

# Family between God's Plan and Human Concepts

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The purpose of this article is to show the evolution of matrimony and family implied by the Christian and traditional ideal toward modern concepts of family. The fundamental element of functioning of a human being in the society is a family, which is the first environment for human development. Therefore, a universal view of a family enables to show the role of an individual striving to fulfil the mission of one's life that is implemented by starting a family in the context of ideas of God and man.

In this context, the author concludes that the traditional family model characterised by indissolubility and faithfulness, wherein the traditional model of education and the value of religiosity are appreciated, has been replaced by a modern family model. The God's plan of family headed by the sense of faith is increasingly being replaced by human ideas that strip off its beauty and harmony given by the Creator.

**Key words:** God, marriage, family, life, indissolubility, cohabitation, divorce, free unions, associations LGBTI

## Introduction

When pointing at God's ideas of marriage and family, reference should be made to the biblical text, in which God the Creator creates a male and a female and determines their objectives and responsibilities. Those basic responsibilities indicate the biological dimension of a family legitimised in the axiology of its existence. After all, matrimony and family are not resultants of blind natural forces or elements of a human agreement. They have always been interpreted as the "first and essential expression of human social nature (...) a community of persons whose proper way of existence is *communio personalum*"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> JAN PAWEŁ II: *List do rodzin*. Wrocław : TUM, 1998, No. 7.

In the theological reflection of a family, wherein a person is rationalised as an incarnate spirit, the value of love as a thread that binds spouses together must be emphasised. Since the human being is born out of love, marriage was also conceived by God out of love. Thus, matrimony is the "covenant of conjugal love or a free and conscious choice, whereby a man and a woman accept the intimate community of life and love intended by God himself"<sup>2</sup>. However, in the social sense, it remains a both divine and human institution established by God and conditioned by the rules of law, which results in a mutual service of spouses for the procreation and education of their offspring.<sup>3</sup>

The semantics of the word "ideal" should be understood as a definition of something perfect. The human being guided by high principles is capable of sacrifice, responsibility and self-affirmation.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the ideal of marriage is the one wherein the entity is worthy of following in the implementation of the highest human aspirations, objectives and desires in a given field of life.

The purpose of this article is to show the evolution of matrimony and family implied by the Christian and traditional ideal toward modern concepts of family. The fundamental element of functioning of a human being in the society is a family, which is the first environment for human development. Therefore, a universal view of a family enables to show the role of an individual striving to fulfil the mission of one's life that is implemented by starting a family in the context of ideas of God and man.

## 1. Socio-pastoral view on a family

Regardless of the definitions cited from the literature that interpret marriage in the light of a monogamous relationship, reference must be made to the interpretation of a family in the context of a community and institution. Family is an "intimate communion of life and love based on the sacrament of matrimony, confessing the same Christian faith and remaining in compliance with the Church law"<sup>5</sup>. This kind of understanding of the notion of a family is also presented by Z. Tyszka, who states that "matrimony is a legal, relatively permanent relationship of a man and woman ordained for cohabitation, co-operation for the sake of the family, and therefore mainly for raising children and providing mutual assistance"<sup>6</sup>.

2 JAN PAWEŁ II: *Familiaris consortio*. Wrocław, 2000, No. 11.

3 For this reason, "family is the first, special, unique and unrepeatable way of realisation of human development. For this is to whom a man owes the fact of being a human" (JAN PAWEŁ II: *List do rodzin*. Wrocław : TUM, 1998, No. 2).

4 Cf. SIKORSKA-MICHALAK, A., WOJNIEŁKO, O. (eds.): *Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego*. Vol. II. Kraków : PAN, 2000, p. 112.

5 SZYMCZAK, J.: Rodzina a małżeństwo. In: OZOROWSKI, E. (ed.): *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*. Warszawa-Łomianki : Wydawnictwo Akademii Teologii Katolickiej, 1999, p. 397.

