

FAMILY

Living Life Together in the Church and the World

**One World Theology
(Volume 10)**

FAMILY

Living Life Together in the Church and the World



Edited by

Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth



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Preface

'The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church' are the words with which Pope Francis begins his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, which he wrote after the XIVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. This formulation, which bears a striking similarity to the first sentence of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, sets the tone for the pastoral character of *Amoris Laetitia*. In saying that the Synod process 'allowed for an examination of families in today's world' he was conscious of the course taken by the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and had in mind the situation of families not just in Europe, but also in the various family contexts in Africa, Asia, Australia and the two Americas.

This volume in the *One World Theology* series also examines the situation and the challenge(s) confronting families from a global perspective. The authors from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe present their personal views and experience of what constitutes family in their respective environments, of the different forms family can take and the transformation processes to which it is subjected, of the challenges facing families, of the relationship between the Church and families, and of the need for a forward-looking family apostolate. Their contributions, coloured as they are by their individual contexts and perspectives, enable this volume in the *One World Theology* series to function as an intercontinental platform for an exchange of views within the universal Church. The focus here is on an equitable dialogue between and within the local churches.

In the first chapter the contributors examine the concept of the family in their own particular context. In his article entitled 'The Emergence and Erosion of a Family Model in Germany' Michael N. Ebertz looks at the evolution in 19th century Europe of a lower middle-class model of the family which was accorded ontological

status, since its historical origins were overlooked. This model, which bore a distinct patriarchal stamp, found its way into Catholic social teachings and was not questioned in theological terms until the 1950s. The social changes which have taken place in Germany mean that the economic, reproductive and institutional function of marriage has faded into the background, thus transforming the concept of the family: 'The main, socially accepted notion and understanding of the family in Germany is now that of one or more adults sharing a home with children who are brought up, looked after and provided for by those adults in cooperation with other social institutions.'

Anne Béatrice Faye from Burkina Faso looks at the 'Moral Values of the Family in Patrilineal and Matrilineal Structures'. She begins by investigating the specific characteristics of patrilineal and matrilineal structures in Africa and then assesses the moral values which give the family stability through ties of kinship. She distinguishes between 'family' and 'kinship' and coins the term 'family as kin' in order to do justice to the specific situation that applies in Africa. Faye subsequently deals with the evangelisation mission of families in Africa in the light of social changes and upheavals.

Preetha Varayilan addresses the challenges posed by the Asian concept of family in Indian Hindu culture. She describes the concept of the 'joint family' in India which normally consists of a husband and wife, their children, the husband's parents and any unmarried sisters. The 'joint family' is run by the husband as its head and it is he who takes the decisions. All the members of the family share a common residence and a common kitchen and have a joint housekeeping system for their income and expenditure. The 'joint family' is not just the place where its members live together, take their meals and exchange news and views. It is also the setting for their common prayers or a common religious service. The marital relationship and community of property mean that the members of the family are tied to each other by a system of reciprocal obligations. Despite urbanisation, secularisation and mobility, the traditional communal household remains the ideal in India and is the principal social factor affecting the lives of most Indians.

In his article on 'The Family within the Andean Vision' Víctor Bascopé Caero says that the Andean peoples believe all humanity is one Ayllu, meaning that all humanity constitutes a single family.

One of the principles of community life in the Ayllu is the practice of complementary reciprocity, which means that the individual receives what he is prepared to give to others. One of the characteristics of the Ayllu is the principle of 'we-ness', which expresses the Andean peoples' sense of belonging. The members of the Ayllu make a contribution to the community by performing permanent services as 'wise men' and 'wise women', which means they are recognised as authorities, or by providing temporary services, for instance in the administration or in helping people to cope with everyday life. When boys or girls have completed one or two years of life, they enter the Ayllu following a rite of initiation called Umaruthuku. The members of the Ayllu develop as human beings, which finds expression in the complementarity of man and woman and is fully realised in marriage. The physical encounter of man and woman is regarded as the fourth birth in the process of life. Víctor Bascopé Caero sees in the concept of life in the Ayllu 'coffers full of immense riches that we only need to open and offer into the service of families and peoples for their lives today.'

The second chapter on 'Types of Family' concentrates on the transformation processes to which families are exposed in their various contexts. In his contribution headed 'Modern Diversity – Families at a Time of Change' Stefan Becker says there is now a greater choice between a variety of family types and that single parents, unmarried couples with children, stepfamilies and rainbow families constitute socially acceptable lifestyles in Western Europe. This is apparent not least from the fact that, while the number of traditional families (i.e. married couples with children) has declined steadily over the past few years, other types of family (single parents and unmarried couples) are on the increase. Becker calls for a respectful attitude to the various types of family, although he does point out that marriage gives both partners a protective space and room to develop. It should not be understood as a normative stipulation or moral requirement, he says, but expressly as a 'proven family model that remains attractive'. He is not in favour of any particular form of family being idealised. Rather the Church should turn its attention to the resources that families need so that, through manifold creative efforts, all those involved can experience a good everyday family life, across generations and across locations.

'Contemporary Changes in Family Forms and their Diversity in Africa Today' is the title of Bony Guiblehon's article. He surveys

the transformation of marriage and the family in Africa, analyses the factors which have led to changes in family ties on the continent and spotlights the challenges the Church there has to face in the light of the changes that are taking place. Guiblehon points to the crisis affecting social ties in Africa, which is accompanied by a crisis of education, an intergenerational crisis, a crisis of confidence, a crisis of values and, above all, a crisis in family relations. He takes a critical stance with regard to recognition for homosexual partnerships, on which there could well be a general consensus in Africa, although this may be difficult to understand from a European perspective. In view of the dissolution of the model of marriage and the family in Africa he feels 'that the Church in Africa has little choice but to formulate its own model of the family which remains true to the Church as well as to the rich African heritage and its ideas on the family. This includes a strong feeling for relationships, kinship and brotherhood, a sense of the importance of solidarity, hospitality, respect for elders and traditions, and a sense of honour for and attachment to ancestors, all of which help to maintain group equilibrium.'

Alwyn Dantis makes it clear in his contribution on 'Marriage and Family Issues Facing the Church in Contemporary Indian Society' that the family is likewise subject to far-reaching changes in India. He attributes this to migration, urbanisation, modernisation, increasing literacy levels and the growing influence of mass media such as films, television and the Internet. He describes the formation of alternative family structures and lifestyles in India, deals with the challenges facing marriage and the family on the Indian sub-continent and shows the extent to which people become alienated from each other as a result of social and economic upheavals. Finally, he draws attention to the understanding of the family as a 'domestic church', as the Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council put it, saying that the challenge of the Family Apostolate is to 'incorporate in its pastoral approach a family spirituality which grounds conjugal and family relationships within the Trinitarian communion incarnated and revealed in Jesus Christ.'

Carmen Domínguez Hidalgo's comments on the development of policies to strengthen the family in Latin America may initially strike European readers as a little 'awkward'. She addresses the role of the state in promoting families and calls for a policy – not 'for the family' but 'of the family' – which requires that stock first be taken

of the present reality of family life in Latin America. Hidalgo warns against taking over concepts of the family from Europe and urges that concern for the family should be rooted 'in the real needs of the family in that country.' She illustrates how the state can promote families in Latin America and advocates preventive support for families so that any crises that occur do not mean they drift apart.

The third chapter focuses on the challenges facing the family at the outset of the third millennium. Michael Sievernich, who took part as an adviser in the XIVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2015, looks back at the gathering, at which the breadth of the universal Church was plain for all to see. On the one hand, he recalls the humanising potential of the Christian marriage and family which promotes equality between husband and wife, the voluntary agreement between the two partners, the lifelong covenant of love before God, the protection of the procreation and upbringing of children, the defence of human lives from beginning to end, the inter-generational solidarity between young and old, and the protection and support for marriage and the family through international family policies. On the other hand, he warns against giving monopoly status to a certain form of marriage and family and against any 'over-regulation' in marriage and family matters. In conclusion he lists the eight points which Pope Francis emphasised at the end of the Synod: appreciation of the importance of the Christian family; listening to the voices of the families and the bishops; frank discussion of controversial issues; kindling the flame of faith and giving encouragement in times of crisis; bearing witness to the Gospel; opening hearts rather than judging others; the Church of the poor in spirit and of sinners seeking forgiveness; and spreading freedom and transmitting the beauty of Christian newness.

The Ugandan theologian, Veneranda Mbabazi, considers the situation of women in African families. She makes it clear that they are their backbone; they make a major contribution to the running of the household and to growing foodstuffs. On the other hand, their efforts are neither recognised nor rewarded. Socio-cultural traditions and prejudices continue to weaken the status of women in the family in many African countries. They suffer from a large number of socio-cultural restrictions and are treated as second-class citizens. Mbabazi calls for a change in the image of women in Africa and urges that a

distinction be made between gender roles and social stereotypes. She wants women to have the same rights as men in the family and believes there is need to re-examine gender stereotypical beliefs about mothers' roles.

In view of the family situation in Asia, Shiju Joseph sees a need to confront the reality of family life in India. One influential factor here is the comparative stability and longevity of marriage in the country – the divorce rate in India is one of the lowest in the world. The size of families is also shrinking and this has had a considerable impact on the structure of the Indian family in recent years. Responding to the statements made at the Family Synod, Joseph sets out a model of pastoral ministry to families in India, which he calls Accompaniment in Mercy. He says that this pastoral ministry should not be directed solely at Christians but must extend through all sections of Indian society if it is to be successful.

Sofia Nicolasa Chipana Quispe turns her attention to the life of indigenous families in the Bolivian Andes. She starts by saying that migration has a serious effect on the life of the indigenous population of Bolivia and that it is confronted with economic practices which show little respect for life. She points to the discrepancies between traditional and urban cultural contexts which go hand in hand with the discrepancies between the cultural values of different generations. She highlights the special significance of the family for indigenous culture and makes it clear that this culture comprises elements which enrich the cultural value system in urban families. She refers, in particular, to the bond with the earth and the cosmos, the community dimension, the personal dimension, the religious dimension or the experience of the sacredness of life, and the celebratory dimension.

The fourth chapter examines the responsibility of the Church for the family. Heiner Cardinal Koch, who also attended the XIVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2015, points out that the 'sacrament of marriage has something to do with being called, that it is a focus of God's presence and that it encompasses the promises of the Gospel.' He says that, on the one hand, marriage is currently an attractive ideal for a large part of the population in Germany while, on the other hand, the government does not do enough to foster marriage and the family. He calls for corrections and proposes a number of practical measures. He also underlines that the

family is a learning venue for faith. 'Just as people learn to live within marriage, so they learn to have faith within the family. This includes supporting one another during times when the other person may be lacking in faith, and it also means being a community of prayer and forming a Christian house church.'

In his remarks on the Church and its relationship with the family Paul Béré first outlines the contours of the family in Africa and then illustrates the obstacles to family life there before pinpointing the reasons for them. He concludes by setting out the pastoral guidelines of the Church as the family of God in Africa. He makes it plain that, in the African context, life and the family are virtually inseparable and that human conjugality is only permitted to blossom in a family framework. Incest, adultery and homosexuality are taboo subjects in Africa, he says, even though they exist in real life. As regards homosexuality, in particular, Béré draws attention to the fact that the family in Africa is defined not so much by its members as by blood relations, which poses a challenge for the Church in Africa in the future. He also underlines the importance of the extended family in the African context and says that the Church as the family of God finds expression in the Basic Ecclesial Communities.

Commenting on the Church in Asia and the transformation processes affecting families there, Jacob Kavunkal says that the foundational Hindu scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, have their origin in the family and that the family is a central element in Asian culture. 'Asian families continue to serve as the nursery for the Kingdom values like love, sharing, equality, respect, hospitality and forgiveness.' The Asian family is thus the 'sacrament of the reign of God', although he does criticise the fact that the Asian family has contributed to the practice of patriarchy and the maintenance of the caste system in India. In his opinion, a special challenge to marriage and the family in Asia comes in the form of intercultural and inter-religious marriages and long-term relationships between same-sex partners. The failure of many marriages is a call to the Church to be 'always motivated by the mission of compassion, always remaining a sacrament of the kingdom and enabling the Asian families to reflect that kingdom in their lives.'

In her contribution entitled 'The Latin American Church and the Family' Silvia Regina de Lima Silva starts out by saying that Latin

American liberation theologians have largely kept silent on the subject of the family. This has resulted in the presence in theological pastoral reflection of a fundamentalist or conservative discourse. To broaden the perspective the writer takes a look back into Latin America's past where she explores the Christian tradition for helpful inspiration in the search for a viable future for the family on the continent. The picture she paints of the reality of family life in Latin America is one of poverty and inequality. She sees the challenge confronting Latin American families as stemming from same-sex couples, sexual abuse, the abandonment and mistreatment of children, the situation of street children, the fight for the right to 'in vitro' fertilisation and women's campaign to decriminalise abortion. She criticises the fact that in the past the Christian message has been abused to justify a hegemonic understanding of family. She also calls on the Church to adopt a positive attitude to sexual diversity in Latin America. As regards the elaboration of contextual family theologies, she points out that the diversity of cultures and teachings on wisdom in Latin America offers a treasure trove which can be used to usher in a new attitude to the family. The focus here, she says, should be on care, partnership, respect and affection. She encourages the churches in Latin America to minister to families and to show them solidarity on their journey through life.

The fifth chapter on 'Challenges for a Family Apostolate' begins with Klaus Vellguth's article on 'Living Family Life Differently', in which he says that the polyphony of the universal Church was the hallmark of the discussions at the two synods of bishops on the family in 2014 and 2015. He explains that the attitude of the African local churches which emerged from the preparations for the Synod of Bishops (and is a little 'hard to handle' for Europeans) has its roots in a distinct anthropological concept. Vellguth's contribution is an invitation to come to terms with the polyphony of the universal Church discourse and to pursue a global dialogue on the differing perspectives of the family. He shows that the currently dominant 'Western family model' reflects an obsession with a model of the family which emerged at a certain time and in a specific regional context and is now confronted with the challenges of transformation in the wake of social change. The author makes a plea for family pluralism and a stronger Church commitment to pastoral ministry for marriage and the family. He also issues a reminder that, no matter what one's own attitude might be,

there can be no sidestepping the obligation to face up to the universal Church discourse on the family, 'to formulate personal positions, accept otherness and seek benefit from what is unfamiliar.'

Eunice Kamaara from Kenya begins her article by describing the family in traditional Africa and illustrates the extent to which it constitutes the main social system in African society (ies). She emphasises that the family in Africa has proved very flexible and been in a position to adjust to various social and cultural changes. She sees a risk to the family in Africa in the symbiotic relationship between individualism, materialism and consumerism, which – she thinks – are mutually reinforcing. She urges that traditional African values be set against relativist 'Western values' so that the traditional African family can be lived as a non-materialistic form of community life.

In her contribution Judette Gallares looks at the transformation of the family in the Philippines and at the socio-cultural and religious challenges it faces. Prominent among these is labour migration and the effects it has on family life. According to official estimates, 11 per cent of Filipinos currently work overseas. This has a drastic impact on their families, which are exposed to the complex interplay of social, economic, class, religious, and political factors. Hence it is all the more important that the Church should minister to the labour migrants and offer psycho-spiritual accompaniment to both the migrants and the families they leave behind in order to ease the burden they have to shoulder.

In the last article, Ramón Francisco Curivil Paillavil looks into how the Mapuche families were definitively transformed into peasantry and how the occupation of Mapuche territory by the Chilean state led to serious changes in the lifestyles of the traditional family clans: traditional cultures were undermined and a Chilean peasantry emerged. The family lost its influence on the education and upbringing of future generations because the transmission of culture was taken over by the Church or school. Families are currently exposed to a radical transformation process caused by the influence of means of mass communication. One of the key challenges for families, Ramón Francisco Curivil Paillavil says, is 'about recovering and strengthening their authority in the home and thereby responsibly assuming their educational role by imparting values and a lifestyle in close harmony with nature.'

We owe a debt of gratitude to the missio staff members Mark Draser, Michael Meyer, Dr. Marco Moerschbacher and Dr. Stefan Voges, without whose advice this volume would not have been possible. Our thanks also go to Larissa Heusch and Martina Dittmer-Flachskampf for the careful preparation of the manuscripts and Andrea Biermanns, Judith Lurweg and Christine Baur for their attentive proofreading. We hope very much that this tenth volume in the *One World Theology* series will generate interest in the theological discourse within the universal Church.

