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THEOLOGIAN'S LOOK ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

SPOJRZENIE TEOLOGA NA MAŁŻEŃSTWO I RODZINĘ

W obecnym czasie małżeństwo przeżywa kryzys. Można mu zapobiec zachowując wskazania Kościoła oparte na Słowie Bożym *Starego i Nowego Testamentu*. Ważna jest rola Kościoła ukazująca wartości zarówno w sensie antropologicznym jak i kościelno-religijnym mogące przewyciężyć obecny kryzys małżeństwa i rodziny.

Słowa kluczowe: małżeństwo, rodzina, nauczanie papieża, encyklika Pawła VI *Humanae vitae*, ludzkie wartości małżeństwa, odpowiedzialne duszpasterstwo.

Introduction

We are now witnessing a laxity of marriage and family life. Liberal streams impose wanton lifestyle that is not compatible with the Word of God and the teaching of the Church. Hence the question of whether married and family life according to the Word of God and the teaching of the Church is still possible today? Theologians' considerations suggest such possibilities, giving spouses arguments for compatibility of life with the Word of God, and at the same time bringing happiness to spouses and their families. In this paper, taking into account the fact that marriage and family are one of the most important departments of general pastoral care, they will be presented both the human values of marriage and family, as well as there will be reflected contemporary crisis of marriage and the understanding of marriage and the family especially

in accordance with the teaching of Pope Paul VI¹ and the subsequent popes: St. Pope John Paul II² and Francis³.

Concern for marriage and family is one of the basic tasks of the Church, and implemented especially in the smallest particle – the parish – as one of the most important areas of pastoral associate and it is also firmly integrated into the ordinary pastoral care. That is why we treat it in a special way. We can at the same time say that probably there are not any other areas of human life, from which so much would depend happiness of modern humans as the love between man and woman, that marriage and family takes its permanent shape⁴. There are not also any other areas of life in which that faith and life went so inextricably together as in marriage, because marriage should belong both to the order of creation and the order of redemption. God created man as male and female and the Bible adds that it was very good (Gen 1, 27. 31). Union of a man and a woman is both the image and making present the relationship between God and man contained in Jesus Christ, the likeness of God's love and fidelity to man (cf. Eph 5, 21-23). In this way, the reality of creation in Christian marriage becomes the reality of salvation.

In light of this understanding of marriage there is a disturbing fact that – as in any other area of human life – there is such a huge discrepancy between the official teaching of the Church and experiencing beliefs and even practice, as in marriage. Because in reality the creation of marriage and the reality of salvation are so closely linked together, understanding of marriage and family must be deepened in the field of contemporary crisis of marriage. It is not just about such pressing issues as premarital sex, abortion, in vitro, homosexuality or gender. It's about a comprehensive and renewed look at the man entering into wedlock, and integrating him with the faith of the Church. Only in this way the moral precepts of the Church will be able to be accepted as a Christian and your own.

¹ Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, Citta del Vaticano, 1968.

² John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation on the tasks of the Christian family in the modern world *Familiaris Consortio*, Rome, 1981.

³ Francis, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* about love in the family, Rome, 2016.

⁴ Cf. G. Schmidtchen, *Zwischen Kirche und Gesellschaft. Forschungsbericht ueber die Umfragen zur Gemeinsamen Synode der Bistuemer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Freiburg, Vienna, Graz, 1972, p. 123-129.

The human value of marriage

What is the essence of marriage? In the history of humanity it was determined very differently. The ethnological study stressed two options. Thesis by Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954) – SVD, who was engaged in linguistics, anthropology and ethnology says that at the beginning of human development was monogamy, and the subsequent collapse of polygamy was a form of monogamous marriage, is not entirely historically proven. In turn, the hypothesis of J. J. Bachofen (1815-1887) – a Swiss lawyer, ethnologist and researcher of antiquity – claims that at the beginning there was polygamy, group marriage, promiscuity – is derived from the principles of liberalism and does not correspond to the reality of the original condition of marriage and family⁵. Engels based on the Bachofen's hypotheses, introducing to the Marxist ideology liberalism of marriage, which had and still has an impact today in many countries in the understanding of marriage, moreover, contrary to God's revelation, which keeps the Catholic Church.