6 TYSZKA, Z.: *Socjologia rodziny*. Warszawa, 1974, p. 77.

Due to mutual existence, a family in sociology is defined as an economic community. At least, citing J. Szczepański, one may conclude that it remains a "group composed of people linked by marital and parent-child relationships. These are the two basic relations that exist in the family – marriage and kinship or adoption. Family members usually live under one roof and form a single household, which may include two or often three generations"<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, considering the various forms of interpretation of a family, I propose to define it as a community characterised by economic, emotional and sexual aspects, jointly implementing the desires of spouses and their children.

An institutional perception of a family should be associated with a system of values, norms and cultural behaviours. For this reason, its institutional dimension includes the "socially recognised forms of partner selection, including the governing provisions"<sup>8</sup>. Also the functions are another sphere of interpretation of a family as an institution. For that reason, F. Adamski classifies conjugal, parental and fraternal functions as personal functions of a family.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the traditional family as the ideal of social coexistence of people shall be understood as a universal human institution existing in various epochs. Its universality stems from the implemented desires and objectives, involving satisfaction of the basic needs of life, procreation and education of children.<sup>10</sup> As a community and institution, it creates a monogamous marital circle, wherein the spouses determine the conditions of its development and participation in the society.

Marriage and family are institutions of a special social rank. Although various formal and informal relationships can be distinguished in different cultures, it is sustainability that should be the distinctive feature of matrimony. This sustainability is significantly correlated with the ideal of marital communion as expressed by the words of the nuptial couple: "until death does us part"<sup>11</sup>.

The importance of sustainability of a marriage is well explained by F. Adamski, who states that "what distinguishes matrimony from other types of relationships is primarily its endurance. This relationship is always concluded for the whole life and never for a specified period of time. The lifetime binding of partners also stems from the purpose of the relationship. This relationship has a social nature; the spouses create a 'hearth' and form a family together with their children. Each of the partners obtains an adequate social role by the fact of conclusion of marriage"<sup>12</sup>.

7 SZCZEPAŃSKI, J.: *Elementarne pojęcia socjologii*. Warszawa, 1963, p. 82.

8 MAJKOWSKI, W.: Instytucja. In: OZOROWSKI, E. (ed.): *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*. Warszawa-Łomianki : Wydawnictwo Akademii Teologii Katolickiej, 1999, p. 390.

9 Cf. PODGÓRSKI, R.: *Socjologia : Wczoraj – Dziś – Jutro*. Rzeszów : FOSZE, 2006, p. 225.

10 Cf. KOŁDON, B. M.: Rodzina jako instytucja społeczna w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym. In: *Forum Pedagogiczne*, 2011, Issue 1, p. 235.

11 Wedding ceremony.

12 ADAMSKI, F.: Małżeństwo i rodzina i instytucja społeczna i wspólnota miłości. In: ADAMSKI, F. (ed.): *Miłość. Małżeństwo. Rodzina*. Kraków : Petrus, 2009, p. 7.

By showing the value of matrimony in terms of indissolubility, John Paul II indicates two facts. The first one is the eternal plan of the Creator. It is the plan of God and God demands respect. It is not just about respecting someone's relationship but also respecting the law of God that cannot be replaced by any human law.<sup>13</sup> Another aspect defining the ideal of marriage in terms of dissolubility is the sacramental nature of the relationship. By virtue of this sacrament, the mutual relationship of spouses becomes inseparable and their mutual love is the source of their life together.<sup>14</sup>