Klaus Krämer
Klaus Vellguth

Concept of the Family in Different Cultures

The Emergence and Erosion of a Family Model in Germany

Michael N. Ebertz

Like most Germans my grandfather, who was born in 1901, had a *Familienbuch* (“family book”), a pre-printed collection of birth and marriage certificates. It was probably issued in the 1920s and bears the following introductory words: “The family is the most honourable and important institution of human society as a whole. What makes it so honourable is that it is as old as the human race itself. It gives the state its members and the church its children, and this is why it is so important. All other social institutions may change or pass away without endangering the existence of the human race, but the dissolution of the family would mean the destruction of society as a whole.” Those introductory words accord a high social status to the institution of the “family”, calling it “honourable”. They also give the family a central function within the state, church and society: reproduction and stabilisation. What is even more striking is that the family is regarded as being exempted from social change and as an anthropological, not a social dimension. Should the family ever disappear, then so would human society – and indeed the human race. The introductory words suggest that any change to the family could potentially cause its dissolution and would therefore be a disaster for our entire species.

This introduction also defines the family model very clearly in terms of a process and a structure. Structurally, it is the model of a middle-class nuclear family, based on Christian principles: “A family is founded and developed through the conclusion of a marriage in which a man and a woman enter into a covenant and in which, under God’s holy will and counsel, they become a married couple and, with God’s blessing, mother and father.” The purpose of the family, according to these words, is a heterosexual marriage covenant as the basis for the conception, birth and rearing of children. Two things are noticeable,

however. Firstly, the introductory words contain hints about the internal structure of the family, but without specifying whether the concept of a “marriage covenant” should be understood in contractual terms – as it had been since the Enlightenment, paving the way for civil marriage – or as a community of love based on the existence of individual love, a concept propagated since Romanticism.¹ The introduction contains no trace of either “love” or a “contract”, even though the economic rationale of the pre-middle class family model had been replaced by sentimentalism.² The representatives of 18th-century enlightened natural law, whose ideas were reflected in a more moderate form in Prussian General Common Law (1794), said: “Marriage does not just start with a contract; it is a contract in itself, a social contract with certain personal features and, therefore, subject to contract and company law.”³ This includes the option of a specific time limit or (non-sexual) purpose for the marriage covenant. At an earlier stage, Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) had said that “natural law does not require exclusively sexual relations or permanent union throughout life, nor does it preclude polygamy”⁴. On the other hand, it is also remarkable that there is no mention of any vertical or horizontal differentiation between the sexes. No question mark is set against the dominance of the father or husband who, under German law until 1928, was still entitled to chastise his wife. There is no mention of any equality between the sexes or generations. However, this male dominance is not given any emphasis either, even though – or perhaps because – the image of the family, as set out in Germany’s Civil Code of 1900, was distinguished by “a patriarchal concept which relied on the man exercising fairness and justice in his responsibility as the head of the family.”⁵ He was the one who made the decisions on all issues concerning married life – as the guardian of his children and as his wife’s “superior”, with the right to forbid her to enter into gainful

¹ Cf. König, René, “Soziologie der Familie”, in: Gehlen, Arnold/Schelsky, Helmut (eds.), *Soziologie – Ein Lehr- und Handbuch zur modernen Gesellschaftskunde*, Düsseldorf/Cologne 1955, 121–158, here: 134f.

² Cf. Lorenz, Angelika, *Das deutsche Familienbild in der Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt 1985, 6.

³ Schwab, Dieter, entry: “Familie”, in: Brunner, Otto/Conze, Werner/Koselleck, Reinhard (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe – Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Studienausgabe, Stuttgart 2004, 253–301, here: 280f.

⁴ Schwab, Dieter, entry: “Familie”, op. cit., 281.

⁵ Rauscher, Thomas, *Familienrecht*, Heidelberg/Munich/Landsberg/Berlin 2008, 2.

employment outside the home. German Civil Law also regulated horizontal differentiation between the sexes, whereby the woman took care of the household, her husband and their children, i.e. the private sphere, while the man operated in the public, professional and political domains. The patriarchal division of labour with its patterns of superiority and subordination was an essential part of the middle-class family model and was implicitly taken for granted in the introductory words of the *Familienbuch*. Interestingly, the introduction placed the marriage covenant under God's blessing, thus indicating a Catholic or Protestant concept of marriage and therefore a church wedding, which by then had ceased to be the only form of matrimony. That had previously been the case under Prussian General Common Law (1794), but was permanently replaced by mandatory civil marriage after Germany's *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s (a struggle between the German government under Bismarck and the Roman Catholic Church over control of education, marriage and Church appointments). How traumatic this conflict was can be seen from the fact that, as late as 1954, Bernhard Häring wrote that it had partly achieved "what the men of the *Kulturkampf* had intended – the secularisation of marriage and the family."⁶

The middle-class family model

The introductory words in the *Familienbuch*, quoted at the beginning, can be read as a warning against any change or even dissolution of the nuclear family with its focus on father, mother and children – an indication that its erosion was deemed possible. In reality, however, this middle-class family model – unlike the family concept of the nobility with its emphasis on the "continuity of the dynasty"⁷ – was not as old as the introduction suggests. In fact, it had only just gained general acceptance and was already displaying cracks. It was the product of the experiences and reflections of the upper middle class, i.e. scholars, philosophers, clergy, judges, doctors, pharmacists, grammar school teachers and high-ranking civil servants, and had gained ground as a normative standard. Moreover, it had also found its way into non-middle class circles which had accepted it as a

⁶ Häring, Bernhard, *Soziologie der Familie. Die Familie und ihre Umwelt (Wort und Antwort 10)*, Salzburg 1954, 129f.

⁷ Lorenz, Angelika, op. cit., 4.

point of reference and legitimation. Although the upper middle class differed in its forms of work, organisation and employment – offices, chambers, schools, churches, etc. – it maintained a clear separation between the professional sphere, on the one hand, and the residential or private sphere, on the other.⁸ But it was not until about 1900 that this middle-class family model, “shaped and stabilised by the newly established property-owning class”⁹, was given legitimacy as *the* family. Only since then have there been families in our narrow sense of the word – without the inclusion of the extended family, who were just as much removed from the middle-class idea of the family as were all domestic servants and any elements of commercial life.¹⁰ The model was also transported with comparative success to other social classes – the urban lower middle class and the working class – thus becoming a model for society as a whole. Eventually, in fact, it was so successful that its historical origin ceased to be recognised and, like marriage, it was given ontological status and regarded as naturally (if not divinely) predetermined.¹¹ The middle-class concept of the family with its processes and mechanisms owed its existence to a range of factors. There was a large amount of paterfamilias literature on the subject as well as instructions for an ideal family life, ensuring the “missionary propagation” of the “middle-class family ideal”. Initially, this was the work of the churches, but – from the mid-19th century onwards – it was also undertaken by “numerous local clubs and associations”¹² and other structural elements in society. Take, for instance, the class of urban craftsmen who, from the Middle Ages onwards, had known a variety of competing models of marriage¹³ and whose members were very much ruled by the constitutions of the guilds with their anti-competitive and expansion-inhibiting structures.

⁸ Bauer, Rudolph, “sich wechselseitig veredeln ...” – Zur sozialgeschichtlichen Durchsetzung des bürgerlichen Familienideals”, in: Deutsches Jugendinstitut (ed.), *Wie geht's der Familie? Ein Handbuch zur Situation der Familie heute*, Munich 1988, 13–22, here: 15.

⁹ Rauscher, Thomas, op. cit., 2.

¹⁰ Cf. Koschorke, Albrecht, et al., *Vor der Familie. Grenzbedingungen einer modernen Institution*, Munich 2010, 12, 48 and 109; Schwab, Dieter, entry: “Familie”, op. cit., 272f.

¹¹ Cf. Berger, Peter L./Luckmann, Thomas, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie*, Frankfurt 1974, 95f.

¹² Bauer, Rudolph, op. cit., 20.

¹³ Fritsch-Staar, Susanne, “... der will mir Freud und Lust vertreiben” – Mittelalterliches Eheleben aus weiblicher Sicht”, in: Gehl, Günter/Reichert, Mathilde (eds.), *Leben im Mittelalter* (No. 1), Weimar 1996, 73–93, here: 86f.

Yet although guild membership ceased to be mandatory in the second half of the 19th century and was replaced by the freedom of trade, the earlier structures still continued to influence the behaviour of many craftsmen. The guilds laid down detailed vocational training regulations for an apprentice living in his master's house, including his journeyman's examination, and they also controlled the promotion of journeymen to masters of their craft. Moreover, since those qualifications included a man's ability to run a family, each guild also controlled the marriage market in the relevant trade. To restrict access to the master class and at the same time to ensure new blood within the trade, the guilds demanded a 'morally upright lifestyle' and 'legitimate birth'. Children of 'lower birth', e.g. any offspring of unmarried parents, failed to qualify for the craft, while adultery could lead to the cancellation of guild membership. The moral conduct of apprentices and journeymen was strictly monitored.¹⁴ Social disciplinary procedures based on the middle-class family model were also supported by full-time and voluntary social institutions, run by local authorities and the church, after social welfare facilities had come to be established in the mid-19th century and continued well into the 20th century.

However, it was very difficult to establish this middle-class family model, as regards both its legitimacy and practicality, among lower middle-class traders, craftsmen and rural homeworkers. "A farmer's business, like that of a grocer or baker, depended not just on his own working capacity, but also that of his wife and children [...] It is easy to understand that wives found it extremely hard to lead a middle-class family life with its division of labour between the private and public spheres."¹⁵ Here too, however, "the educated middle class, personified in the form of church and state authorities [...], sought to respond with restrictions (for example, by imposing conditions when granting marriage licences), prohibitions, the monitoring of compliance, stiff penalties and eventually also by influencing the children [...] through the introduction of school education" – often against the will of parents "who needed their children as workers".¹⁶ When the middle-class family model eventually asserted its normative power

¹⁴ Bauer, Rudolph, op. cit., 17.

¹⁵ Frevert, Ute, "'Wo du hingehst ...' – Aufbrüche im Verhältnis der Geschlechter – Rollentausch anno 1908", in: Nitschke, August, et al. (eds.), *Jahrhundertwende. Der Aufbruch in die Moderne 1880–1930* (No. 2), Reinbek 1990, 89–119, here: 93f.

¹⁶ Bauer, Rudolph, op. cit., 19.

around 1900, it did so partly against the will of sections of the population who conceived and bore extramarital and illegitimate children. The downside of this family model was that these people were “legally stigmatised”, thus revealing “society’s contempt”¹⁷ for them. At the same time, the model “had a great fascination for non-middle classes, even though its realisation often meant insurmountable material barriers for them. Prominent among those endeavouring to copy the model were white-collar workers, whose numbers had been growing rapidly since the late 19th century, and it also enjoyed increasing popularity among better-off skilled workers.”¹⁸ In the wake of Germany’s growing strength as an economic power a middle-class family life gradually became accessible lower down the social ladder, among the working classes.

Changes in gender roles and in the family model

Hardly had the family model of the educated middle class asserted itself as the dominant cultural model and thus also more and more among non-middle class circles than significant cracks began to appear in it – as reflected, at least, in several satirical “visions of the future”. They gave their contemporaries an inkling that, in theory, “the family” could assume completely different forms. “Won’t it be lovely in a hundred years’ time, when the world will be ruled by women alone,” wrote Otto Reutter, a Berlin comedian, in 1908. “And if a man wants to go out in the evening, he won’t be allowed out unless he’s accompanied by a lady. Yes, it’s hard work for a man to bring up children [...], but this isn’t enough for his wife – oh no, she’d really like him to give birth to them, too.” This 100-year-old vision of a future gender reversal in the family was presented satirically, yet it bore an element of seriousness. Although the vision never came true, the transformation of outmoded gender assignments nevertheless continued to be nourished – for example, by more and more women entering gainful employment, by an end to prohibitions on women becoming politically active in associations and political parties (1908 in Prussia), by women studying at universities and eventually also by “scientific contraception.”¹⁹ Forecasts as early as the 1920s predicted that this

¹⁷ Rauscher, Thomas, *op. cit.*, 2.

¹⁸ Frevert, Ute, *op. cit.*, 93.

¹⁹ Lindsey, Ben B./Evans, Wainwright, “The Companionate Marriage”, <https://archive.org/>

transformation would “bring about upheaval [...] which the history of mankind has never witnessed before” and “which is already causing radical changes in marriage today.”²⁰ The two world wars played a major role in “seriously damaging men’s positions of power [...] during their absence.”²¹ The Weimar Republic (1919-1933) guaranteed women active and passive voting rights, and the welfare state increasingly gave them social rights and a social security network that made them independent of the “breadwinner”. Among the younger generation, relationships of superiority and subordination were re-cast into partnerships between equals, expressed by the term “companionship”. “Companionship” was the keyword bridging the former gap between male and female. Co-education at school, shared leisure experiences in youth groups, joint vocational training and workplaces served to prepare people for a ‘companionate marriage’.²² This was a term coined by the American youth judge, Ben B. Lindsey, and Wainwright Evans, who defined it as a “legal marriage with legalized birth control and with the right to divorce by mutual consent for childless couples, usually without payment of alimony”.²³ Modifying this model, Lola Landau wrote in 1929 that “the psychological attitude of women to marriage has changed fundamentally. Women no longer wait for marriage, frequently not even desiring such a bond for themselves, which they fear might hinder their free development. While in previous times the life of a young woman was little more than a period of preparation for marriage, which she then took on as a full-time occupation, the woman of today is scarcely capable of accepting marriage as her life’s work. In the past, household activities and the never-ending work of motherhood taxed a woman’s energies to the full. Today, modern conveniences provide some relief in the private household, while birth control, a matter of sheer economic necessity, either shelters women from motherhood or interrupts it with long breaks. Certainly, by being able to prevent conception, women have escaped the slavery of their own bodies, but at the same time they are deprived of the elemental happiness of fulfilled tranquillity. Women’s natural maternal energies

stream/companionatemarri032183mbp/companinatemarri032183mbp_djvu.txt (published in 1929) (19.04.2017).

²⁰ Ibid, 9f.

²¹ Frevert, Ute, op. cit., 104f.

²² Ibid, 109.

²³ Lindsey, Ben B./Evans, Wainwright, op. cit., 9.

now lie fallow through no fault of their own and, just as men are forced into the work-a-day grind at an early age, they seek a substitute experience for their vitality and find it in fruitful employment, usually outside the home. Moreover, the occupational independence thus gained signifies a looser psychological bond with men. The home is no longer the fortified garden of profound and happy rest. Family life is also subject to the effects of the transformation; it is already being replaced in part by the self-tutelage of the young, by a group life that takes children out of their parents' home."²⁴

By entering into a so-called companionate marriage, men and women wished to "come together to found a modern family based on mutual understanding and respect." Their relationship was to be "unsentimental, sincere and without a false sense of shame or contrived sensitivity. This new model was cultivated, in particular, by the labour movement, social democrats and communists, where boys and girls went on 'holiday tours' together, spent their school holidays in free children's republics and had [...] 'discussions among comrades about the gender issue'".²⁵ The principle of co-education and gender equality was also upheld by parts of the Catholic youth movement, in an association called Quickborn. This youth organisation was in clear opposition to the patriarchal middle-class model of the family – a model which nonetheless continued to be proclaimed by the official Catholic Church for many decades, even though the "seed" for a wife's personal equality had already been planted previously, in the Middle Ages, through the Christian idea of consensual marriage.²⁶ But it was not until the 1950s that the image of the patriarchal family came to be counterbalanced in Catholic social doctrine by the principle of "partnership between husband and wife", as propagated, for instance, by Joseph Höffner in his "Christian Social Doctrine".²⁷ Höffner does, of course, concede that this paradigmatic shift in Catholic family semantics was partly due to a new balance of power between the

²⁴ German History in Documents and Images, No. 6, Weimar Germany, 1918/19–1933; Landau, Lola, "The Companionate Marriage" (1929), http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/SEX_LANDAU_ENG.pdf (24.02.2017).

²⁵ Frevert, Ute, op. cit., 109f.

²⁶ Cf. Ennen, Edith, "Frauenleben im Mittelalter", in: Gehl, Günter/Reichert, Mathilde (eds.), *Leben im Mittelalter* (No. 1), Weimar 1996, 59–71, here: 61.

