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the incest taboo is at the foundation of civilization. For him, it marks the passage from the state of nature to a state of culture.¹⁰ Still today most people agree that the incest taboo must be upheld. The reason that is often given is that incestuous relations present a danger for the health of the possible offspring inasmuch as they restrict the gene pool and increase the likelihood of the transmission of genetic diseases. The knowledge of genetics is relatively recent, however, while the incest taboo is archaic, going back to the dawn of human history, when people were still quite blissfully ignorant of the principles governing the transmission of one's genetic inheritance. For Lévi-Strauss the incest taboo is so decisive for civilization because it amounts to the requirement of exogamous marriage, that is, marriages outside of the strict family circle.¹¹ The incest taboo requires families to open up and to form alliances with other families. Exogamous marriages prevent families from closing in on themselves; they are marriages between families, and as such they are the condition of the possibility of larger social realities like the city or the nation.¹²

¹⁰ "It will never be sufficiently emphasized that, if social organization had a beginning, this could only have consisted in the incest prohibition. ... It is there, and only there, that we find a passage from nature to culture, from animal to human life, and that we are in a position to understand the very essence of their articulation." (Lévi-Strauss, 1971, p. 350)

¹¹ "The prohibition of incest establishes a mutual dependency between families, compelling them, in order to perpetuate themselves, to give rise to new families. ... Incest-prohibition simply states that families (however they should be defined) can only marry between each other and that they cannot marry inside themselves." (Lévi-Strauss, 1971, p. 349)

¹² "The ultimate explanation [of the incest taboo] is probably that mankind has understood very early that, in order to free itself from a wild struggle for existence, it was confronted with the very simple choice of 'either marrying-out or being killed-out.' The alternative was between biological families living in juxtaposition and endeavoring to remain closed, self-perpetuating units, over-ridden by their fears, hatreds, and ignorance, and the systematic establishment, through the incest prohibition, of links of intermarriage between them, thus succeeding to build, out of the artificial bonds of affinity, a true human society, despite, and even in contradiction with, the isolating influence of consanguinity." (Lévi-Strauss, 1971, p. 350)

But there is still another reason for the incest taboo. It makes sure that family relations are well-defined and clear, so as to avoid ambiguity in the lines of descent and thus in the relations of consanguinity and kinship.¹³ The mother is the mother and not the wife. One's mother's children are one's siblings and not one's own children. One's sister is one's sister and not one's wife. One's sister's children are one's nephews and nieces, not one's own children. Clarity about who is whose is of paramount importance. Only in this way, each family member will have a definitive place in the great network of relationships, and all will know who they are with respect to everyone else in this network. While clarity about one's relations of origin, about one's ancestors and descendants, is not as such a *sufficient* condition for healthy family relations, it is nonetheless a quite *necessary* and fundamental condition. Most taboos surrounding our sexuality have something to do with this basic human concern, a concern and need that remains in force, even if we are increasingly losing our awareness of it. In this sense, Leon Kass writes: "Our society is dangerously close to losing its grip on the meaning of some fundamental aspects of human existence. ... Properly understood, the largely universal taboo against incest, and also the prohibitions against adultery, defend the integrity of marriage, kinship and especially the lines of origin and descent. These time-honored restrains implicitly teach that clarity about who our parents are, clarity in the lines of generation, clarity about who is whose, are the indispensable foundation of a sound family life, itself the sound foundation of civilized community. Clarity about your origins is crucial for self-identity, itself important for self-respect." (Kass, 2002, pp. 99–100)

To a great extent, then, the taboos against fornication and adultery were based on the concern for legitimacy, which in turn derived from a solicitude about guarding one's lines of origin. The concern about legitimate vs. illegitimate birth was still prevalent in most European countries right up until the middle of the last century. In German civil law, for instance, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children was abrogated only in 1998. (German Parliament, 1997, pp. 16, 1997, 2942–2967) While legitimate or illegitimate

¹³ "Personal relations can 'rise out of' biological relations. Just as the biological functions of a human being often become personal acts, e.g. sexual intercourse, eating, drinking, so it is with the basic relations of consanguinity and affinity. One can easily see this from the fact that these connections are lifelong, and it is irrelevant whether we welcome the fact or not. Mother will always be mother. This is not true in the same way of animals, among whom the relation comes to an end with the cessation of the biological function, and becomes indistinguishable from the relation to every other fellow-member of the species. The incest-taboo among humans makes the point especially clear in protecting a variety of relations against the loss of personal clarity. In many cultures, such as nineteenth-century Russia, it was impossible even for brothers and sisters-in-law to marry, even though no consanguine relation existed between them." (Spaemann, 2006, p. 69–70)