The sustainability of matrimony naturally serves the welfare of conceived children. Their birth is an integral element of the conjugal life. In this context, the relationship of spouses must be defined in the light of objective criteria, taking into account the nature of the human being and his acts, which, within the context of sensible love, preserves the full sense of mutual commitment and human procreation. Parental unity of spouses is carried out in the act of unification.<sup>15</sup> Marital sustainability is not limited to the procreation of children but it also includes their education. This process triggers interaction of spouses and creates a community of life throughout their existence. In this context, the Pope Francis notes: "...at this point, reference is made to the unification of marriage not only in sexual and bodily, but also in voluntary self-giving love. The fruit of this relationship is that they become one flesh, whether it is in the grip of a physical or in the unity of hearts and life, and perhaps a child who is born of the two, combining both genetically and spiritually, two bodies."<sup>16</sup>

According to W. Stephens, "matrimony is a social, legal and sexual relationship that starts with a public proclamation and commitment undertaken with a view of its duration"<sup>17</sup>. By means of that commitment confirmed by an agreement, the spouses are required to be responsible for their actions and maintain cultural behaviours. Another vital element of the sustainability of marriage is its character as a community. Hence, M. Braun-Gałkowska recognises that spouses create a lasting community realised on the basis of interaction that is the way of life and implementation of common objectives. Such a durable relationship is concluded for a lifetime and strives for the achievement of common goals through the duration of a multi-faceted community of life.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, F. Adamski states that life in marriage and family not only develops with time but also takes the form of an order governed by the laws of consequences. The first stage of the new order is the care of the spouses

13 Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *He Created Them as Male and Female : Christ Refers to the "Beginning"*. Conferences delivered at the Wednesday general audiences 05. 09. 1979 – 02. 04.1980, Vatican, 1980, p. 8.

14 Cf. JAN PAWEŁ II: *Familiaris consortio*, 13.

15 Cf. JAN PAWEŁ II: *Familiaris consortio*, 32.

16 FRANCISZEK: *Amoris laetitia*, 13.

17 STEPHENS, W. N.: *The Family in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York : Ballantine Books, 1964, p. 5. Cf. KOTLARSKA-MICHALSKA, A.: Małżeństwo jako związek, wspólnota, instytucja, podsystem i rodzaj stosunku społecznego. In: *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*, 1998, Issue 10, p. 52.

18 Cf. KOTLARSKA-MICHALSKA, A.: Małżeństwo jako związek, wspólnota, instytucja, podsystem i rodzaj stosunku społecznego. In: *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*, 1998, Issue 10, p. 52.

for cultivating their conjugal love. This is both a condition necessary for the durability of the family as well as the goal of family life.<sup>19</sup> It is the community in which a human being can realise his own expectations, satisfy his needs, enrich his personality and open to the needs of the other person.<sup>20</sup>

Emphasising both the indissolubility of matrimony and durability of family seems to be an important factor in the development of a family as the ideal and model. This is particularly relevant nowadays when more and more families undergo disintegration. Without describing the origins and causes of disharmony in a family, it should be noted that each marriage that is sustainable is the basis of a high social rank.

## 2. Contemporary concepts of a family

Modernity is a feature of contemporary times often rationalised as cultural fashion. Therefore, during the time of intensive transformations, a family, being the fundamental element of society, is also undergoing various changes. The preferred and implemented models of a family life are changing, family relations are being transformed and even the understanding of a family is currently not straightforward. Divorces and separations are escalating. In this context, it can be stated that new ideas for a family, which significantly diverge from the God's plan, are emerging. Such ideas may include: cohabitation (premarital form of a family life), patchwork relationships, single life and LGBTI relationships.

Cohabitation is one of the alternative forms of marital life being rather a premarital stage of living together with a partner. This term means "joint habitation of two unrelated individuals of different gender who maintain intimate contacts and share a household without formally registering their relation as a marriage"<sup>21</sup>. In this context, "the basis for a relationship is the affection between a heterosexual couple, the sustainability is connected with the factual existence of a bond and partnership and not with a formal act constituting a relationship"<sup>22</sup>.