²⁷ Cardinal Höffner, Joseph, *Christliche Gesellschaftslehre*. Studienausgabe, Kevelaer 1983, 86f.

sexes – a shift that can also be found in Häring's²⁸ reference to Helmut Schelsky's sociological insights into the family and gender roles. "As a result of their occupational activities outside the home," says Höffner, "girls and women no longer feel helpless and dependent on men."²⁹ Apparently, what happened here "and is still happening", he continues, "is more important for the history of mankind than, for instance, the discovery of nuclear power or the spread of automation."³⁰ Threats to the "hierarchical structure of marriage and the family",³¹ resulting from power shifts within the family, were partly also seen in relation to children. This happened in two ways. On the one hand, the influence of the family on the younger generation was felt to be declining, because "the doors had been opened to strong external influences". After all, young people's "independence", "self-control" and "self-determination" were being propagated by external agencies (through compulsory state school attendance, youth movements, motorisation, sports and the mass media). On the other hand, "as children have recently become a rarity in some circles, they are now subject to quite a lot of fuss. This flatters them in their urge for freedom and significance, and situations may arise in the relationship between children and adults in which the natural order is, as it were, turned upside down."³²

What is striking is the development of views among Germany's Catholic bishops. When they were first confronted with the German Equal Rights Act in the early 1950s, they "started to make substantial use of their external political contacts" in an attempt to defend the subordination of wives to their husbands' authority. At the same time they vehemently demanded within the Church that women should submit to their husbands' decision-making prerogative on educational issues and on the question of their wives' employment – a prerogative which was "being eroded within Catholic women's associations". The bishops were very much convinced on this point

²⁸ Cf. Häring, Bernhard, op. cit., 86.

²⁹ Schelsky, Helmut, "Emanzipation – auf Kosten der Frau – Eine Bestandsaufnahme der Familie in Westdeutschland", in: *Wort und Wahrheit*, No. 8 (1953), 485–492, here: 485.

³⁰ Mörsdorf, Klaus, "Die hierarchische Struktur von Ehe und Familie", in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 78 (1953), 322–336.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Jostock, Paul, "Wandlungen im soziologischen Bild der deutschen Familie", in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 79 (1954), 334–345, here: 341.

and supported their views with references to the Gospel and to traditional Church doctrine.³³ However, it was only at the Second Vatican Council that the traditionally explicit supremacy of men “was deleted” (GS 48-52) fairly early in the editing process.³⁴ In 1976, however, when Germany reformed its matrimonial legislation, “the German bishops [...] did not repeat their position on explicitly hierarchical gender assignments” and, in 1981, even declared that the truth of women’s equal dignity had “not always been fully recognised in the history of the Church and theology”, although it had “never been completely obfuscated”.³⁵

The middle-class model of the family and marriage, defined as a normative standard in the German Civil Code, was actively supported by Germany’s two major denominations (Roman Catholic and Protestant) and – despite criticism from alternative movements – persisted into the 1960s with broad support among the population, partly due to the country’s collective emergency just after the war.³⁶ Between 1953 and 2007, however, popular acceptance of the view that a family was a requisite for happiness dropped from 78 to 63 per cent.³⁷

Since then gender and family roles have continued to shift even further, and a society without marriage has become both conceivable and practicable. The same is true of a family without marriage and certainly of a family without a permanently monogamous marriage. The older model of a couple with natural physical children has become just one of many possible family types. “Under assisted conception it is possible for children to have up to five parents – their two social

³³ Cf. Lüdecke, Lorenz, “Die Ehe im Plane Gottes und seiner Kirche. Geschlechterverhältnis, Ehe und Ekklesiologie in kanonistischer Sicht”, in: Heininger, Bernhard (ed.), *Ehe als Ernstfall der Geschlechterdifferenz. Herausforderung für Frau und Mann in kulturellen Symbolsystemen*, Berlin 2010, 115–137, here: 119f.; Cf. Rölli-Alkemper, Lukas, *Familie im Wiederaufbau. Katholizismus und bürgerliches Familienideal in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945–1965*, Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zurich 2000, 560f.

³⁴ Lüdecke, Lorenz, op. cit., 124.

³⁵ Ibid, 117f.

³⁶ Cf. Schelsky, Helmut, *Wandlungen der deutschen Familie der Gegenwart: Darstellung und Deutung einer empirisch-soziologischen Tatbestandsaufnahme*, Stuttgart 41960; Tyrell, Hartmann, “Helmut Schelskys Familiensoziologie”, in: Baier, Horst (ed.), *Helmut Schelsky – ein Soziologe in der Bundesrepublik*, Stuttgart 1986, 4–56, here: 48.

³⁷ Cf. IfDA (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach), *Allensbacher Jahrbuch der Demoskopie 2003–2009*, Berlin/New York 2009, 652.

parents, a sperm donor, an egg donor and a surrogate mother.”³⁸ The legislative separation of marriage and the family has led to major cracks in the outmoded middle-class family model, while also causing a substantial break with a central element of the Christian family model which has been acknowledged by the urban western world since the 11th century: the “requirement of marital faithfulness, which is the positive side of the ban on polygamy, and also the grounds for marriage as a permanently monogamous relationship.”³⁹ Today “marriage is seen as merely one among many socially acceptable ways in which people can live together, especially with regard to male-female relationships as the basis for families”.⁴⁰ Among the German population, marriage has become less and less a “fundamental necessity”, a development which started after the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. When asked “Do you believe that the institution of marriage is fundamentally necessary or do you think it is outmoded?”, 89 per cent described it as “necessary” in 1949 and 78 per cent in 1973. By 1984 this value had dropped to 64 per cent and in 2001 it had gone down to 54 per cent.⁴¹ Moreover, the concept of marriage itself is currently being extended to include same-sex couples, both as a basis for a family and simply as a couple. Over the past few decades the defining criterion for a family, as seen by the German population, has shifted away from marriage and now focuses on children (see table).

³⁸ Koschorke, Albrecht, et al., op. cit., 7.

³⁹ König, René, op. cit., 121–158, here: 131; Fritsch-Staar, Susanne, op. cit., 85.

⁴⁰ Rauscher, Thomas, op. cit., 2.

⁴¹ Cf. IfDA (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach), op. cit., 116.

“What is your understanding of the family?”

Concept of the family among the German population (total)
(In percent, multiple answers possible):

Definition	2000	2007
Married couple with children	97	95
Three generations living together: grandparents, parents and children	68	77
Unmarried cohabiting couple with children	53	68
Single father or mother with child	40	47
Married couple without children	30	32
Unmarried, cohabiting couple without children	12	17
Two men or women forming a cohabiting union	8	13

Source: IfDA 2002, p. 110; IfDA 2009, p. 653; compiled by author

Socially, marriage is regarded less and less in terms of its reproductive function and increasingly as a foundation for mutual emotional stability between two partners. “A good marriage” is seen as being more a matter of trust, faithfulness and love, mutual respect, recognition, understanding and tolerance (67–88 per cent) and not primarily as a matter of having children (54 per cent). Whenever economic and institutional aspects play a minor role in a marriage, the relationship between the couple is relatively unstable, as it is based merely on their emotions. The idea of an “erotic flight of fancy that continues into everyday life” is now taken so much “for granted” that “we hardly understand how recent this concept of marriage is and how others saw marriage before us”.⁴² Economic, reproductive and institutional aspects are often regarded as so insignificant that couples question the concept of marriage as a legal way of regulating their partnerships (therefore deciding not to get married in the first place) or they only get married if, during pregnancy, they feel that their relationship is likely to remain relatively stable. Pregnancy alone, on the other hand, whether planned or de facto, is no longer a reason for starting a family. After all,

⁴² Von Wulffen, Barbara, *Zwischen Glück und Ghetto – Familie im Widerspruch zum Zeitgeist?*, Osnabrück 1980, 55.

Germany's welfare state – like several other European welfare states (though not all) – has destigmatised children born out of wedlock and weakened the family as an entity for survival, while also encouraging more and more women to seek gainful employment.⁴³ Whereas, in the 19th century, women “primarily worked under pressure in order to supplement their husbands' inadequate earnings”, there has been an “unmistakable” tendency “since the 1960s for many women to work for the purpose of self-fulfilment. This is also manifested in increasingly better vocational training for women. It naturally also boosts a woman's self-confidence, which may enable her to take a more positive view of divorce than she did in the past. On the other hand, the general trend towards the individualisation of marriage and the family has meant that women are making a greater effort and no longer regard marriage as an institution to secure financial and material provision.”⁴⁴

New types of families

The main, socially accepted notion and understanding of the family in Germany is now that of one or more adults sharing a home with children who are brought up, looked after and provided for by those adults in cooperation with other social institutions. The marital or non-marital status of the adults – who may be in heterosexual, homosexual or non-sexual relationships – is just as secondary as their kinship with the children. The relative unimportance of the marital status goes hand in hand with the understanding that it no longer needs to be for life. Neither does society's model of marriage and the family require the presence of any shared religious faith. This socially legitimate framework of ‘family’ covers a large range of available – albeit not totally random – options. Nationwide surveys – including those in Germany's rural south – have shown that most young Catholics are prepared to affirm a variety of alternative family types.⁴⁵

The far-reaching erosion of Germany's marriage-based, middle-class family with its focus on father, mother and children has not caused the “destruction of society as a whole”, nor is it “as old as

⁴³ Cf. Elias, Norbert, *Die Gesellschaft der Individuen*, Frankfurt 1987, 271.

⁴⁴ König, René, op. cit., 147.

⁴⁵ Cf. Sagel, Irina/Kühn, Marion, “Die Einstellung junger Katholikinnen und Katholiken zu Ehe und Familie”, in: *Familien-Prisma 2012*, 8–11.

the human race”, since this kind of family did not exist in pre-middle class times either as a concept or in reality. The middle-class family model thus turns out to be a historically limited and possibly even dispensable phenomenon which has now been replaced by a pluralistic, although not random, family model.

Moral Values of the Family in Patrilineal and Matrilineal Structures.

An African Contribution and Perspectives

Anne Beatrice Fayé

*'In the times in which we live, the stark social and spiritual crisis poses a pastoral challenge, to which the evangelising mission of the Church must respond by throwing its weight behind the family, the vital core of society and the ecclesial community.'*⁴⁶

The Church is witness to an abundance of conferences, seminars, workshops and publications on the eve of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to 'the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation'. This is an indication that the times we are living through under the pontificate of Pope Francis constitute a *kairos*, a supreme moment, as all those which preceded it have been.⁴⁷ The conclusion which can be drawn

⁴⁶ Working document I.

⁴⁷ Cf. Pope Francis, Homily at the Holy Mass for the opening of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family (5.October 2014), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/homilies/2014/documents/papafrancesco_20141005_omeliaapertura-sinodo-vescovi.html (09.04.2016); Homily on Matrimony (2.June 2014), <http://www.zenit.org/de/articles/predigt-des-papstes-in-santa-marta-von-montagdem-2-juni> (09.04.2016); General Audience on the subject of Marriage (2.April 2014) http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/audiences/2014/documents/papafrancesco_20140402_udienza-generale.html (09.04.2016); Address to Engaged Couples Preparing for Marriage (14.February 2014), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/speeches/2014/february/documents/papa-francesco_20140214_incontro-fidanzati.html (09.04.2016); Letter to Families (2.February 2014), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/letters/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140202_lettera-alle-famiglie.html (09.04.2016); Holy Mass for the Family Day (27.October 2013), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (09.04.2016). Benedict XVI, Letter on the occasion of the Seventh World Meeting of Families (23.August 2010), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/de/letters/2010/documents/hf_benxvi_let_20100823_antonelli-milano2012.html (09.04.2016); The Human Family, a Community of Peace, Message for the Celebration of the 41st Day of Peace, (1.January 2008), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/de/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20071208_xli-world-day-peace.html (09.04.2016); Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family (13.May 2006), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/de/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_

is that the problems families encounter differ from one continent to the next.

The various regional and continental episcopal conferences held in Africa reflect on and send out messages to families which sometimes find themselves trapped between traditional customs and Catholic doctrine.⁴⁸ Particularly striking in an analysis of some of these conferences is the apparent consistency of their views on the importance of the family as the fundamental nucleus of society, within which everyone develops and thrives. The family is also acknowledged as the ideal place from the emergence of human life, helping children to progress and parents to perfect their skills. Great importance continues to be attached to family ties. The family is definitively the place where all values are given room for expression.

While the family is recognised and valued in Africa, it is important to realise that it is currently suffering serious harm as a result of the far-reaching changes taking place in all areas of human life, which have caused family values to be called into question. Everyday experiences clearly disrupt traditional sources of guidance. I am astonished by the multiple, contradictory images of men, women and couples that are propagated in the media. The very notion of marriage and family is

ben-xvi_spe_20060513_pc-family.html (09.04.2016). John Paul II, Letter to the Elderly, 1999, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_01101999_elderly.html (09.04.2016); Letter to Families, 1994, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html (09.04.2016); Letter to Children, 1994, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_13121994_children.html (09.04.2016); Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris consortio John Paul II, 1981, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (09.04.2016); Speech to Participants in the Fifth International Congress of the Family, 8.November 1980.

⁴⁸ Instances of this are the Congress on the Family in Libreville (Gabon) from 13. to 17. November 2013; the First Christmas Message in 2013 from the Episcopal Conference of Chad and the preparatory workshop of the Synod on the Family, organised by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) from 14. to 16.June 2014 in Cotonou, on the topic: 'The Synod on the Family and the Participation of Africa: Scope and Challenges'. Theologians, African biblical scholars and experts have devoted much time and thought to the current changes and the variety of forms assumed by families in Africa today as well as to the situation of women within families and African society as a whole. Also worthy of note are the General Assembly of the Association of Episcopal Conferences of the Central Africa Region (ACERAC) held in Brazzaville in July 2014; the 40th General Assembly of the Bishops of Cameroon held on 16.April 2015, and, finally, the bishops of the Regional Bishops' Conference of North Africa (CERNA), who are continuing their reflections on the vocation of Muslim-Christian families and thus helping the synod to pursue the question of access to the sacraments in greater depth, taking due account of all the different situations (Muslim-Christian couples, common-law couples, migrants, customary marriage).

distorted; maternity is devalued to a certain extent; abortion is trivialised; divorce is facilitated; and social, cultural and religious values are treated as relative. Generally speaking, the family nucleus is subjected to various moral, physical and psychological assaults. Torn between tradition and modernity, it struggles to find its frame of reference.

As a consequence, family ties are loosened and marital breakdown increases in frequency, resulting in the absence of one of the two parents; families disperse, divide and are subsequently reformed. This decline in traditional values obliges us to pay particular attention to the current situation of the family in all its paradoxical complexity. For, despite all these contradictions, the desire to have a family remains one of the highest priorities of the majority of individuals.

One question remains, however. Is the family, understood as a stable union between a man, a woman and their children, still a resource for the individual and for society, or is it merely a relic of the past which hinders individual emancipation and the development of a more liberal, egalitarian and happier society? This somewhat paradoxical question calls for a theoretical discussion of the historical situation of the family today.

This modest contribution aims to stimulate the debate by approaching it from an African perspective. It proceeds in three stages. Firstly, it seeks to explain the patrilineal and matrilineal family models that co-exist in Africa so as to provide a better gauge of the richness of filiation within the family in Africa.⁴⁹ Secondly, it looks at the moral values which afford a certain degree of family stability through the ties of kinship, which is why we talk about 'family as kin' in Africa. Thirdly, it examines how the evangelisation mission for the family can be redefined holistically in the light of the changes and upheavals to which it is exposed in Africa.

Clarification of the patrilineal and matrilineal concepts in Africa

Amadou Hampâté Bâ, a writer from Senegal, believes that, while many general traits exist within African culture, there is not one 'African man' or one African tradition which covers all regions

⁴⁹ Grelley, Pierre, "Contrepoint – Famille, parenté et éducation en Afrique", in: *Informations sociales*, No. 4 (2009) 154, 21, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-informations-sociales-2009-4-page-21.htm> (28.02.2017).

and ethnicities on the continent. The same is true of the African family, the way it functions and its notion of how parental authority should be exercised. Instead, he says, we should refer to 'African families'. Any attempt to define 'the African family' requires precise knowledge of its organisation and the roles attributed to each of its members. The concept of the family in Africa is fraught with emotional and ethical overtones. The extended family, for instance, is most frequently to be found in traditional forms of settlement, in which ancient customs work counter to any form of decline in the elementary unit of the family. This is apparent in both the patrilineal and matrilineal systems.

Kinship within the patrilineal system

No matter where people live in the world, they leave something behind them when they die, be it status, social position, certain possessions, property, money, etc. Rather than being distributed throughout the community, this heritage must pass undivided to someone else; all societies have made hard and fast rules for this act of transfer. Filiation is the principle governing the transfer of kinship; heritage (transfer of possessions) and succession (transfer of functions) tend to follow this principle.