birth said nothing about the moral quality of the child born, it did mark the difference between being recognized by one's father and being given a definitive place within the family network on the one hand and being given no such recognition and place on the other hand. Of course, what the ancient Roman adage says holds true: *pater semper incertus est* – the father is *always* uncertain. But marriage, among other things, was meant to be a remedy precisely for this predicament. It is meant to link the father to his children and the children to their father. By entering into marriage, the man, among other things, agrees to recognize the children potentially born to his wife as *his* children, at least unless there is evident proof to the contrary. In the case of an out-of-wedlock birth, the father and his children are not linked in the same way. By engaging in fornication or adultery, one risks generating a child that will be born outside of publicly recognized lines of descent and that will thus not be able to assume a definitive place in the network of familial relationships. And it is precisely here that a great part of the immorality of fornication and adultery reside: one commits an injustice to the child one may potentially conceive in this act.

Now a society that is concerned with legitimacy and illegitimacy, with knowing who is whose; a society that aims at ensuring that its members have a definitive place in a network of family relations, will find it hard to tolerate fornication or adultery. It will certainly not consider giving these acts an air of social respectability. A debate about possibly de-penalizing incest will not so much as occur in it.¹⁴ Such a society will also not suffer divorce and subsequent remarriage, since divorce not only disrupts the relationship between two individuals, but also introduces a disturbance into the whole family matrix. Family relations become ambiguous. Children may find themselves with having four or more parents. The question to whom they really belong will become impossible to answer. With the setting up of the legal institution of divorce, relationships that were once thought to be unconditional became conditional.¹⁵ One abandons the idea that the marital promise institutes a relationship between the spouses that is analogous to kinship, the idea that it is as impossible for a woman to have an ex-husband as it is impossible for her to have an ex-father or an ex-son and that it is as impossible for a man to have an ex-wife as it is impossible for him to have an ex-mother or an ex-daughter. In some ways, the

¹⁴ As opposed to today's European countries: in Germany, for instance, a debate about possibly de-penalizing sexual relations between siblings has been going on for a number of years now. (Cf. for instance Martenstein, 2013)

¹⁵ "The gift relationship has an unconditional aspect that is unacceptable to modernity but whose bonding effect was crucial to the development of the family. That is why divorce is probably the most important social revolution of modern times. Will the unconditional nature of other family relationships (brothers, sisters ...) survive the end of unconditionality in the couple?" (Cf. Godbout, 1998, p. 34)

existence of the legal institution of divorce makes of every marriage a temporary, consensual relation that is valid until further notice.¹⁶ A promise made under the reservation that it lasts up until the moment that one changes one's mind is evidently not unconditional and does not institute a kinship relation.

IV. Where the Lines of Descent Still Seem Important Even Today: Royal Families

One might simply say that the idea of the family as a web of relationships, in which each member has a definitive, precisely defined place is irretrievably lost to us today. One might think that people are not even remotely capable of relating to what one is saying. But there are still a few, indeed famous, families where the lines of descent are being jealously guarded, also because they are of high practical significance: the royal families. Let us take as an example the House of Windsor. Lineage and descent are tremendously important, not least of all because they determine the line of succession to the British throne. In the 1930s the liaison between King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, a twice divorced American, caused a lot of stir. In the eyes of the most powerful representatives of the government and of the Anglican Church, along with, it seemed, the vast public, it was considered inappropriate for the King to marry a divorcee. Edward, who was determined to marry Simpson but also wanted to remain King, proposed a solution that clearly shows where he himself perceived the problem to reside. He suggested a so-called morganatic marriage, which would have withheld from Simpson the royal title and would have excluded their possible offspring from the line of succession to the throne. (For all this, cf. Pearce, Goodlad, 2013, p. 80) To tell the end of the story: the British government refused the plan, and Edward, not wanting further to intensify the already severe constitutional crisis, decided to abdicate the throne on December 11, 1936. But what interests us here is this: if Edward VIII had really thought that a morganatic marriage would have been a solution, then it is clear where he saw the problem: For a monarchy a divorce in the immediate lines of succession can spell potential disaster as it easily introduces ambiguity and uncertainty. And hardly anything is more important for a monarchy than clarity about who is next in line for the throne.

It is true that on May 19, 2018, Prince Harry married an American divorcee just as Edward did more than eighty years before him, and no one, it seemed,

¹⁶ “The sheer existence of the legal institution of divorce has done a lot to promote this attitude [of understanding the marital relationship as a consumer good]. Law has an educative effect. The mere fact that divorce legislation exists in secular society witnesses to the fact that the State authority ... does not presume that marriage is meant to last ‘till death do us part’, but that it is a temporal arrangement.” (Pérez-Soba, Kampowski, 2014, p. 133)

raised an eyebrow. The fact is of course that Harry is not the reigning monarch nor heir apparent. The matter is different with Charles, who is indeed first in the line of succession. In 2005 he too married a divorcee whose husband is still alive. The Queen and the Anglican Church leadership eventually gave their consent to that union, which is a fact that one could interpret as a fundamental change in attitude with respect to the 1930s. Alternatively, one could interpret the preceding controversies and difficulties as a confirmation for the thesis that for an heir apparent, marrying a divorcee is a particularly significant matter not to be taken lightly. Besides, for simple biological reasons in 2005 no more children were to be expected of Charles' and Camilla's union, and Charles already had two legitimate sons, William being the next in succession after him.