Research on this phenomenon shows that cohabitation may: precede marriage and constitute a period of extended dating, precede marriage and constitute preparation for marriage, constitute an alternative for marriage,

19 Cf. ADAMSKI, F.: Duchowość życia małżeńskiego i rodzinnego. In: ADAMSKI, F. (ed.): *Miłość. Małżeństwo. Rodzina*. Kraków : Petrus, 2009, p. 132. "Particularly relevant is to understand the Christological key to natural properties of marriage, which constitute the good of the spouses (bonum coniugum), including the opening of the unity of life, fidelity and indissolubility, and within Christian marriage as mutual assistance on the road fullest friendship with the Lord." (FRANCISZEK: *Amoris laetitia*, 77.)

20 Cf. RYŚ, M.: *Psychologia małżeństwa w zarysie*. Warszawa : CMPPP, 1999, p. 5.

21 SZUKALSKI, P.: Związki kohabitacyjne w krajach rozwiniętych. In: *Wiadomości Statystyczne*, 2001, Issue 1, p. 64.

22 KWAK, A.: Kierunki przemian rodziny – alternatywy dla małżeństwa. In: *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*, 2001, Issue 13, p. 1.

especially for people who do not intend to marry each other, take the form of unmarried life emerging from the idea of independence.<sup>23</sup>

Although cohabitation is not the primary form of existence in Poland, its scale is increasing. According to certain researchers, the number of marriages has dropped recently and the number of cohabitation relationships has increased. The first statistical data regarding this issue comes from the "macro-census of 1975 and stated that the percentage of cohabitation was 1 %. Partnerships, as a new category, were included for the first time in the Census of 2002 – it turned out then that they constituted almost 2 % of all families in Poland. The latest data from the Census conducted in 2011 shows another increase (by 80 %) in the number and percentage of people living as partners (2,4 % of all families). In 2002, almost 200 000 couples were found to be in a partnership while there were already 390 000 such couples in 2011"<sup>24</sup>. The above data show that the phenomenon of cohabitation in Poland is of explorative nature.

Many researchers emphasise that in the analysis of cohabitation, its two dimensions should be noticed: as a premarital relationship, most frequently preceded by a period of engagement, and a second relationship among people who experienced a failed marriage.<sup>25</sup> However, regardless of the adopted form of cohabitation, this phenomenon is located in the sphere of human ideas as an alternative for a heterogeneous relationship.

Another human idea for a formal habitation without formally registering as a marriage is a patchwork relationship described as a reconstituted family. A reconstituted family may be interpreted as "a remarriage of partners (formal relationship - officially registered), out of which at least one introduces his/her child or children from the previous marriage to the newly established family"<sup>26</sup>. Hence, according to K. Senkiewicz, "remarriages are those, in which at least one partner (a man or a woman) was previously married, regardless of the marital status of the new partner"<sup>27</sup>. From the formal and social point of view, a family of such type has the same purpose but the burden of recent past, connected with the loss of a close person as a result of a failed marriage or conscious split-up, implies a changed form of a family life.<sup>28</sup>

A reconstituted family is most frequently formed by divorced people. In this context, a divorce significantly correlates with relationships of this kind. Statistical data show that every third marriage in Poland ends in divorce. In

23 Cf. KWAK, A.: Kierunki przemian rodziny – alternatywy dla małżeństwa. In: *Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny*, 2001, Issue 13, p. 23.

24 KITAJ, M.: Problematyka przedmałżeńskiej kohabitacji. In: *Fides et Ratio*, 2013, Issue 2, p. 52.

25 Cf. MAJKOWSKI, W.: *Rodzina polska w kontekście nowych uwarunkowań*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo księży Sercanów, 2010, p. 227.

26 KROMOLICKA, B.: Rodzina zrekonstruowana. In: PILCH, T. (ed.): *Encyklopedia Pedagogiczna XXI wieku*. Warszawa : ŻAK, 2006, p. 390.