As in other societies, Africa has adopted a unilinear mode of transfer, i.e. status and ethnic affiliation are passed down either through the father or through the mother. In the first instance, the filiation is termed 'patrilineal'. This should not be confused in any way with the prevalent patriarchal system which is often used to define 'the family' in Africa. In this system the children belong to the family of their father, who is largely responsible for them. In a patrilineal society, by contrast, the children belong to the ethnic group of their father, who is both the head of the family and the custodian of tradition. He is responsible for preserving harmony throughout the family. He also exercises a certain authority, not over the individuals but over the community of which he is in charge. As head of the family it is his task to announce happy or unfortunate events (dowry, marriage, death, etc). This may help to explain the difficulties encountered now and then in grasping the meaning of family in Africa, which prompts some people to talk of kinship. So what is the difference?

Difference between family and kinship in Africa

While the terminology used to describe African families may appear a little meagre, it is rich and diverse when it comes to kinship. We are not talking here about biological kinship but about social kinship. You are 'kin' if you share the same social space; this is known as 'kinship by participation'. The words 'brother' and 'sister' are frequently used to describe individuals who are not related by blood. The complex state of affairs arising from multiple symbolic and biological unions makes it virtually impossible to pinpoint where an African family begins or ends. Moreover, within each family there are a certain number of people who are recognised as relations, without anyone being able to classify the degree or nature of their relationship to the child with any precision. In certain tribes, the dead, the living and the unborn are all deemed part of the family. Any attempt to comprehend the African family, then, involves adopting a very wide definition of the notion of kinship. The huge diversity this entails makes it imperative to reconsider all the problems associated with the African family: biological paternity or maternity, adoption, guardianship and the education and socialisation of children, including those aspects deemed 'pathological'.

And what about 'joking kinship'? According to Raphaël Ndiaye, 'joking kinship constitutes all the privileged and permanent convivial links established by the Ancestor, both horizontally and vertically within the group of relatives, and in relations with the Other, as well as the activities undertaken as part of a personal process of renewal, which rests on humour and polite mockery.'⁵⁰ The playful character of 'joking kinship' gives it vitality and expressiveness. It is easy to recognise two joking kinsmen by the well-aimed insults they hurl at each other during their mock disputes. 'Joking in this context not only aims to create a more relaxed atmosphere, but also to strengthen the bonds of friendship and brotherhood. Furthermore, this manner of joking frequently conveys a very strong message, which forces the other party to change his ways for the better.'⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ndiaye, Raphaël, "Correspondances ethno-patronymiques et parenté plaisantant: une problématique d'intégration à large échelle", in: *Environnement africain*, No. 8 (1992) 3–4, 97–128.

⁵¹ Kusiele Somda, Jean Boniface, La parenté à plaisanterie, un outil de réconciliation, Blog from 28.December 2008, <http://daleb-mpassi.over-blog.com/article-26697434.html> (28.02.2017).

In order to understand the African family it is also necessary to refer to the notion of 'extended kinship', which emphasises common characteristics shared by individuals such as membership of the same lineage or the same generation. Thus, in the case of the Wolof people of Senegal, the word for 'parent' is 'mbokk', a term which derives from 'bokk', which means to share or possess in common.⁵² The concept of 'generation' gives structure to the various forms of kinship. Thus, all men of the age of one's father are referred to as 'Dad', all those of the age of one's mother as 'Mum', and brothers and sisters of the same generation as one's own are referred to as such. The notion of the family extends to uncles, aunts and cousins. Doesn't this broadening of the concept complicate inner-family cohesion? Definitely not, because in Africa the family has always encompassed these aspects. This is especially apparent in the avunculate in matrilineal societies.

The avunculate in matrilineal societies

In the matrilineal model, the bond via lineage prevails over the conjugal bond, thus conferring on the maternal uncle an authority superior to that of the father by blood. I will now provide a brief overview of the '*matrilineal belt*' of Africa and certain advantages of this often forgotten form of social organisation.

Overview of Africa's 'matrilineal belt'

Nowadays, the vestiges of matriarchy have disappeared almost completely and can only be located in minuscule traces already half obliterated. Nevertheless, in the beginning, Africa was a symbol and a deity: the Berber and Roman goddess of Africa. 'No one did anything without first invoking Africa'.⁵³ As a result, the matrilineal family has become a social and political syndicate. The principle of solidarity is based on the line of descent from an historical or mythical mother. This is what makes Africa's '*matrilineal belt*' so extensive.

It stretches from Ethiopia (Queen Candace, or Kandake) to the Akan of Ghana. This ethnic group is also found in the Ivory Coast,

⁵² Bara Diop, Abdoulaye, *La famille Wolof: Tradition et changement*, Paris 1985.

⁵³ Matriarcat en Afrique: Le continent des reines guerrières, <http://matricien.org/geo-hist-matriarcat/afrique/> (09.04.2016).

Togo and Benin. The Akan culture is a specific synthesis of elements of various origins, which can be subdivided into two categories: patrilineal cultural elements and matrilineal cultural elements. The coexistence of matrilineal and patrilineal elements in the political, social, economic, ritual, spiritual and psychological lives of this ethnic group demonstrates that the Akan culture is the result of an amalgamation of cultural traits with diverse geographical origins.

Mention should also be made here of the Azandés or Zandés of the Congo, Central Africa and Sudan⁵⁴ as well as of the important role played by Chewa women in social life in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia and by the Baïnouks in Guinea, Gambia and Senegal. In all these countries the bond between mother and child is deemed the touchstone of all social relationships. In countries inhabited by Serer people, the maternal line, the emotional relationships between the maternal uncle and the children of his sister provide the family with an identity and enable it to appreciate its educational, social, material, moral and spiritual values. The maternal, or uterine relationship, is both a space and a category of relatives who live out specific, solid familial bonds in their distinct domains.

This means that, within matrilineal societies, women do not necessarily enjoy greater authority than in patrilineal societies, nor do they (perform) own the assets. In fact it would be more accurate to refer to 'avunculineal' filiation in such cases, because in societies of this kind transfers are made principally from the maternal uncle to the uterine nephew. A man's assets and status are transferred to his sister's children. Hence a matrilineal society is by no means a matriarchy in which women exercise power or dominate men.

As far as the economy is concerned, the individuals and assets within the matrilineal family constitute a type of capital at once indivisibly human and physical. In the case of the Serer people of Senegal, for instance, all sisters surrender themselves and their assets to their older brother. The nephews work for their uncle on a permanent basis if they live together and, if not, more sporadically. They also surrender their assets or savings to the uncle. The problem of the individual becomes that of the family. In consequence, the sister's children

⁵⁴ The works of Evans-Pritchard, published in the 1970s, demonstrate that the Azandé society is matrilineal.

inherit from their uncle. These cultural systems emphasise the need to consider the roots of the 'family as kin' in Africa.

The legacy of cultural values in the patrilineal and avunculineal system

'Family as kin' has always been the foundation of society, a place of education where cultural and spiritual values are passed on. The extended 'family as kin' teaches children community attitudes and behaviours. The 'family as kin' retains a profound sense of the sanctity of life, because each life is a gift from God. This reminds us of the texts of the Magisterium. For Saint John Paul II, the Pope of the Family, as he himself wished to be called, "the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family, the first cell of the living ecclesial community, and also that of society. In African culture and tradition, the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental. Open to this sense of the family, of love and respect for life, the African loves children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God."⁵⁵

The sons and daughters of Africa love life⁵⁶

Globalised society will only be able to create a civilised future if it is capable of promoting a culture of 'family as kin', conceived anew as the vital link uniting joy in the private sphere with that in the public sphere. At all events, 'family as kin' is not dead. On the contrary, it remains contemporary society's most important resource despite the great difficulties it is now experiencing. It is a resource because it creates relational bonds which no other life form is capable of producing. 'Family as kin' is unique in its ability to generate relationships, which is precisely why it requires protection.

'By virtue of its central importance and the various threats looming over it – distortion of the very notion of marriage and family, devaluation of maternity and trivialization of abortion, easy divorce and the relativism of a "new ethics" – the family needs to be protected and defended, so that it may offer society the service expected of it,

⁵⁵ John Paul II, Post-synodal apostolical letter, *Ecclesia in Africa*, about the church in Africa and its order of evangelisation in view of the year 2000, 14. September 1995, No. 50, 43, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.pdf (28.02.2017).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

that of providing men and women capable of building a social fabric of peace and harmony.⁵⁷

In social and cultural terms the woman is deemed the mainstay of the family nucleus and the mistress of the household in both systems. She stands as the beacon of society and of the family home. It is she who gives life to human beings. In her capacity as a mother she assumes an essential role, responsible for the education of children in the overall sense of the word. She acts as the guardian of social, cultural, religious, physical, aesthetic and moral values. She is seen as the very embodiment of virtue, order, justice, stability, longevity and moral values at all levels.⁵⁸ This is the reason why, in the family context, it is she who is placed in charge of raising the children and passing moral values on to them. It is in this sense that we should understand the maxim: 'to educate a woman is to educate a nation.' Having provided an overview of cultural values in the patrilineal and matrilineal systems, I will now outline a number of elements needed to secure holistic pastoral care for the family.

African perspectives on the pastoral care of the family

Having looked at the situation facing families today and examined the phenomenon of 'family as kin' in Africa, I will now put theoretical definitions to one side and attempt to pinpoint some answers that will help families to discover their strength and the vocation the Lord has bestowed upon them. There is no denying that we face a major and very delicate challenge which affects both the Church and civil society. It is therefore essential to demonstrate great courage and boldness – in a word, great love for our families.

Reconsidering pastoral care of the family

Since the family is the fundamental nucleus and 'sanctuary of life' of both society and the Church, there is a pressing need to devote special attention to the concerns of men and women on the

⁵⁷ Benedikt XVI., Nachsynodales Apostolisches Schreiben *Africae Munus* über die Kirche in Afrika im Dienst der Versöhnung, der Gerechtigkeit und des Friedens, 19. November 2011, No. 43, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/de/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html (16.06.2016).

⁵⁸ Cf. Société africaine de culture, *La Civilisation de la femme dans la tradition africaine*, meeting in Abidjan, 3–9. July 1972, *Présence africaine*, Paris 1975.

continent. As far as the social role played by the family is concerned, it is essential to maintain a form of openness and engage in a constant dialogue with society. The image of 'family as kin' "emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust"⁵⁹. Far from complicating cohesion within families, the African concept of 'family as kin' is based on brotherly solidarity. The purpose of evangelisation is to lift up the Church as God's Family, in anticipation, albeit imperfect, of the Kingdom on earth.

Drinking from the fountain of our cultural and religious heritage so as to formulate a new concept of pastoral care for the 'family as kin' on the basis of the 'central concept of the Church as God's Family' and of 'brotherhood in the Church'. Certain traditional values passed down from one generation to the next must be subjected to a critical review if the 'family as kin' is to be preserved: the supremacy of the community over the individual; responsible solidarity; respect for one's elders, old people and the disabled; community work, 'joking kinship'. The first school of values is 'family as kin'. Hence parents are indisputably the first and principle educators of their children. This is not a responsibility which is 'chosen'; it is imposed. No parent can legitimately renounce it or be freed from it.

The 'family as kin' is the setting for the transfer of cultural, moral and religious values as well as of the social attitudes that are essential for the development and well-being of its members and of society as a whole. It is in the families that the various members can receive and live the Good News and experience a love which overcomes their fears, filling them with a sense of hope in the world.

Reconsidering pastoral care of the family based on faith education, witness of the gospel and all-round constructive relationships

The Christian family has always been the prime channel for transmission of the faith. It retains great potential for evangelisation today. It is capable of evangelising, or bearing witness within itself, for example as regards mutual love, prayer, listening to the Word of God and family catechesis; in short, everything which is capable of uplifting its members. It can also evangelise in its immediate environment thanks to relationships with neighbours, relatives, friends, colleagues,

⁵⁹ Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 63.

school acquaintances and sporting and leisure companions. It can evangelise in the parish through faithful attendance at Sunday mass, by participating in catechesis lessons for children, in family meetings, movements and associations, by supporting families in difficulty or by attending marriage preparation courses. It can also evangelise in a civil society setting, by presenting it with new citizens, upholding social virtues, helping those in need and joining family associations to promote a more favourable family culture and family-related legal policies⁶⁰. The Christian family is a privileged setting where, thanks to the care of their parents, children discover that they are precious in the eyes of God and that they have an important mission to fulfil in the Church and the world at large. This can lead to the greater good of society as a whole.

Conclusion

The tentative conclusion which can be drawn is that, given the plurality and diversity of family problems, it would be advisable to give local churches more autonomy in their search for solutions and organise the Church more on local lines. That said, there is a need to review the pastoral care currently provided and to consider the fact that a decision taken by one specific church can have repercussions for another...

There are numerous factors destabilising the family: the spread of gender theories, violence and misery, secularisation, insidious persecution in some countries where Christians are regarded as suspicious just because of their faith... It is important to maintain direct relations with politicians while simultaneously having the courage to urge them to intervene when necessary.

As far as Africa is concerned, confronted as it is by social, cultural and political issues, we must continue to denounce international agencies which make their economic and financial aid contingent upon the acceptance of specific, supposedly 'universal' ethical and legal norms relating to homosexuality or gender theory.

⁶⁰ Cf. Antonelli, Cardinal Ennio, Pontifical Advice for the Family: The Christian Family as Agent of Evangelisation, Lisieux 2012; Pope John Paul II., Apostolical letter *Familiaris Consortio* about the orders of the christian families in the todays world, 22.November 1981, No. 44.

Africa continues to face issues such as polygamy; the baptism of polygamists and their wives; the baptism of divorced or remarried converts; and multiple challenges to the family (war, violence, poverty, cities, street children, bad governance, mismanagement and misery). In the light of these problems we would do well to recall the importance of the presence of the Church for people today.

Challenges Posed by the Asian Concept of the Family in Indian Hindu Culture

Preetha Varayilan

In German society the family is often seen as synonymous with a nuclear or two-generation family. India, however, has a different concept of the family, and so a family apostolate faces very different challenges. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to examine the nature of the family in India.⁶¹

The “Joint Family” model in India

The word *family* comes from the Latin term *familia* which translates as “household” – a concept we can also apply to the Indian model of a “joint” family.⁶² The family is a permanent and universal human phenomenon. Families are to be found in all societies, regardless of their stage of development, although the specific family forms may differ substantially. A variety of family types exists all over the world. India has its own special family system which deserves particular attention. An Indian family comprises not only a husband, wife and their offspring, but also uncles, aunts, cousins and grandchildren. Although Indian society has many different religious communities and social groups, the family system is ubiquitous in India and held in great esteem everywhere. The beauty of Indian culture lies in the tradition of the joint family, a system which has prevailed for centuries.

Together with the caste system and the village community, the joint family is one of three fundamental institutions in Indian society.

⁶¹ Cf. Varayilan, Preetha, “Das Konzept der ‘Joint Family’ – Das Familienverständnis im indisch-hinduistischen Kulturkreis”, in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), *Familie – Auslaufmodell oder Garant unserer Zukunft?*, 364–380; *Ibid.*, “Das Konzept der ‘Joint Family’”, in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 371–376.

⁶² The joint family is an established term which describes India’s family system, the specific features of which will be described in the course of this article.

In fact, it is the standard family form.⁶³ The writings of the post-Vedic period, e.g. Dharmashastra and Manusmriti, provide indications of how families were mostly organised at the time and of the changes they faced. The early extended family was patriarchal in character, i.e. supreme authority was invested in its oldest male member.⁶⁴

The joint family is a system in which a large number of members live together – parents, children, their spouses and offspring, etc. The oldest family member, usually the oldest man, is the head of the family. He makes all the important decisions and lays down rules which the others follow with great respect. Sons often receive preferential treatment, because it is expensive to bring up daughters, since they do not earn any money to support the family and require a large dowry when they marry. Sons, on the other hand, are usually breadwinners and support their parents in their old age. Joint families tend to be found among the higher castes which usually have a higher income.⁶⁵ A joint family comprises several generations and its members have very close ties based on property, income, mutual obligations and commitments.