Given the diversity of views you can ask whether there is permanent nature of marriage. St. Thomas gives the following reply. On the question of whether a marriage is natural, he accounts that although there is a natural human tendency to marriage, but its concrete implementation is done through human freedom. According to St. Thomas there is the task of the historical-redemptive revelation to support submissive for the sin nature of human mistake in recognizing the deeper meaning of human nature and its realization also in marriage. It was St. Thomas⁶ who managed in the Middle Ages to create a great synthesis, which fully comes to the fore classical Christian view of the human value of marriage. St. Thomas was to integrate the marriage in the overall concept of man. Referring to the teaching of St. Augustine's three goods of marriage: *proles*, *fides*, *sacramentum* – offspring, fidelity and love and sacramentality – he expresses through them the human dignity of marriage. Purely sensual love is – according to him – a tendency to breaking out of the holistic approach of man, and to become independent threatening by this same human dignity. Through these three values – goods of marriage, love is part of an overall concept of man. And so through the good of *proles*, or offspring by giving life, human sexuality is included in the service of humanity as a natural good. Through mutual love and fidelity of the spouses – *fides* – sensual human love is turned into love and sacrifice, and thus ensure that first of all a woman will not be treated only as a sexual being, but as a person. It is the sociological element of marriage. Finally, in the religious sense by the sacramental nature of

⁵ See W. Kasper, *Zur Theologie der christlichen Ehe*, Mainz, 1977, p. 13-14 .

⁶ Ibidem, p. 15 and passim.

marriage – *sacramentum* – human loyalty becomes a sign of God's faithfulness in Jesus Christ, and the marriage directs to God as the final cause and the purpose of existence. Thomas' concept squeezed a mark on Western culture dealing with marriage and family life.

The crisis within the meaning of marriage

The crisis within the meaning of marriage and the family, which is today more and more intensified, has many causes. First, the separation between public and private. Large family was shattered, starting especially from the nineteenth-century industrialization, and is dominated by small family. In turn, the professional work of men and women in the majority takes place outside the house. This separation of reduced welfare and economic solidarity and social functions of the spouses to a minimum⁷. Family crisis deepens off the natural conditions of fertility of offspring. Married life is heading today, in many cases, just to satisfy emotions, and not to accept offspring. Satisfying the lust goes towards unimaginable perversions. For some couples desire to have children it is not their conjugal love but mere in vitro insemination. Such attitudes are often the reason for the treatment of marriage as a short-term and casual adventure, hence the growing number of divorces. Thinking only how to earn, excessive desire to earn extra money to acquire wealth of prestige, leading to discontent in the event of failures influencing the durability of marriage, supposedly it was the cause of these failures, and hence the treatment of marriage as an article of consumption like many others. Trips abroad for bread are often the cause of breakdown of marriage, what most children suffer.

Meanwhile, the Church shows profound values in order to preserve the stability of marriage and to make the family a place of joy and satisfaction. Popes Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti connubii*⁸, many statements on marriage and the family of Pope Pius XII, after the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* and St. John Paul II (*Familiaris consortio*, Wednesday speeches: Man and Woman He created them, Charter of the rights of the family and many other statements) point the way to a new look at marriage, to treat it fully personal, not as subjects. The point is that in the concept of marriage to maintain internal unity of the three values, goods of marriage and family and see them in their natural, social, personal and theological relationships.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 18 ff.

⁸ Pius XI, Encyclical on Christian marriage among existing relationship, the needs, mistakes and misconduct in the family and society *Casti connubii*, Rome, 1930.

The possibilities of a new understanding of marriage in the light of the encyclical of Paul VI's *Humanae vitae*

Conjugal love should be understood primarily as a personal love. If we start in determining the essence of marriage from mutual love of the spouses, the word "love" cannot be understood superficially and sentimental. It is about the integrated meaning, when a person is accepted as a human being. Human fullness implemented in personal love says, "I want you to be", "it is great that you are." In such a personal understanding of love it is connected the physicality of man and becomes a means of personal communication between spouses. And only when the corporeality of man is integrated with the person can be humanly done, and only in permanent relation – in marriage with all its consequences, so the life in the community, joint economic and financial decision-making, acceptance of offspring, complementarity and development. The church meets here formidable task preparing well young people for marriage, for their good start in marriage and family, to selfless life, because whoever loses his life, he will recover it.