27 SENKIEWICZ, K.: Potencjał rozrodczy kobiet w małżeństwach powtórnych. In: *Problemy Rodziny*, 1982, Issue 4, p. 16.

28 DOBOSZ-SZTUBA, A.: Typy i cechy rodziny zrekonstruowanej. In: *Problemy Rodziny*, 1989, Issue 1, p. 2



2014, 65 761 marriages ended in divorce out of 188 625 contracted marriages.<sup>29</sup> In sociological literature, there are very few publications regarding reconstituted families. It seems that most partners, who start new relationships, do not wish to expose this fact. According to I. Kurlak, "it is connected with unfavourable public opinion about divorce and stigmatisation of divorced people among believers in God"<sup>30</sup>. However, it is a fact that every year the number of contracted remarriages increases. In 1980, remarriages constituted 12,5 % of all contracted marriages while in 2014, the number of remarriages increased up to 13 948,000 (13,9 %).<sup>31</sup> Remarriage conditioned by the termination of the first marriage for subjective reasons (searching for a better model) seems to be an idea of an individual for joined living in a reconstituted family.

Another form of a quasi-marital and family life is living as a single. The popularity of this type of existence is relatively increasing; it is a phenomenon of industrialised countries where most frequently young and talented people with relatively good jobs prefer a lifestyle that is typical for the so called singles.<sup>32</sup> This form of life should include single mothers.

This phenomenon is quite typical for cultural changes of post-industrial societies and occurs as an accident or deliberate choice. In this meaning, the transformation itself decided about the emergence of the so called abandoned family.<sup>33</sup> With reference to the statistics of this phenomenon, it is considered that 9 million young people in Poland live as singles. From the conducted Censuses, it results that there are almost 5 million people (men 32 %, women 38 %) between the age of 25 and 40 who live as singles. Demographers forecast that this number will increase by even 2 million by 2030 and the 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to become "the civilisation of singles"<sup>34</sup>. This form of life, especially of women, who consciously plan to be a single mother and raise their children on their own, occurs to be an idea for familial existence. In the context of discussed concepts of a family, the analysis of LGBTI relationships should also be conducted. In the literature, the term LGBT describes "all people who form minorities of sexual orientation other than heterosexual and demonstrate sexual identity inconsistent with biological sexual identity (transgender and transsexual)"<sup>35</sup>.

29 Cf. *Demographic Yearbook of Poland*. Warsaw, 2015, pp. 235, 242.

30 KURLAK, I.: Blaski i cienie powtórnego zamąż pójścia : Andragogiczno-feministyczne aspekty rekonstrukcji małżeństwa. In: *Forum Pedagogiczne*, 2011, Issue 1, p. 127.

31 Cf. *Demographic Yearbook of Poland*. Warsaw, 2015, p. 135.

32 Cf. TYMICKI, K.: Starokawalerstwo i staropanieństwo : Analiza zjawiska. In: *Studia Socjologiczne*, 2001, Issue 4, p. 82; SUCH, M.: Zjawisko singli w nowoczesnym społeczeństwie. In: BEJMA, U. (ed.): *Spółeczeństwo polskie w procesie zmian*. Warszawa : UKSW, 2008, pp. 309–312.

33 As a result of transformations and social crises, Polish families seem to be open to various forms of a family, especially such as concubinate or trial marriage. This hypothesis is confirmed by such experts as T. Ochowski, W. Łagodziński and M. Kucharska-Ciesielska. Cf. KUCIARSKA-CIEŚIELSKA, M., OCHOWSKI, T., ŁAGODZIŃSKI, W., TERLIKOWSKI, T.: Osamotniona rodzina. In: *Nowe Państwo*, 2003, Issue 10, p. 20.

34 GIĘTKA, E.: Single – samotni z wyboru? In: *Przegląd*, 11. 12. 2005, p. 18.

35 BASIUK, T., FERENS, D., SIKORA, T.: *Odmiany odmienia : Mniejszościowe orientacje seksualne w perspektywie gender*. Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002, p. 7.