The concept of the joint family

A family can be described as a joint family if its members are related through blood and share collective property rights and obligations, these being fundamental criteria. The inter-generational structure of a family alone is not a determining factor for its designation as a joint family, which requires a combination of two or more individuals with common activities, outlook and property.⁶⁶

The Indian system of the joint family is unknown in Western societies, just as the system of the extended family in Western industrial societies is virtually non-existent in India.⁶⁷ A joint family typically comprises a husband and wife, their children, the husband's parents and any unmarried sisters. A man has no choice but to accept his parents into his home and to care for them. His wife, the daughter-in-law of the house, must treat her parents-in-law as though they were

⁶³ Cf. Shah, Arvindbhai Manilal, *The Family in India – Critical Essays*, Hyderabad 1998, 14.

⁶⁴ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, *Dynamics of Change in the Modern Hindu Family*, New Delhi 1993, 19.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁶ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, *op. cit.*, 24.

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 17.

her own parents, calling them mother and father. She will need to come to an arrangement with any unmarried sisters-in-law. The man plays an essential role in balancing the sensitivities of the various family members and ensuring that the needs of each individual are met. He must care for his parents and his wife and resolve any conflicts that may arise between them.

The family is a special institution which is both private and public in character. Depending on the situation it can be both highly intimate and very open. It is also ubiquitous as an institution. After all, everyone spends most of their life in a family.⁶⁸ The joint family is the backbone of Indian society.⁶⁹

As stated earlier, a joint family is essentially a combination of two or three nuclear families.⁷⁰ The term used in Hindi for a joint family is *samyukta parivar*.⁷¹

Crucial to a joint family are

- the head of the family who makes all the decisions, his position being derived from a patrilineal and patriarchal structure
- a common residence and a common kitchen, which is shared by all the members of the family
- joint housekeeping for all income and expenditure and joint ownership of the same
- usually three generations living together
- a common place of worship.

Most people see the joint family as providing a guarantee of emotional satisfaction and economic security.⁷²

Types of joint family

There are essentially two types of joint family: patrilineal and matrilineal. Although the two types differ with regard to descent, they

⁶⁸ Cf. Patel, Tulsi (ed.), *The Family in India: Structure and Practice*, New Delhi 2005, 19.

⁶⁹ Cf. Jayapalan, Narayana, *Rural Sociology*, New Delhi 2002, 10.

⁷⁰ Cf. Manilal Shah, Arvindbhai, *op. cit.*, 18.

⁷¹ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, *op. cit.*, 19.

⁷² Cf. Deane, Steve, *Culture in Action – Family Life, Emotion and Male Dominance in Banaras, India*, New York 1995, 5.

are the same in all other respects.⁷³ A joint family is patrilineal if the chain of descent is through the male line and matrilineal if the chain of descent is through the female line.⁷⁴ The patriarchal family structure is based on an extension of the father-son relationship and the matriarchal family structure on an extension of the mother-daughter relationship.⁷⁵ The population in the mountainous territory of the north-east is well-known for its matrilineal tradition in which descent and inheritance follow the female line of succession, not the male line. One of the biggest groups of people living here is the Khasi tribe in the State of Meghalaya which is divided into matrilineal clans. The youngest daughter receives almost the entire family estate, including the house. Her husband moves into her home.

In both cases the structure of a joint family is clearly specified by law: it involves shared property, shared income, shared residence, commensality, a division of labour and the observance of certain rights and duties.⁷⁶ In most modern Hindu societies women and children also engage in gainful employment. The widespread notion that only men earn a living in a patrilineal Hindu society applies solely to a thin upper class and upper middle class. In most cases women take on regular work in agriculture, factories and offices. Moreover, although many activities can be described as domestic, they are in fact productive economic activities.⁷⁷ To sum up, all the members contribute to the joint family according to their abilities and are cared for according to their needs. It is useful in this context to be aware of the typical features of a joint family.

Typical features of an Indian joint family

A traditional Hindu family has a communal structure.⁷⁸ The essential features of a joint family are applicable to higher and lower casts alike.⁷⁹ The family meets the needs of its members in all areas

⁷³ Cf. Bhagwan Agrawal, Krishna, *Family Law in India*, New York 2010, 84.

⁷⁴ Cf. Manilal Shah, Arvindbhai, *op. cit.*, 18.

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁶ Patel, Tulsī (ed.), *op. cit.*, 84.

⁷⁷ Manilal Shah, Arvindbhai, *op. cit.*, 21.

⁷⁸ Sinha, Raghuvir, *op. cit.*, 23.

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 21.

of life, over which it exercises control.⁸⁰ Traditionally the joint family was large, whereas nowadays Hindu joint families are mostly small, although they are still more widespread than very small Western-type families. In a traditional joint family three generations would live under the same roof, whereas today's smaller joint families often only comprise two generations, sometimes just one. In urban areas, small joint families are more common than traditional extended families.⁸¹

Family structure

A joint family consists of several relatives sharing the same residence and using a common kitchen. The marital relationship and community of property mean that the members of the family are tied to each other by a system of reciprocal obligations. As they live together, they share each other's joys and sorrows, e.g. on important occasions such as births, deaths and weddings. The joint family has always exercised a wide range of stabilising functions. Its hallmarks are intimacy and mutual interest. Members endeavour to support each other in times of hardship and during crises.⁸² They have the same rights and duties, and no one has any special privileges, except for the head of the family.

The joint family is the epitome of male authority.⁸³ A Hindu family usually has a patriarchal structure. The oldest male member of the family, the *karta*, exercises supreme authority, to which all the others submit. His position is enshrined in Indian law, which specifies that he is responsible for managing the house and its finances as well as the family's income and livelihood. He holds the highest position within the family.⁸⁴

The members of a joint family always prioritise the interests of the family as a whole, individual interests being treated as secondary. This means that the goals and interests of the family are of necessity also the goals and interests of the individual. The daughter-in-law is

⁸⁰ Jayapalan, Narayana, op. cit., 65.

⁸¹ Sinha, Raghuvir, op. cit., 25.

⁸² Cf. *ibid*, 25.

⁸³ Cf. *ibid*, 69.

⁸⁴ Cf. <http://www.preservearticles.com/201105096431/characteristics-of-joint-family.html> (30.04.2016).

often responsible for running the household and may not be permitted to work outside the home. She cooks for the family, supervises its domestic staff and looks after her parents-in-law and their needs. If she has children, they are her primary concern, as she is responsible for their upbringing.

Unlike the conjugal bond between husband and wife, the joint family system emphasises the relationships between father and son and between brothers. In other words, the spouses are subordinate to the blood relatives.

As in other cultures, a Hindu marriage is traditionally seen as irrevocable and sacred, so that it cannot be dissolved by the will of an individual.⁸⁵ The head of a joint family sees it as his privilege to arrange the marriages of its members. Family members are not entitled to choose their own partners, and younger members do not usually question the decisions and arrangements made by the head of the family.

Another factor that plays a major role in India's joint family system is discipline. If the head of the family expresses an opinion, this generally carries more weight than anyone else's views. If there is a difference of opinions, the issue is discussed with care, consideration being given to suggestions made by other adult members. Typically, individual members are expected to be punctual when returning home and for meals, etc. The joint family system has historical roots stretching back to the Vedic period, when up to four generations used to live together. This tradition is helpful in sustaining close family bonds and the customs and traditions of the past. When bringing up their children, Indian parents take great care from the very beginning to instil certain patterns of behaviour in them. Children are expected to express respect for their elders, e.g. they must touch their parents' feet, talk in an appropriate manner and obtain advice from their elders before taking important decisions. The head of the family responds by showing care and consideration and treating all the members equally.

Marital relations and communal property

One of the most important features of the joint family system is that its members share the same place of residence, usually living

⁸⁵ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, *op. cit.*, 19.

together in the same house or in one particular place. However, living under the same roof is not the main hallmark of a joint family. Not every group of individuals who share the same residence automatically form a joint family. The key characteristic of a joint family is the shared kitchen. The members of the family eat the meals that have been jointly prepared in the communal kitchen. Traditionally, a shared kitchen is therefore closely associated with the joint family system.

Another central attribute of a joint family is the management of its shared property.⁸⁶ A joint family is a cooperative body and similar to a cooperative society in which the property belong to all its members. The head of the family acts as a trustee, the income of the members being pooled in a joint fund to pay for the family's expenses. According to ancient Hindu laws, joint ownership of inherited property constitutes the very essence of a joint family. Family property cannot be divided between members.

The practice whereby the oldest family member enjoys supreme authority goes back to the earliest joint families which, typically, were patriarchal in character and practised joint ownership of property.⁸⁷ Joint purchases, particularly the acquisition of land, are still seen as conducive to family unity. Moreover, land ownership means social prestige.⁸⁸

Nowadays, joint families can also be found in India's cities, where kinship can be a decisive factor in finding a good job or obtaining financial support. Many well-known Indian families – e.g. the Tatas, Birlas and Sarabhais – continue to maintain their family ties while controlling some of the country's biggest financial empires. From an economic perspective, the joint family can be seen not only as a single consumer, but also as a single producer.⁸⁹ The entire income of the family members is pooled.

Every joint family strives for autonomy⁹⁰ and fulfils a variety of economic functions. It guarantees its members food, clothing and

⁸⁶ Cf. Patel, Tulsi (ed.), *op. cit.*, 41.

⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 69.

shelter. Everyone works together cooperatively, thus saving money that would otherwise have to be spent on external labour. Moreover, the joint purchase of household items saves money.

The inter-generational family

A joint family comprises three or more generations, including grandparents, parents and children, although it may also include other relatives, such as uncles, aunts, cousins and great-grandparents. So in addition to the members' shared life and common worship, a joint family is also based on consanguinity.

In other words, a joint family consists of members who are related by blood, directly or indirectly or both. It is generally the custom to refer to a family as joint if it comprises two or more next-of-kin who are each married. The members of the family may be either directly related (usually father/son, though sometimes father/daughter) or indirectly (usually brother/brother and sometimes brother/sister). Both types, direct and indirect, highlight the compositional aspects of a patrilineal joint family. This constitutive relationship is unique, each individual being irreplaceable.⁹¹

In a traditional joint family a woman's social life was largely limited to the family and her relatives. There were various ways of keeping the sexes apart. Men and women would work in different domains. It was a man's duty to earn money, while the woman was responsible for all the work in the house. The two domains were generally kept apart. This separation of the sexes within the family also characterised the family's social life, and women would form their own social groups.

Common worship

A Hindu joint family derives sustenance from its religion, which involves a variety of rites and practices. It is a special feature of such a family that it engages in common worship and shares the same gods and goddesses. The religious practices are complex.⁹² In the past each family had its own household deity – a *kula devata* – which it had worshipped for many generations. The common worship of

⁹¹ Cf. Skolnik, Arlene/Skolnick, Jerome H., *Intimacy in Family and Society*, Boston 1974, 86.

⁹² Cf. Bhagwan Agrawal, Krishna, *op. cit.*, 34.

gods and goddesses is therefore associated with the joint family system.⁹³

The ritual practices of a joint family can take a variety of forms,⁹⁴ and the family's rites are an important bonding element among the members. The family is held together by the regular remembrance of deceased ancestors. A *shradha* ceremony is performed in which the oldest male placates the spirit of the deceased father or mother by sacrificing a *pinda* on behalf of all the family members.

Extended family system

A patrilineal joint family can also consist of several households, each of them led by a brother and held together by their father. They may even live in geographically distinct places, so that there is not necessarily any community of property. Nevertheless, everyone sees themselves as members of the same family who conduct rites and ceremonies together, support each other in every way, including financially, value a sense of togetherness and adhere to the standards that govern their shared life. One important aspect of Hindu society that has ensured the survival of the joint family down the ages and given it clear contours and stability is the caste system – one of the most complex social systems in the world. Ultimately, an Indian caste is an extension of the joint family – an inclusive group of families who all share the same social status and social functions.⁹⁵

Despite the steadily increasing impact of urbanisation, secularisation and Western culture, India's basic values and family system have largely survived to the present day. Nearly everyone upholds family loyalty as an essential value. Such loyalty fosters sacrifice, affection, collaboration, selflessness and generosity; it makes the family the cradle of these values. The care and succour provided by the older generation help to curb any undesirable or antisocial tendencies among the young and prevent them from idling away their time. They learn to take responsibility for themselves. All members learn to observe the family's rules and respect their elders.

⁹³ Cf. <http://www.shareyouressays.com/87647/essay-on-joint-family-system-definitions-types-and-characteristics> (30.04.2016).

⁹⁴ Cf. Bhagwan Agrawal, Krishna, op. cit., 34.

⁹⁵ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, op. cit., 21.

Benefits and drawbacks of the joint family

The joint family has a range of benefits and drawbacks. Compared with small families who live separately it has the advantage of greater cost effectiveness in the family's expenses and members have more economic leeway than they might otherwise have. Two other economic factors that give the joint family a certain strength are joint ownership and the members' common economic needs.⁹⁶ As the members are essentially part of a community, they can usually fall back on a generous support system. When bringing up their children, parents can rely on help from the other members. Children grow up in close contact with aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins. The greatest benefit of this system is that children can learn a great deal from their grandparents. If two married brothers live together in a joint family, their children grow up together as though they were siblings. This gives them a great feeling of security and stability from an early age. The modern joint family sometimes allows women to seek employment outside the house, since other family members can tend to the children and their upbringing.

While there are many benefits, there are also various drawbacks to a joint family. One of the greatest disadvantages is that members do not give of their best and their potential is often not exploited to the full. There is also a tendency towards conservatism, as the head of the family is usually an elderly man who is not prepared to accept change or break with customs and traditions that the family has followed for many years. The system can sometimes be an obstacle to its members' progress and development, as they can always fall back on the family's protection. A joint family can harbour loafers and idlers who have no need to earn a living for themselves. If people can eat well with little effort involved, they are unlikely to indulge in strenuous activities. It is generally the case that some of the family members work hard and earn money, while the others enjoy a life of comfort. Another weakness is that the parents-in-law might not get on very well with their daughter-in-law or she may have problems with her unmarried sisters-in-law. This can cause considerable emotional tension, and a man requires tact and skill in handling such cases. If, for instance, two brothers and their families live under a single roof,

⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

there are actually three families which need to get on with each other: the parents and the families of their two sons. Usually, the older son and his wife are treated with greater respect in this situation. They are more influential and bear a greater responsibility.

These disadvantages notwithstanding, the joint family system has survived to the present day. It is by no means true to say that the system has been completely replaced or lost its influence, even though it has undergone certain changes. It continues to live on in Indian society and endeavours to address modern-day challenges.

Structural and functional changes in the joint family system

Over the past few decades Indian society has seen several changes in the family.⁹⁷ Research into India's family system has revealed a range of structural and functional changes. Joint families are of greater importance and more widespread in towns and cities than they are in the countryside.⁹⁸ This may be because towns and cities offer greater opportunities to acquire property; the joint family is closely associated with its members' income, after all. The way families develop has changed, too. A Hindu household is a structural and functional collective, since all its members live and act under the same roof. But as people migrate from villages into towns they are required to live apart, although that may help to maintain or even intensify functional bonds with the family. It should be borne in mind, however, that structural changes also bring functional changes with them. When a husband, his wife and their children live away from the rest of the family, the relationship between the couple is going to be different than if they are living in the joint family home. The role of the wife may change, too.⁹⁹

The key to the transformation of the Hindu family can be found in other aspects of India's changing social system.¹⁰⁰ A number of studies have been made of the joint family in recent decades, since sociological research into Indian families has indicated that the traditional joint family is increasingly breaking down into nuclear families

⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁸ Cf. Patel, Tulsi (ed.), *op. cit.*, 74.

⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 75.

as a result of urban and industrial developments.¹⁰¹ These changes have had a subtle impact on the industrial focus of the family and wrought structural and financial changes in family organisation. These changes in the family clearly reflect the changes taking place in society as a whole. The organisation or disorganisation of society can best be understood by looking at the organisation or disorganisation of the family.¹⁰²

Whenever joint families grow, they invariably split into smaller units over time. This development follows a predictable cycle. The division of a joint family into smaller units does not necessarily mean a rejection of the joint family as an ideal. Rather, it is usually a response to various circumstances, e.g. the need for some family members to move from the village into town or from one town to another in their search for employment. The breakup of a family is often ascribed to typical female squabbles that flare up between the wives of brothers living under one roof. Although such arguments between women can certainly lead to separation, a breakup may equally be due to quarrels between male members of the family. Despite the cultural ideals of fraternal harmony, adult brothers often argue about land ownership and other issues, which may prompt them to divide up their common property and live separately. It regularly happens that a joint family splits up after the death of the oldest generation and the loss of the key identification figure who held the different parts of the family together. After separation has taken place, each newly created household becomes a joint family of its own when the sons of the family marry and bring their wives into the family household.