V. Sons and Daughters of the Great King: Guarding Where We're Coming From by Guarding Our Sexuality

The House of Windsor was mentioned here not as a role model and example of virtue, which it may or may not be. Rather, the point is that for a royal family, the question of the lines of descent, the question of who is whose, is still of utmost importance today, if only to make sure one can identify who is the legitimate heir to the throne so as to avoid strife and possibly civil war. The birth of a new baby is celebrated as an event of almost cosmic proportions: perhaps we have witnessed the birth of a new king. Now, what Christianity tells us is that all human beings are called to be sons and daughters of the great King. We are invited to be part of His family (cf. 1 Tim 3:15). Every new human being coming into this world should thus be treated like a royal baby, because he or she is called to be the child of the great Monarch. Each family should thus consider itself a royal family when it comes to the importance of being able to determine who is whose. This means that each human being's origin really matters and that his or her lines of descent must be carefully guarded. These must not be toyed with, not willfully and deliberately confused to the point that the questions "Who is my father?" or "Who is my mother?" become literally impossible to answer.

Family relations are evidently rendered ambiguous by incest, particularly in its impending most radical form, which is cloning. They also become ambiguous through divorce and remarriage. But after these brief reflections, we may also consider the confusion and identity crisis that the new artificial reproductive technologies can bring about in children who might have to distinguish between their genetic mother, their birth mother and their social mother, and who might not ever be able to know who their genetic father is. Who is my father? Who is

my mother? We are heading toward a society in which these simple questions become ever harder to answer. With the increasing confusion of our lines of descent, the very terms “father” and “mother” might soon become meaningless, especially, of course, if research on artificial wombs and cloning should make further headway, but even the proliferation of already existing artificial reproductive technologies strongly moves into this direction.

If we are unable to say unambiguously who our father and our mother are, if there is confusion in the linear lines of descent, then there will be ambiguity also in all collateral family relations. We will not be able to say who our brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews are. All this means that family relations are not simply changing but are being virtually destroyed. We are risking a society in which people become isolated individuals that are alienated from their origin and exposed to a rather polluted, if not toxic, human environment that is unable to provide a home for them, a place that is particularly theirs, a place where they belong. If St. John Paul II is right and family relations are the basic structure of a human ecology, then we need to guard them, in particular inasmuch as they present the genealogy of the person. We will guard them precisely by guarding human sexuality as that power by which human beings are conceived. It is a question of rediscovering indissoluble marriage as the context that ultimately alone is capable of providing the proper human environment for the conception, birth and education of new human beings, because here alone there is clarity about who is whose.

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Ekologia rodziny i człowieka: wzgląd na naturę relacji rodzinnych

Streszczenie: Idea „ekologii człowieka” zyskuje coraz większe znaczenie w naukach humanistycznych, wskazując na interdyscyplinarne podejście do relacji między człowiekiem a środowiskiem. Należy jednak pamiętać, że wyrażenie „ekologia ludzka” ma również znaczącą historię w dokumentach Kościoła katolickiego, poczynając od papieża Pawła VI. Jednak to papież Jan Paweł II określił rodzinę jako pierwszą i podstawową strukturę ludzkiej ekologii. Dlatego ważna jest ochrona relacji rodzinnych, a genealogia danej osoby jest w nie wpisana. W artykule dowiedziono, że aby móc ochronić związki rodzinne, należy ludzką seksualność widzieć jako pozytywną, sprawczą siłę, dzięki której na świat przychodzi nowa istota i zostaje włączona w sieć relacji rodzinnych. Genealogia i przyszłość rodu ma dla ludzi ogromne znaczenie, a każda próba zaciemnienia powiązań między generacjami jest nieekologiczna z ludzkiego punktu widzenia. Ostatecznie chodzi o ponowne odkrycie nierozzerwalności małżeństwa, dzięki czemu możliwe jest zapewnienie odpowiedniego środowiska do poczęcia, narodzin i wychowania nowego pokolenia. Nierozzerwalność małżeństwa pozwala na utrzymanie ciągłości pokoleniowej i identyfikacji z celami wspólnymi całej rodzinie. To również podtrzymywanie przynależności rodowej.

Słowa kluczowe: ekologia człowieka, relacje rodzinne, pochodzenie i pochodzenie, pokrewieństwo, małżeństwo, Jan Paweł II.