This type of parenthood, i.e. raising children by lesbians, gays, bisexual and transsexual people should be treated not only as an undesired idea for life but a certain type of socially different and abnormal behaviour. Unfortunately, informations show that in 2015 in Britain 19 % of same-sex marriages, 8 % of gender-homogeneous partnerships and 3 % of homosexual cohabitation relationships were raising children. In 2014, in the USA 17 % of homosexual couples were raising children, in Canada this percentage amounted to 9 %, in France 10 % and in Australia 12 %.<sup>36</sup> In Poland, it is estimated that there are cca 500 000 homosexual families.<sup>37</sup>

According to M. Abramowicz, "Bi- and homosexual people constitute a very diverse group of people that we know very little about. For researchers, reaching LGB people is a challenge itself because until recently bi- and homosexual people disclosed their sexual orientation only to a very small group of friends or to nobody. For several years now, there has been increased visibility of LGB people in the society, including their significant activity on the Internet, which allowed gays and lesbians to meet"<sup>38</sup>.

The concept of this type of existence seems to be highly disturbing. Therefore, as a contemporary idea for a family, it leads to the destruction of the bases and fundamentals of a biological identity of a family.

## Summary

The issue of a family fits into the logic of development of an individual, into the stage of this individual's life, wherein the society expects independent roles related to the family and professional life. It must be admitted that in recent years, the approach to family life has changed. The traditional family model characterised by indissolubility and faithfulness, wherein the traditional model of education and the value of religiosity are appreciated, has been replaced by a modern family model. The God's plan of family headed by the sense of faith is increasingly being replaced by human ideas that strip off its beauty and harmony given by the Creator.

Within alternative forms of conjugal or family life, the modern family drifts between cohabitation, patchwork families (reconstituted families, in which at least one child was not conceived by the couple, by whom the child is being raised), DINKS families ("double income no kids" – resignation from having children by persons who create a relationship) and living as a single, etc.<sup>39</sup>

36 Cf. *Rodzicielstwo osób LGBT*. <https://pl.wikipedia.org/> (12. 04. 2016).

37 *Ile mamy związków partnerskich w Polsce*. <http://rodzinyzwyboru.pl> (12. 04. 2016).

38 ABRAMOWICZ, M.: Sytuacja społeczna osób LGB : Analiza danych z badania ankietowego. In: MAKUCHOWSKA, M., PAWŁĘGA, M. (eds.): *Sytuacja społeczna osób LGBTI : Raport za lata 2010 i 2011*. Warszawa, 2012, p. 20.

39 Cf. MIZIELIŃSKA, J., ABRAMOWICZ, M., STASIŃSKA, A.: *Rodziny z wyboru w Polsce : Życie rodzinne osób nieheteroseksualnych*. Warszawa : PAN, 2014, p. 11.



A particularly alarming idea of a family seems to be "families created by same-sex couples, with or without children, that pose the tip of the iceberg of family life transformations, characterised by changes in gender relations, an increased number of divorces, the emergence of patterns of living such as LAT ('living apart together' – living in a relationship without cohabitation) etc"<sup>40</sup>.

The outlined "divine" and human ideas of a family represent an attempt to demonstrate the evolution of matrimony that, conceived by God, significantly departs from the ideal in the human perspective. Within this context, it should be noted that although the diversity of families is analysed by the conservatives as a family crisis, it does have its place in the lives of people in Poland. Hence, the interpretation of cultural behaviours different from the traditional family model is not only important but also necessary. Also, one should hope that the exploration of these types of relationships, especially same-sex relationships, will meet negative trends. In this regard, we must hope that the Church will help families to follow the path of truth.

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<sup>40</sup> MIZIELIŃSKA, J., ABRAMOWICZ, M., STASIŃSKA, A.: *Rodziny z wyboru w Polsce : Życie rodzinne osób nieheteroseksualnych*. Warszawa : PAN, 2014, p. 11.

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