In brief, changes have occurred in India's socio-economic, political and cultural environment which have transformed the structures, functions, allocations of roles, relationships and values of the family.

Conclusion

The typical family structure in Indian society has traditionally been a joint family. Despite the steadily increasing influence of urbanisation, secularisation and externalisation, the traditional joint household – both as an ideal and in practice – remains the

¹⁰¹ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, *op. cit.*, 19.

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid.*, 18.

strongest social force in the lives of most Indians. The Indian family is regarded as strong, stable, close-knit, resilient and persistent.¹⁰³ Nearly everyone upholds the ideal of family loyalty. Large families tend to be flexible and are well capable of adapting to modern life in India, particularly since 67 per cent of Indians are farmers or agricultural workers or are employed in similar areas. As in most rural societies, few individuals can hope to achieve economic security without being members of a community. India's joint family is most widespread in the Banara region.¹⁰⁴ The joint family as a traditional Indian institution underwent a number of changes in the late 20th century. Although several generations still follow this ideal, there are now numerous vastly different lifestyles, depending on region, social status and economic circumstances. Many Indians live in joint families which differ in varying degrees from the ideal, while others form nuclear families – i.e. a couple with unmarried children – in the same way as in Western society. However, even where the ideal of a joint family is no longer pursued as such, there are often strong networks based on kinship ties which provide economic assistance and other forms of support. It is not uncommon for several relatives to live near each other, which facilitates the give and take involved in fulfilling kinship duties. Even if relatives cannot live in close proximity, they nevertheless cultivate strong ties and attempt to support each other economically, emotionally and in other ways. In the Western world the extended family eventually gave rise to the nuclear family during the industrial revolution. The Indian joint family is a different institution, however, which emerged from the country's specific cultural and ethical traditions and influences.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Shangle, S., "A View into the Family and Social Life in India", in: *Family Perspective*, No. 29 (1995), 423–446.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Derne, Steve, *op. cit.*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Sinha, Raghuvir, *op. cit.*, 22.

The Family within the Andean Vision

Víctor Bascopé Caero

In present times, affected as we are by deeds and attitudes reflecting anti-values that distort the lifestyles of peoples and individuals, in particular, it is worthwhile taking a look at the life schemes of the Original Peoples, be their origins Andean, African, Asian or European. All the Original Peoples have coffers full of immense riches that we only need to open and offer into the service of families and peoples for their lives today.

I believe that in the vision and experience of the Andean cultures we guard those principles and values of life which can provide sustenance and encouragement for today's peoples. I say this without the slightest intention of disrespecting, let alone negating, the ideas or visions of present-day or postmodern cultures.

The truth is that those who came before us in life have something, and perhaps a great deal, to tell us about fostering and improving our personal and family life in our present life in the Pacha¹⁰⁶.

Human life, for the Andean Peoples, has always been and always will be a condition immersed in the existential wholeness of the Pacha. We are and we exist as Runa¹⁰⁷ in the Pacha.

The Ayllu

The Ayllu¹⁰⁸, our family. We Andean Peoples believe that all humanity is one Ayllu, meaning that all humanity constitutes a single family. All the peoples in the world are our Ayllu, without distinction between the different cultures or different physical manifestations they may have. Our Ayllu are all the peoples who inhabit the Pacha.

¹⁰⁶ Phrase of the Andean people for the World.

¹⁰⁷ *Runa* is the meaning for the Word "Human" in the language of the Quechua.

¹⁰⁸ In the language of Quecha *Ayllu* means family, extended family, rural community, so it means the lowest tier of the social organisation.

In this article we shall try to share the fundamentals that underlie the coexistence of our Ayllu in the Andean Pacha, the coexistence of the Andean family.

The Ayllu is the manner in which we live in the human family based on the principles of coexistence in our Pacha. It is how we in the Andes organise our coexistence in harmony with everything that exists. It embraces our organisational units from the small Ayllu (father, mother and children) to the great Ayllu – the Marka or the Suyu¹⁰⁹ – where economic, social, cultural and religious structures are generated.

One of the principles that grants consistency to our coexistence in the Ayllu is Ayni, a way of living based on the practice of complementary reciprocity which is radically gratuitous, governed by the ability to receive and offer for the benefit of the life of the whole Ayllu in its existential relationships in the Pacha. In what follows we will share something of our Ayllu, attempting to reflect the different levels of coexistence in the Andean Pacha.

Ayllu founded on the principle of Ayni

The foundation of life for Andean Ayllus is the principle of Ayni. Our way of living in harmony with every existential dimension of the Pacha is sustained by the past and living experience of Ayni.

Basically, we live Ayni by knowing how to receive and offer freely. To us as Andeans, the recognition of an offer freely made is sacred. The experience of Ayni must therefore be lived and fulfilled with great dedication.

Our Andean Ayllus are aware that our relationships, be they on the economic, social, political or even religious level, are sustained within the principle of Ayni. For us, “all is Ayni”. Our life is Ayni. That means that any action or intention must be engaged in the spirit of its objective. In other words, if our actions or intentions are good ones, the reward will also be good. If, on the other hand, our actions or intentions are negative, the response will likewise be negative. This is just, this is how it should be.

¹⁰⁹ *Suyu* = region.

In this sense, our wise men and women, our Yatiris, advise us to educate ourselves constantly in the principle and lived experience of Ayni. Our educational projects are guided by the “knowledge of living well”. The knowledge of living in the abundance of universal harmony. The knowledge of living with everything that exists in the Pacha.

Ayllu and the principle of We-ness

One of the characteristics of our Andean Ayllu is that we live according to the principle of “We-ness”. Whether something relates to someone else or to ourselves, it is always our concern. The principle of We-ness derives from the principle of mutual co-responsibility.

The principle of We-ness nourishes our experience of life in mutual co-responsibility. Our interpersonal relationships within the Ayllu have meaning in the sense that each and every one of us shares responsibility for all that transpires and for everything that might happen to our Ayllu and to each of its members. Everything is our concern.

Ayllu in our Pacha as a territorial space

Territorial references are a fundamental part of the development of our Ayllus in the Andean region. We believe that within our territorial space we affirm our identity as peoples belonging to a specific Ayllu. Our distinctive ways of being on the various planes of existence are affirmed within our belonging to a territory.

Throughout the four regions of our Territory, we give shape to our Ayllus, our Markas and Suyus.

A territory is the space that determines our movements as Peoples. Our Ayllus move within our territory in accordance with the existential regions, the Suyus. Just as in the time of the Incas there was the Tawantinsuyu. Nowadays the journeys of the Andean Peoples take place between the territorial spaces of the High Plateau, the Valleys and the Tropical Plains.

At the same time, we have another territorial reference corresponding to our everyday habitat, for our Ayllus are located in the *Sayañas*¹¹⁰: the Aransaya and the Urinsaya.

¹¹⁰ A place, where people often stop.

A further territorial reference we have as Ayllus are our environmental ecosystems, depending on how we interact with the fruits of the soil. For example: the Ayllus of the plateau undertake their journeys towards the valleys and the tropical plains to exchange their products. This same dynamic is the framework for intercultural processes between the Peoples.

Ayllu in our vital space, the Earth

As Ayllus we develop within our vital space, the Earth. Thus the Earth is our fundamental base that sustains our way of life in the Ayllu. This is how we constitute our Andean culture, from the same Andean soil.

The Earth is the vital space where we build our homes in accordance with the skills of millennia; where we live and develop our spirituality; where we create and renew our fundamental values of life; where we develop our knowledge of how to cultivate and grow the fruits of the soil; where we develop our knowledge of caring for and raising all the living creatures of the Pacha, including the animals and the plants; where we develop our organisational arrangements with our own system of authorities, our Amawt'as, in the form of permanent and temporary services.

Our Earth is the space where we as Runas and Jaqis achieve fulfilment as beings. We become Runas or Jaqis¹¹¹ with the experience of fostering life, from caring for the family to cultivating the fruits of Mother Earth.

In this way, we Ayllus regard ourselves as guardians of the Kay Pacha¹¹². We are the stewards of this vital space in all its existence. In this sense, we are the best beloved children of our Pachamama, called upon to tend and grow her fruits.

Ayllu, our form of socio-political organisation

We Andean Ayllus have our own organisational structures, in which we develop a system of authorities or life services. Basically, we distinguish between permanent and temporary services:

¹¹¹ *Jaqi* means "Human" in the language of Aymara.

¹¹² *Kay Pacha* is according to the Inka-mythology a visible, perceptible habitat of people, animals and plants.

- The permanent services are performed by wise men and women who dedicate their wisdom in tending to life, offering their knowledge in the service of the Ayllu throughout their lifetime. Our Wise Women and Men, Yatiri, Qulliri, Aysiri, Ch'amaqani, Kukaqhawiri, etc. are recognised as authorities within the Ayllu. The services provided by our Amawt'as are true ministries geared towards health, integral education and religion.
- By contrast, temporary services are provided by every member of the Ayllu, who fulfil such services in turn and in accordance with the use and custom of each region. These are temporary administration services geared to everyday life, including economic, social and political development. Our temporary servants, Mallku, Jilanku, Jilaqata, Yapukamani, etc. are also recognised as bearing authority.

Ayllu as the way in which we become people in the Pacha

Just as all beings who exist in the Pacha follow their path to become people and achieve fullness, so too Runa, Jaqi, follow a process to become people and achieve fullness in the Pacha. On our path through life, from the moment of our conception until the moment of our death, we realise our growth towards becoming fully Runa or Jaqi.

Knowing how to receive life: we receive life from the belly of Pachamama

Every person is a fruit of Pachamama. We come to this Pacha because our Pachamama so desires it. The life we receive is sacred, and so we must take care of it, for that is what our Pachamama asks of us.

Within our Ayllu, it is the Mother who receives the beginning of life, nursing it in her belly until the moment of birth. After the birth, the same Mother provides care and food until the boy or girl can fend for himself or herself. This experience of knowing how to receive life and how to care for it is evidence that the Mother is the objective and real expression of Pachamama, who makes possible the existential project of human beings in the Pacha.

In the life of our Andean Ayllus, it is the Mother who receives, nurses and cares for life. Furthermore, it is she who takes the

decisions fundamental to the life of the Ayllu. Hence we can safely assert that Andean Ayllus are matriarchal. Once the Mother begins a period of gestation with a new life, the members of the Ayllu, which is to say all the family, are aware of their obligation to look after her and care for her. It is important to take into account appropriate food, attention to health, protection from evil spirits and from places ill-suited to life, and permanent spiritual accompaniment for the pregnant Mother.

There is no doubt that women who are mothers are the physical and spiritual force in the life of the family, the Andean Ayllu. The future way of life of Andean families depends on the attitudes and fundamental decisions of the Mother.

Umaruthuku

When the boy or girl has completed one or two years of life, in accordance with the life principles of Andean Ayllus, we perform Umaruthuku. This is a rite of initiation enabling the new person to enter the Ayllu with all rights and duties.

This celebration is attended by the authorities and all members of the Ayllu, who watch and participate in the cutting of the child's hair. Each portion of the hair symbolises and acquires an economic value. In other words, someone who cuts a small portion of hair must, depending on the quantity, deposit a sum of money or give a hen or a sheep, and there are even cases where someone will cut a portion of hair in return for a llama or a cow.

Following the celebration of this rite of initiation, the new person is recognised by their own name in the Ayllu. He or she is now the person called by this name. From this day on, this person will have their own economy. The money collected and all the other possessions given at the cutting of the hair is and remains the exclusive property of this child. The parents and guardians pledge to protect and care for this economy until the new person is able to manage it appropriately.

From this day of the Umaruthuku, the person of the boy or girl is recognised in the Ayllu as Runa or Jaqi, and is even able to assume tasks and services within the Ayllu. This person has all the rights and faculties needed to perform services within the Ayllu.

The time for Warmichakuy, Qharichakuy or Jaqhichasiña in the Ayllu

On our path of planning, we human beings become fully Runa or Jaqi as we experience the complementarity of being masculine and feminine. We are truly people when we achieve unity in harmony between the male being, Qhari, Chacha and the female, Warmi.

Being male and female, Chacha-Warmi, Qhari-Warmi, is an essential reality in our Ayllu in order to form part of the source from which springs the path of life. As Runa or Jaqi we are always in a couple.

From this encounter between man and woman arises the family as a fundamental nucleus of growth towards being a human person in the Ayllu.

The real expression of the complementarity between man and woman, Chacha-Warmi or Qhari-Warmi, takes place and is fully realised in marriage. In the encounter of man and woman we attain the fullness of being Runa, Jaqi, as Domingo Llanque described: "For the Aymara, this is the fourth birth in the process of life and they call it 'JAQICHASIÑA', which means to become an (adult and responsible) person. The subject is born into the society of adults and can share in the full existence of the community as a social living being. One is born to assume the cultural heritage and historical memory of the social group to which one belongs."¹¹³

In the Ayllu, the couple begins to live in accordance with the sacred experience of Mañaqaku or Irpaqa. In the celebration of Mañaqaku or Irpaqa, the couple's union takes place in the hands of Pachamama, before the gaze of Pachakamaq¹¹⁴, in the presence of the ancestors, attended by the local authorities of the Ayllu, with the testimony of the wise men and women and the counsel of all family members. In this way, the Ayllu guarantees the permanence of the couple, reflecting the principle that all members of the Ayllu share co-responsibility for the life of a new couple. Warmichakuy, Qharichakuy or Warmichasiña, Chachantasiña. Thus we begin to live as Qhari-Warmi or Chacha-Warmi. To be fully Runa, Jaqi, it is not sufficient simply to be a couple. In addition to being a couple,

¹¹³ Cf. Llanque, Domingo, *Vida y teología andina*, Peru 2004, 92.

¹¹⁴ Creator of the world.

Qhari-Warmi or Chacha-Warmi, it is of vital importance for the couple to have children, to know how to receive all the sons and daughters offered to us by our Pachamama. The more sons and daughters we have and raise, the more we are people, the more we are Runa or Jaqi.

It should be mentioned that not being able to have children is the saddest thing that can happen in our life as couple. Sterility is regarded as a misfortune in the Andean world. Children represent the affection and blessing of our Pachamama, and if we have no children it is like living without the affection and blessing of Pachamama.

The time to fulfil obligations within Ayllu

Within our Ayllu, as Runa or Jaqi, we are aware of the obligation to perform the services or tasks in the Ayllu that befit the traditions, usage and customs of each region.

Clearly, our wise men and wise women, Amawt'as, fulfil permanent services in the Ayllu, whereas every member of the Ayllu, as Runa or Jaqi, as Qhari-Warmi or Chacha-Warmi, achieves wholeness by observing the exercise of temporary services. We seek education to grow on the path of service.

The time to give counsel

From the day we cease to fulfil our service commitments in the Ayllu, we are regarded as true Runa or Jaqi, worthy of respect. In the Ayllu we will be granted the role that becomes us as elders. This is the time when we rightfully occupy the place of counsel.

It is impressive to see the experience of life among those older persons who have attained the level of counsel. There is a constant flow of many visitors to their house. People come alone or in couples to seek advice or simply to converse. These counsellors become the Tata-Mama of the Ayllu.

Our counsellors will always offer us the great word, the ancient word to illuminate and guide us in daily life or when we have to take important decisions in the Ayllu.

Types of Family

Modern Diversity – Families at a Time of Change

Stefan Becker

When we talk about the “family”, we inevitably have a certain image in mind. We derive this image partly from our own experiences with the families we were born into and partly from our personal longings and needs. What springs to most people’s minds is probably a “normal happy family”: mum, dad and two children – usually a son and a daughter. Yet today’s family is more than a traditional married couple with children. Over the past forty years, family structures have undergone a transformation, particularly in developed societies.¹¹⁵ This transformation is marked by the abandonment of the traditional family model and involves greater choice between varieties of family types. Single parents, unmarried couples with children, stepfamilies and rainbow families (with two dads or mums) have become very widespread and socially acceptable lifestyles. Yet the marriage-based family continues to play a key role.

Family models and images

Without being aware of it, everyone has an ideal or unspoken image of what a family should be. The way we work out our private lives follows certain quite specific cultural models which we seldom call into question. These are models of a “normal”, “proper” or “good” life together, whether as a couple or family.¹¹⁶

The family models that prevail in society “may contain ideas of the family in general (e.g. ‘The family must always stick together’) or

¹¹⁵ Cf. Sagel, Irina, “Nachholende Modernisierung im katholischen Milieu”, in: Familienbund der Katholiken (ed.), *Stimme der Familie*, No. 1 (2011), 9.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Henry-Huthmacher, Christine (ed.), *Familienleitbilder in Deutschland – Ihre Wirkung auf Familiengründung und Familienentwicklung*, published by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Paderborn 2014, 29.

they may relate to specific features of family life, such as partnership aspects (e.g. 'Neither of the two parties should be much older than the other'), parenting (e.g. 'Two kids are ideal, preferably a boy and a girl') or family biography (e.g. 'Before two people get married, it's a good idea for them to live together for a while').¹¹⁷ They help us find our bearings in everyday life and therefore influence the way we think and act.