Another characteristic of conjugal love, according to the encyclical *Humanae vitae* is a fully human love: "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, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment."⁹

Paul VI also talks about another trait of conjugal love, that it is full, when the spouses generously share everything with each other, without unjust exception and selfish question. 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 himself¹⁰.

Moreover, as Paul VI notes, conjugal love is faithful and exclusive until the end of life¹¹. It should also be noted that true love is one of the strongest arguments in favor of the indissolubility of marriage. The very nature of love says about it, because the man does not exist the way his instinct is matching him biologically to the environment. Its culture helps him to control and regulate their sexuality. Fidelity is a sign of freedom and responsibility for decisions. For every promise tends to sustainability. The final bound of two people by the

⁹ Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, 9.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Ibidem.

promise of marital fidelity bears the essentially religious dimension. Fidelity is not only a symbol of reaching beyond itself, but is also a participation in God's faithfulness. Hence it is no accident that the conclusion of marriage in all known human cultures happened with religious symbols. A church on the basis of the teaching of the Lord Jesus recommends include him in sacramental marriage, as Saint Paul says: "only in the Lord" (1 Cor 7, 39).

You can introduce a lot of arguments in favor of the indissolubility of marriage. First, from the anthropological point of view: the very essence of enduring love, which can be seen most in fear of losing her, losing a partner; for the inseparable speaks well being of children, when they grow and flourish in good atmosphere of loving their parents; durability and safety of all family members (regardless of momentary feelings and emotions); protection of women.

Important is the meaning of freedom and the acceptance of the dignity of the person; love as a mutual, free and sincere gift of self. The essence of this gift is to remission yourself to another person and being at his disposal.

Arguments from the Christian point of view. In the *Old Testament*, the unity and indissolubility of marriage is grounded in the order of creation "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body." (Gn 2, 24). What on the basis of the order of creation was given to people for their marriage, its ultimate grounding receives in the saving order donated to the people through Jesus Christ. With this absolute faithfulness of God to His people is a constant theme of the *Old Testament*, for example. "For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps 100, 5). Marital fidelity is the image of God's faithfulness in the covenant and marital infidelity becomes a symbol of infidelity to God (cf. Ez 23).

There is still need to point out the contemporary problems that are causing people to break marital fidelity. They are: non-sacramental relations of Christians; relaxation of customs in the name of misunderstood freedom: free trade, pornography, homosexuality, in vitro, gender; lack of family ties, the result of which is the lack of time for loved ones, for your spouse and children (work, small income, foreign trips for bread); The contraceptive mentality, trampling all human values, lack of respect for human dignity, egotism. The teaching of the Church in the wider pastoral care of families is trying to remedy all these problems.

Fruitful love, of which the Second Vatican Council¹², has extensive ties. First, it is an expression of the love of spouses, bringing them joy, but it is also self-sacrificing love. The encyclical *Humanae vitae* states that fruitful love is

¹² Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church, 49.

not exhausted in the community of spouses, but also tends to his extension and giving new life. And here he quotes Paul VI Pastoral Constitution on the Church (50): “Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents.” (GS 48)¹³

This understanding of fruitful conjugal love requires responsible parenthood. Fruitful love expressed in the children goes beyond himself and also serves society and humanity. Culture and tradition are also transmitted through the generation and education. But you cannot put neither offspring nor love against each other. Not every married life has to end up conceiving a new life. Therefore, responsible parenthood requires from spouses getting knowledge of the principles of natural birth control in order to protect in their lives the law of God. So the well-understood fertile conjugal love derive four criteria to make moral decisions to conceive a child: 1) respect for the dignity and the partner responsible for the life and the deepening of mutual love; 2) responsibility for born and still born children; 3) the responsibility for the future of society and mankind and 4) respect for nature created by God, which for him has been entrusted to man for the development of cultural coexistence¹⁴.

Deciding on fertile love is for a Christian a matter of his conscience and responsibility for yourself, for your spouse, for society, for humanity and for the deeply religious Catholics responsibility for the Church.