The development of our personal family models is shaped by our socialisation during childhood, although later we also take our lead from the family lives of those around us, i.e. friends, neighbours and colleagues. Our image of a happy and successful family is therefore also determined by the examples we see around us.¹¹⁸

The yearning for a family, stable relationships and harmonious circumstances springs from a basic human need. This explains why most people see the family as central to their own well-being. Surveys have repeatedly shown that the family continues to be highly valued, especially among young adults. Over three-quarters (76 per cent) of the young people questioned in the Shell Youth Study (2016) said they could only live a genuinely happy life as part of a family.¹¹⁹ 93 per cent believe that fidelity is important or very important. 97 per cent could imagine growing old together with their current partners and 78 per cent say they believe in love with a capital L. Also, most singles do not see their current status as a preferred choice (81 per cent) and would like to have a partner. 88 per cent wish to have children.¹²⁰

Definitions of family

It is a Roman Catholic value to see marriage as the model and foundation of a family. Marriage is an institution resulting from the nature of man, and its essential qualities derive from the personal love

¹¹⁷ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (ed.), Familienleitbilder – Vorstellungen – Meinungen – Erwartungen, Wiesbaden 2013, 7.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Henry-Huthmacher, Christine (ed.), op. cit.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Shell Youth Study 2015, www.shell.de/aboutshell/our-commitment/shell-youth-study/2010/family.html (11.04.2016).

¹²⁰ Cf. Forsa-survey 2014, www.guj.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/die-stimmen-einer-generation-grosse-forsa-studie-im-auftrag-von-neon-zeigt-die-jungen-deutschen-sind-selbstbewusst-konservativ-und-wuenschen-sich-frieden/ (11.04.2016).

that exists between husband and wife and from their fundamental openness to having children.¹²¹

A micro-census conducted by the German Federal Statistical Office defines the “family” on the basis of kinship, with the main emphasis on the parent-child relationship. The parents may be married to one another or not, they may be single parents or they may be same-sex partners. The family is defined as “parents and unmarried children living in one household”, including stepchildren, foster children and adopted children. Where different lifestyles are concerned, the micro-census distinguishes between three types of family: married couples with children, unmarried couples with children and single-parent families.¹²²

A similarly diverse picture emerges when people in Germany are questioned about their images of the family. When asked, “What is a family?”, everyone still replies without exception: “A married couple with a child”. At the same time, however, 97 per cent of respondents would also apply the term family to an “unmarried couple with a child” and 88 per cent to a “homosexual couple with a child”. A similarly high value – 85 per cent – emerges for patchwork constellations, i.e. families in which at least one parent brings in a child from a previous relationship.¹²³ Moreover, four out of five respondents associate the word family with three generations living together under one roof – grandparents, parents and children (82 per cent).¹²⁴ Childless couples, on the other hand, are regarded far less frequently as families – married couples without children: 68 per cent, and unmarried couples without children: 33 per cent.¹²⁵ The vast majority of respondents currently see children and not so much the parents’ form of relationship as central to the definition.

¹²¹ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_ge.html (11.04.2016).

¹²² Cf. Jurczyk, Karin, *Vater, Mutter, Kind? Acht Trends in Familien, die Politik heute kennen sollte*, Gütersloh 2014, 21.

¹²³ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (ed.), *op. cit.*, 10.

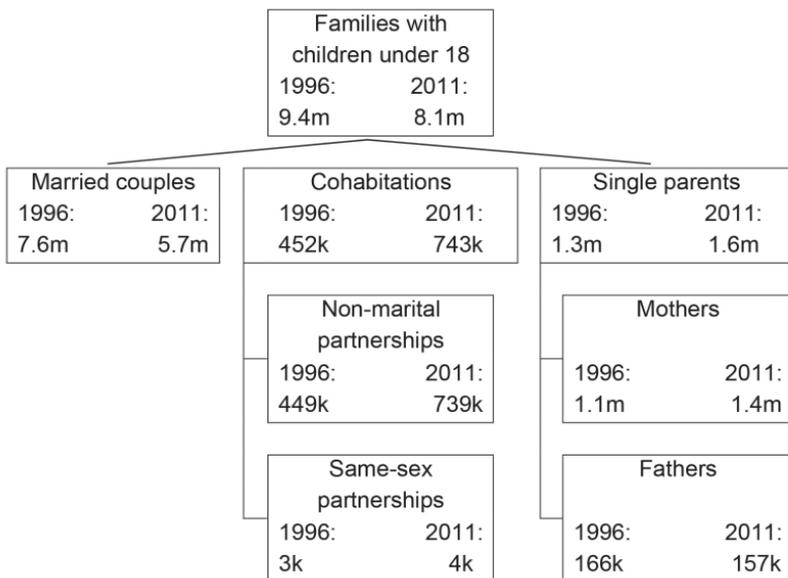
¹²⁴ German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (ed.), *Familienreport 2012 – Leistungen, Wirkungen, Trends*, Paderborn 2012, 13.

¹²⁵ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (ed.), *op. cit.*, 10.

Married couples with children are the most widespread type of family

Today's families are diverse.¹²⁶ Yet most people's personal backgrounds are still based on an experience of a marriage-based family:

Germany's 5.7 million married couples – 71 per cent – are by far the most frequent type of family among the country's 8.1 million families with children under 18. Other types of families can be broken down as follows: 1.6 million single parents form 20 per cent of all families with children under 18, while 9 per cent of all families are unmarried couples with under-age children, including 739,000 non-marital partnerships and 4,000 same-sex couples.¹²⁷



Source: German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) (ed.), *Familienreport 2012 – Leistungen, Wirkungen, Trends*, Paderborn 2012, p. 14.

While the number of traditional families (i.e. married couples) has declined steadily over the past few years, other types (single parents and unmarried couples) are on the increase. There is now a wide

¹²⁶ Cf. Jurczyk, Karin, op. cit., 17.

¹²⁷ Cf. German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (ed.), op. cit., 14.

range of family types and constellations, e.g. couples with children born within or outside marriage, couples with adopted or foster children, single parents with or without partners, patchwork families and rainbow families. But family life also manifests itself where adult children take on responsibilities for their ageing parents and provide them with care and support.

To gain an understanding of the plurality of family types with their increasingly flexible and dynamic biographies of both men and women, we can turn to life course theory, an approach that is becoming more and more relevant in sociology and public opinion research. This aspect of plurality can be seen both in private biographies and in people's careers. In previous decades "institutionalised" CVs showed that the lives of men and women followed a clear sequence of stages: education and training, marriage, birth of their children, children moving out and retirement.¹²⁸ Today's CVs, on the other hand, are more flexible with families and households increasingly being established by cohabiting couples.

Cohabiting unions

The transformation among types of families is reflected especially clearly in the increasing number of cohabiting couples with children.¹²⁹ Their share among family types has almost doubled in less than two decades (from 4.3 per cent in 1996 to 9.4 per cent in 2012). More and more couples are deciding to have a child without first getting married. Yet although there has been an increase in cohabiting couples opting for parenthood throughout Germany, there are still very clear differences between East and West within the country. Proportionally, East Germany has far more children in non-marital family situations than West Germany (East: 1998: 44.1%, 2010: 58.3% – West: 1998: 15.5%, 2010: 27%).

However, this trend does not necessarily mean that many young people see cohabitation as an alternative to married life.¹³⁰ There are many indications that couples see cohabitation as a trial run and a preliminary stage before marriage. This hypothesis is borne out if we

¹²⁸ Cf. Jurczyk, Karin, *op. cit.*, 18.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

compare the proportion of unmarried parents after they have had one child and then two children. While the share of unmarried couples is as high as 43 per cent (2010) at the birth of the first child, this proportion is much lower – 24 per cent – when the second child is born. It shows that marriage continues to be a significant lifestyle and that it still forms the basis for the majority of families.

Divorcees, single parents and stepfamilies

The number of divorces among parents with children has stabilised over the past ten years¹³¹ and remained more or less constant since 2002, affecting 35 per cent of all marriages. Apparently, people who decide in favour of marriage are confident about this lifestyle and are more likely to persevere with it even when they experience partnership issues. Nearly half of all divorces involve children under 18.

The number of parents who, in 2012, were bringing up at least one child under 18 and were either separated from the other parent or bringing up their children on their own was 1.6 million (1.3 million in 1996). Most of them were single mothers. The proportion of women with a child but without a permanent partner was 11 per cent in East Germany and 6 per cent in West Germany.¹³²

Stepfamilies – also referred to colloquially as “patchwork families” – are families that include children from a previous partnership. According to the AID:A Survey by the German Youth Institute (2009), the proportion of stepfamilies was 10 per cent in West Germany and 12 per cent in East Germany at the time.¹³³ Like single parents and cohabiting unions, such types of family are by no means new in history.¹³⁴ In the past, however, stepfamilies mainly resulted from the death of a parent, whereas nowadays they are primarily the outcome of divorce. Moreover, today’s stepfamilies are more heterogeneous.

¹³¹ Cf. Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal German Statistical Office), *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit, Haus halte und Familie – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus (Subject-serie 1, Vol. 3)*, Wiesbaden 2012.

¹³² Bastin Sonja, et al., “Diversität der Familienformen in Ost und Westdeutschland”, in: Dorothea Krüger et al. (eds.), *Familie(n) heute – Entwicklungen, Kontroversen, Prognosen*, Wiesbaden 2012, 126–145.

¹³³ Heintz-Martin, Valerie/Entleitner, Christine, *Stepfamilies in Germany: New Insights on Partnership Formation and Living Circumstances from AID:A – “Partnership Relations in Context”*, Pairfam Conference in Munich, 22. September 2011.

¹³⁴ Cf. Jurczyk, Karin, op. cit., 26.

In most stepfamilies the step-parent does not replace a deceased parent, but functions in addition to the biological parent. As the latter, too, may have entered into a new relationship, the outcome can be numerous different family constellations for children.¹³⁵ This calls for considerable flexibility in arranging day-to-day family life.

Multi-local families

More and more people now live in multi-local families.¹³⁶ These are families in which the parents and their under-age children periodically live apart, in different places, and where family life is distributed over several places of residence. There are three different types of multi-locality, depending on whether it is caused by the family members' jobs, the family situation or a new lifestyle.¹³⁷ Job-related multi-locality primarily affects weekend commuters, frequent travellers and transnational families. Occupational mobility is an issue not only for the highly qualified, but increasingly also for those with low qualifications and for employees in sectors that have not previously placed any major demands on mobility.

Family-related multi-locality is largely caused by separation and divorce. When Germany introduced new custody laws, with a greater emphasis on joint custody and on the fathers' interests, it began to see an increasing number of children growing up in several temporary places of residence. According to the AID:A Survey of the German Youth Institute, one in six families in Germany is a post-separation family with at least one child under 18.¹³⁸ At least 12.5 per cent of all under-age children have parents who live apart and of these children around 61 per cent regularly spend an equal amount of time with both separated parents.

Self-imposed multi-locality also affects "living-apart-together couples", who are in a relationship but who live at different addresses. This form of relationship is currently on the rise, having grown from 4.7 per cent in 1992 to 8.2 per cent in 2008.

¹³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 27.

¹³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 29.

¹³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹³⁸ Cf. Rauschenbach, Thomas/Bien, Walter, *Aufwachsen in Deutschland – AID:A – Der neue DJI-Survey*, Weinheim 2012.

Rainbow families

A new type of family was added under Germany's Civil Partnership Act in 2001: the so-called rainbow family, in which children grow up with a same-sex couple. The 2006 micro-census identified 5,000 families with at least 6,600 children. The origins of such families can vary substantially. A study at the University of Bamberg showed that more than half of all the children came from a previous partnership, while the other half were born within the registered civil partnership.¹³⁹ The study also showed that the children felt greatly burdened by the separation, whereas their parents' coming-out as gays or lesbians was only perceived as burdensome by a small number with most coping well.¹⁴⁰ Children who were born into a civil partnership did not notice the special nature of this type of family until they were older. All the surveyed parents said they tried to help their children by answering any questions they had about their type of family.

Acceptance of plurality

The increasing diversity of family types may well explain why society's understanding of the family has broadened so much in recent years. The majority of the population currently see the definition of the family as hinging on the presence of children and not so much on the nature of the parents' relationship. Both the type of family and society's understanding of family have changed noticeably in recent years. When Cardinal Kasper gave a speech before the Consistory – a talk which attracted much attention – he pointed out that this development should not tempt us to “romanticise the past and then – following the current trend in some circles – to regard the present as a history of decline.”¹⁴¹ Rather, we must acknowledge the different types of families as resulting from a free and pluralistic society. At the same time, however, we must not fail to help those who are searching for suitable models in their lives.

¹³⁹ Rupp, Marina/Bergold, Pia, Zusammenfassung, in: Rupp, Marina (ed.), *Die Lebenssituation von Kindern in gleichgeschlechtlichen Partnerschaften*, Cologne 2009, 281–311.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Walter Kardinal Kasper, *Das Evangelium von der Familie – Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium*, Freiburg 2014, 33.

The value of marriage

A family is not static, nor does it remain unchanged after people have opted for it. It is very much alive and needs to be “recreated again and again as a shared pattern of life. This involves an interactive process of dealing with one’s own developmental challenges – personal challenges and those relating to specific phases in life – and also challenges and strains which impinge on us from outside.”¹⁴² The quality of a family, therefore, largely depends on the success of family members in living out their shared life and in strengthening cohesion within their partnership and family.

As Catholic Christians, we emphasise that a marriage-based family “is an institutional resource which is suitable to facilitate and promote such cohesion in a special way.”¹⁴³ “Marriage gives both partners a protective space and room to develop. The marriage vows offer commitment and security in a confusingly complex world.”¹⁴⁴ At the same time, however, marriage should not be understood as a normative stipulation or moral requirement, but expressly as a proven family model that remains attractive.

One important difference between a marriage-based family and other types of family needs to be mentioned. By entering the sacrament of matrimony, marriage partners accept “that the emergence and growth of their relationship is not just their own doing and the fruit of their own endeavours. Rather, they see themselves as carried by their confidence in God’s love and intimacy, as God supports and strengthens them along the way, not just in good times, but also in times of crisis and failure.”¹⁴⁵

This extends the institutional benefits of this type of family by adding a further and very different dimension and perspective – the

¹⁴² Familienbund der Katholiken (Family Alliance of Catholics) LV Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony Branch), *Diskussion zum Familienbild im Familienbund der Katholiken*, unpublished manuscript, as of October 2012.

¹⁴³ *Familienbund der Katholiken LV Niedersachsen*, op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) (ed.), “Zwischen Lehre und Lebenswelt Brücken bauen – Familie und Kirche in der Welt von heute”, resolution taken by the Committee’s AGM on 9.May 2015, 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Familienbund der Katholiken im Bistum Münster Textvorschlag zum Familienbild*, unpublished manuscript, 4.June 2014.

“promise of a more fulfilled life”.¹⁴⁶ In fact, this is the special status of marriage which is so worthy of protection. It is also the status of marriage-based families and a value which we, as Christians, ought to encourage.

All family types deserve recognition

Those working in the area of family policy – e.g. the Family Alliance of Catholics – will find it useful to take the family model as a source of guidance. However, a modern family policy should not be geared towards one type of family or lifestyle alone. It must recognise that there are many different types, each of them forming an integral part of our free, pluralistic society, and it is on this basis that ways must be found of protecting and promoting families.

The Family Alliance of Catholics speaks out loud and clear on behalf of families and encourages *all* families, of whatever type, to do their utmost in realising their social responsibilities, i.e. “the responsibility for child-rearing, education, care and provision as well as the responsibility for a successful life together, marked by loving, resilient and cross-generational relationships.”¹⁴⁷

Where family policy is concerned, the central question should no longer be: “Which types of family do we support?” but: “What are the resources that families need so that, through manifold creative efforts, all those involved can experience a good everyday family life, across generations and across locations, and how and where can and should we help to ensure that those resources are fairly distributed and available?”¹⁴⁸ At the end of the day what counts is to pave the way for family life, not to determine how family life should be lived.