Sacramental dignity and indissolubility of marriage

Scriptures, both *Old* and *New Testament*, are about love between a man and a woman, about human sexuality, marriage and fertility, natural and positive attitude: there is not any Manichean condemnation of marriage, or has nothing to do with naive euphoria of sex, which today threatens the world. But the Scriptures is also about human weakness, the pain of childbirth, human innocence and guilt in this area of life. At the same time the relation of man to woman is so basic that it is included in the determination of the essence of human similarities to God in Genesis: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1, 27). The sex difference should therefore be to creative determination of the man. There is no man as a philosophical abstraction – a man existed only as a man and a woman. Meanwhile, the relationship between

¹³ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Poznan, 1994, no 1652.

¹⁴ W. Kasper, *Zur Theologie*, op. cit., pp. 29.

man and woman is so deep that it is the image of God's love, His faithfulness and creative power. Thus, Scriptures gives marriage so great dignity, which excludes any hostility to sex. Despite such great respect for marriage in the Bible it never reaches the deification of sex either in the **Old Testament** or the **New Testament**, as it did in the pagan, although religious environment of Israel. On the contrary: sacralisation and mythisation of sexuality is in the Scriptures typically rejected as pagan. Today sexualised world clearly goes back to paganism.

So we ask, what is based on the sacramental nature of marriage? Already in **Old Testament** mutual acceptance and union between a man and a woman become "image and likeness" of God's covenant with man (cf. Os 1, 3, Jeremiah 2-3; 31; Ez 16, 23; Isaiah 54; 62). It is God's covenant with His people finds its ultimate and unattainable fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ: He is the bridegroom of the People of God in the new covenant (cf. Mk 2, 19) and from Him comes the ultimate invitation to the marriage of the Lamb in the Kingdom of God (Mt 22: 2 ff.). So the ultimate understanding of the sacramental dignity of marriage lies in understanding God's covenant with the people.

Jesus' position on this issue is reflected in the pericope Mk 10: 2-9. On the controversial question of the Pharisees, whether it lawful to divorce the woman, Jesus cannot be provoked into casuistic dispute, but he brings a discussion into an original plan of God and the order of creation ending with the words: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." When the Lord Jesus indicates the hardness of the human heart. If God give to man "a new heart" (cf. Jer 31, 33), he will be able to keep God's will. Jesus' preaching fulfilled in messianic expectation, and marriage is a sign of the eschatological reign of God. The early Christians understood the preaching of Jesus in such a way what can be proved by St. Paul who wrote to the Corinthians, to get married in the Lord. Marriage is therefore incorporated by baptism into Christ and in Him becomes a „new creation" (2 Cor 5, 17). Relations between the spouses are directed at obedience, love, loyalty and devotion to Christ Church and vice versa Church of Christ (cf. Col 3: 18 ff.; 1 Peter 3: 1-7). However, Ephesians 5, 21-33 most eloquently shows the relationship of the spouses with Christ, where the relationship between man and woman in marriage is treated as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Pericopes that ends with the words: „ This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. „ Marriage, therefore, in its form of being, through which reveals the divine eternal love and fidelity to man, is being realized historically. Thanks to the love and faithfulness between Christ and

the Church is not only the image of marriage, but it is also a sign of existing Christ and God's love.

The unity and indissolubility of marriage confirmed by its sacramentality is built on the anthropological nature of marriage. Love and fidelity of marriage is essentially focused on exclusivity and finality. The unity and indissolubility of marriage is already established in the order of creation, and ultimately reinforces the inclusion of marriage in the order of salvation through the sacraments of baptism and marriage. This is done by entering into God's covenant with the people, in which God's faithfulness to this covenant is irrevocable and unquestionable.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, referring to the CIC (c. 1055 par. 1) says: "The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, is directed by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. It was among the baptized, raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."¹⁵ These theological reflections on marriage and family are necessary for the proper conduct of the pastoral care of families.

This study was intended to capturing the theological understanding of marriage and family. On this background, broad family ministry can be build. Its development would require an in-depth presentation of this important field of pastoral ministry, especially parish ministry.

Key words: marriage, family, the teaching of the popes, Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae*, the human value of marriage, the responsible ministry

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¹⁵ CCC, 1601