¹⁴⁶ *Familienbund der Katholiken LV Niedersachsen*, op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Deutscher Caritasverband (ed.), “Stellungnahme ‘Familie stärken – die Caritas bezieht Position’”, in: *neue caritas*, No. 14 (2002), 37.

¹⁴⁸ It is a matter of creating an environment that encourages family as a lifestyle, rather than specifying what a family should look like. Cf. *Familienbund der Katholiken LV Niedersachsen*, op. cit.

Contemporary Changes in Family Forms and their Diversity in Africa Today

Guiblehon Bony

Today all societies are undergoing radical change and the social fabric is under tremendous strain. Defining the family as an institution is therefore a hard task, given its profound transformation and destabilisation by the advent of new models such as the 'single-parent family', the 'patchwork family' and the 'homoparental family', to name but a few.

These upheavals have led some family sociologists to abstain from using the words 'family' or 'sociology of the family' in their traditional sense for fear of strengthening the family as an institution and being included in the 'familialist' camp. The challenge is even starker when it comes to the family in Africa, since modern trends tend to reproduce Western models and practices which play havoc with local African appellations and definitions.¹⁴⁹ Clearly, the family is not what it was a few decades ago. It is no longer an exclusive mode of social and legal organisation reserved solely for heterosexuals, but is also open to people of the same sex. In the future there will be many different forms of family. The same is true of marriage, which is no longer the unique frame of reference for life as a couple and for raising children. It has become a 'menu' with various options on offer. The talk is of 'marriage for all' or 'Civil Solidarity Pact' (PACS), etc. These changes raise serious questions about the anthropology of the Church, which favours the biblical model of the family and of marriage based on a union between persons of different sexes. How, then, can the family be defined and, at the same time, due account be taken of the transformations it is undergoing? With these changes in mind,

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Manga, B. "La famille et le changement socioculturel en Afrique", Report according to the colloquium to the topic Conseil international des femmes, "Famille en mutation dans une société en mutation" in Brüssel from 8. to 10. Februar 1992, UNESCO.

how does the Church in Africa define its own model of the family after weighing up the doctrines reflected in the options on offer for family or marriage?

Our family sociology approach does not aim to explore all the different trends and types of family¹⁵⁰. It seeks to find a way of critically examining the family as a complete social entity in order to better grasp the changes it is undergoing. Three aspects will therefore be discussed: firstly, the transformations affecting marriage and the family; secondly, the factors responsible for changes in family ties; and, thirdly, the response of the Church to social change.

The transformations affecting marriage and the family

According to Lévi-Strauss, marriage is the mode of organisation of conjugality or the relationship between spouses. As such, it is flanked by legal and religious rules which provide the framework that gives the family its substance and social approval. It is therefore advisable to first examine marriage and the evolutions it has undergone before attempting to gain a better understanding of the family it and the different forms it may take.

Marriage

From an evolutionist perspective, Engels, drawing on Lewis H. Morgan, posits three forms of marriage corresponding to the three stages of man's evolution: 'group marriage', characterised by polygamy; 'pairing marriage', which describes the union between one man and one woman, and 'monogamy', which symbolises the Western level of civilisation as it is now.¹⁵¹

In Africa, contrary to popular thinking, none of these models of marriage is completely absent, although the most widespread form is polygyny or polygamy, which comprises a husband, several wives and children¹⁵². In addition, depending on the societies in question,

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Studies of matrimony, divorce, maternity, parenting, adoption, couples, etc.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Engels, Friedrich, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, Chapter 4: Die monogame Familie, Online-Bibliothek Projekt Gutenberg. de, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/der-ursprung-der-familie-desprivateigentums-und-des-staats-5092/4> (30.04.2016).

¹⁵² Sub-types of polygamy also fall into this category: 'parallel polygamy' (an individual maintains relationships with several partners over the same reproductive period) and

there are the categories of 'traditional marriage', 'customary marriage', 'arranged marriage', 'abduction', 'forced marriage', 'self-determined marriage', etc.

While monogamous marriage was never absent from African societies, it did come more to the fore in the wake of colonisation and, as an analysis of current practices confirms, is now deemed the most 'advanced' form of marriage by the highly westernised African elite.

In recent decades new models have emerged in the West alongside the classical or traditional types. France has seen the advent of the Civil Solidarity Pact (PACS), which legally recognises cohabitation and gives formal recognition to homosexual couples who were not previously permitted to marry. These couples are now socially integrated and free to organise their lives together within a legal framework. Although this type of union, the PACS, is regarded as a 'secular' alternative to marriage by its detractors and an estrangement from institutional religions¹⁵³, it paves the way for an even more inclusive version. This is the concept of 'marriage for all', which advocates an even greater broadening of marriage and adoption, granting homosexual couples access to these practices.

In the United States, these models are referred to as a 'civil union', 'covenant marriage' or 'social contract'. They give homosexual couples the option to put their union on a par with a 'heterosexual union' and for heterosexual couples to enter into a 'covenant marriage'.¹⁵⁴

These new models also influence African populations, particularly young people, who have a very open-minded attitude to globalisation. Spearheading this development is South Africa, which has passed a law allowing homosexual marriage. Other countries give the impression of resisting this trend or not yet being ready to countenance it (Senegal), the cultural taboo apparently coinciding with a scientific one. Nevertheless, young Africans are susceptible

'sequential polygamy' (an individual has several different partners over the course of his or her life, but at one and the same time). The latter form of polygamy is also known as 'serial monogamy'. Bigamy (a person who has two spouses) and polyandry (a woman with several husbands) also exist.

¹⁵³ Cf. Rault, Wilfried/Letraut, Muriel, Choix du pacte civil de solidarité et rapport à la religion, in: *Politiques sociales et familiales*, No. 96 (2009), 41–54.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Coulmont, Baptiste Eglises chrétiennes et homosexualités aux Etats-Unis: Éléments de compréhension, in: *Revue française d'études américaines*, No. 95 (2003) 1, 73–86.

to temptation and attempts are being made to open the institution of marriage to homosexual couples, as is demonstrated by the surge in gay organisations financially supported by developed countries.

These new types of union highlight the development marriage has undergone. They testify to the fact that marriage can no longer be defined solely as the union of two individuals of opposite sex; it now covers two individuals of the same sex. They also reflect three aspects registered by Singly. Firstly, people pair up without getting married; secondly, extra-marital cohabitation is gradually becoming a fact of life; and, thirdly, divorce by mutual consent (established in 1975) is considered normal.¹⁵⁵

So, following Kant¹⁵⁶, marriage has become a simple public contract between two individuals who remain masters of their destinies. Its contractual nature thus makes it a precarious institution, since it may be invalidated at any moment depending on the interests of the participating individuals. However, marriage is more than a mere contract between two people as it establishes first and foremost an ethical relationship, a new way of conceiving of oneself through, and in relation to, the partner in marriage.¹⁵⁷

These debates accentuate the revolution marriage is undergoing, which has implications for the definition of the family and its very substance, founded as it is in marriage.

Family

Theoretical controversy surrounding the issue of the family in the West has been marked by two key phases; the first, after the Second World War (1945-1965), is described as 'the Golden Age of the family' or the 'twenty glorious years of the family'. This period was characterised by the stability of the family, a low divorce rate and a division of labour, with male and female spouses performing the requisite tasks in a complementary fashion, etc. It was dominated by the theories of

¹⁵⁵ Cf. de Singly, François, *Sociologie de la famille contemporaine*, Paris 1993.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Kant, Immanuel, *Metaphysik der Sitten: Erster Teil: Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*, 60, § 24, Online-Bibliothek Zeno.org, <http://www.zeno.org/Lesesaal/N/9781484105153?page=60> (30.04.2016).

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Online-Bibliothek Zeno.org, <http://www.zeno.org/Lesesaal/N/9781484031919?page=0> (30.04.2016).

Parsons¹⁵⁸ who, adopting a functional approach, believed that the nuclear family constituted a 'sub-system' within the 'social system', which was better adjusted to industrial society and essential to its stability.¹⁵⁹ Le Play based his work on 45 types of family, which include three main categories ('patriarchal family', 'founding' or 'nuclear family' and 'volatile family')¹⁶⁰. He considered the founding family to be the ideal form, since it is best suited to upholding and reproducing values and traditions.¹⁶¹

By contrast, the second phase, described as the 'thirty lamentable years of the family' (1965-1995), is characterised by sweeping social transformations with serious consequences for the family: loss of the monopoly position of marriage, the change in beliefs surrounding procreation, hitherto deemed a couple's 'vocation', the improvement in the status of women, etc. Demographic trends including the drop in fertility rates, the increase in divorce rates and the numbers of children born out of wedlock reinforce this hypothesis. This period also saw the destabilisation and subversion of the family by feminist movements and the sexual revolution of the 1960s. These movements perceived the family as one of the strongholds of oppression, the alienation of women and the replication of the patriarchal social system. André Gide was very much of the same opinion, exclaiming vociferously in 1897: 'Families, I hate you!'¹⁶² The student movement of 1968 also considered the family a harmful institution, because it suppressed the true identity of children and adults by transforming them into conformist individuals. The family thus became the target of political controversy. Left-wing activists and theoreticians, devotees of disciplines ranging from critical theory to psychoanalysis, all seized upon the issue, their criticism of the traditional concept of the family being rooted for the most part in Marxist thought. In his revolutionary approach Marx

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Parsons, Talcott/Bales, Robert F., *Family Sozialization and Interaction Process*, Glencoe 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ The most widespread types are the 'patriarchal family' (adapted to rural life and steppe regions), the 'founding family' or 'nuclear family' (characterised by a stable family core from which the children gradually detach themselves) and the 'volatile family' (characterised by the individualism of its members, the contractual nature of marital life, the absence of rootedness in land or property, the development of different familial structures from one generation to the next, etc.).

¹⁶¹ Cf. Le Play, Frédéric, *L'Organisation de la famille*, Paris 1871.

¹⁶² Gide, André, *Les nourritures terrestres*, Mercure de France 1897.

even went so far as to call for the 'abolition of the family'. Indeed, this slogan appears at the start of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) written by Marx and Engels.¹⁶³ In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels (1983) develops Marx's concept of the family, pointing out that the family leads to alienation because its origins lie in private property and the division of labour, which is based on gender distinction and productive force. He thus proposes its elimination as an important stage on the road to ending social alienation.¹⁶⁴ On this basis, and inspired by Morgan, Engels (1983) posits a typology of the family in which he distinguishes the 'consanguine family'¹⁶⁵, the 'punaluan family'¹⁶⁶, the 'pairing family'¹⁶⁷ and the 'monogamous family'¹⁶⁸. However, marriage is underpinned by a contract which may be revoked at any moment by the two individuals concerned.¹⁶⁹

Although the absence of data relating to such controversies makes it difficult to ascertain the precise state of the family in Africa during these two periods, there can be no denying the domino effects triggered by colonisation and the internal development of African societies.

The monograph on the family compiled by Murdock supplies valuable information on the existence of similar types of family on the continent, which again are open to discussion.¹⁷⁰ He mapped out a typology based on 855 societies in six major regions of Africa. Eight main types will be considered here: three types of extended family with different degrees of extension; two types of nuclear family (one exclusively monogamous and the other occasionally including

¹⁶³ Cf. Marx, Karl/Engels, Friedrich, *Le Manifeste du parti communiste*, Paris 1965, 41–42.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Tai Tak, A. W., Hegel et Engels sur la famille et le politique, in: *Mosaïque, revue de jeunes chercheurs en sciences humaines*, No. 7 (2011).

¹⁶⁵ The consanguine family envisages marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman of the same generation.

¹⁶⁶ The punaluan family prohibits sexual relations between brothers and sisters, but permits all other relationships.

¹⁶⁷ The pairing family, while tolerating polygamy and infidelity among men, extends the incest taboo to other family lineages.

¹⁶⁸ The monogamous family is based on male supremacy; the aim is to produce children of undisputed paternity; paternity of this nature is required because children, as natural heirs, are destined to become the property of their father.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Engels, Friedrich, op. cit.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Murdock, George, Ethnographic Atlas: A Summary, in: *Ethnology*, No. 4 (1967) 2, 109–236.

polygyny); two types of polygynous family, depending on the place of residence of the co-wives; and one type of polyandrous family, which is actually extremely rare. Murdoch points out that in statistical terms 'independent polygynous families' make up almost 42% of the societies examined and the 'extended families' 43%. In the Mediterranean region the 'nuclear family' accounts for 35%.¹⁷¹

He also provides details outlining the complexity of the 'extended family', in which varying degrees of extension are found; they encompass 'very extended families'¹⁷², 'relatively extended families'¹⁷³ and 'less extended families'¹⁷⁴. Apart from these different forms of family organisation, rules of residence must also be taken into account¹⁷⁵.

Murdock's classification is not a direct response to the political and theoretical controversies surrounding the family in the West. Nor does he give any indication of the influences to which it might have been subject. Nonetheless, it makes three things clear: 1) the diverse forms of family that exist in Africa; 2) the considerable difficulty in providing a precise definition of the 'African family', given that the concept of family is embedded in extensive networks and a plurality of systems characterised by social, sexual and ethnic inequality, a settlement system, a system of residence and kinship, a system of ownership and inheritance and, finally, a matrimonial system¹⁷⁶; 3) the 'nuclear family' advocated by the African elite today is rooted in a multiplicity of networks and, moreover, was never entirely absent in Africa in the past.

¹⁷¹ Murdock says that many extended families (47%) and polygynous families are also found in the Mediterranean region.

¹⁷² This describes all family units living in one or more neighbouring homes; it clusters families born of at least two brothers or sisters or cousins over three generations.

¹⁷³ This is defined by the author as a 'group numbering one or two individuals of the oldest generation, but less than two families of the following generation.'

¹⁷⁴ This refers to all members of two related families.

¹⁷⁵ Patrilocal residence (the couple moves in with the husband's parents), matrilocal residence (they live with the wife's parents), bilocal residence (they share their place of residence between the parents of the husband and those of the wife), avunculocal residence (the couple moves in with the husband's maternal uncle), neolocal residence (freedom of residence).

¹⁷⁶ Tabutin, Dominique/Bartiaux, Françoise, Structures familiales et structures sociales dans le tiers-monde, in: *Les Familles d'aujourd'hui*, colloquium in Genf from 17. to 20. September 1984, IDELF, No. 2, 231–242.

In summary, the family in Africa is in flux and is invariably influenced by changes taking place in the West. One of these is the phenomenon of 'single parenthood', i.e. a 'household in which a person lives without a spouse but with at least one dependent child under the age of 25 [...]'^{177,178}. Here Vidal discerns the first signs of change within the African family system in the emergence of new types of union without cohabitation, referred to as 'second offices' (i.e. extra-marital relations), which are widespread in African towns and cities. These unions – a modern, urban reinterpretation of polygamy – are described as 'new interpersonal combinations' or as 'informal polyandrous networks'¹⁷⁹. A frequent phenomenon in urban environments and among the elites, they sometimes include children born out of wedlock who effectively illustrate the changes in the concept of the family.¹⁸⁰ Then there is the 'patchwork family', which frequently emerges after a divorce.¹⁸¹

The greatest novelty at present is 'homosexual parenthood'¹⁸² or a homoparental family involving a self-declared homosexual adult who is the parent of at least one child'.¹⁸³ This form of family is flourishing in the West and is not entirely absent in Africa either, as is evident from the proliferation of gay organisations on the continent and the pressure exerted on African governments by developed countries and

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Tichit, Christine, *La monoparentalité en Afrique*, 25. IUSSP-Kongress, Tours 2005.

¹⁷⁸ According to Tichit, single parenthood in Africa differs from that practised in the West, because it occurs more frequently in Africa and includes broad and more extended networks of familial and material solidarity. The author identifies several types of single parenthood: 'dependent single parenthood' applicable to mothers staying at home or accommodated elsewhere, 'latent single parenthood' practised by women who entrust their children to others, 'social single parenthood', 'masculine single parenthood', etc.

¹⁷⁹ Antoine, P./Nantelamio, J., "Nouveaux statuts féminins et urbanisation en Afrique", in: *Congrès sur le statut de la femme et évolution démographique dans le contexte du développement*, UIESP, Oslo 1998; Ndongo, P., Amitiés, *sexualité et avortement en milieu scolaire: Le cas de la ville de Kikwit* (RDC), in: Gendreau, F./Poupard, M. (eds.), *Les transitions démographiques des pays du Sud*, Paris, 241–250.

¹⁸⁰ The author says that in Cameroon 76% of the heads of single-parent households are women, while just 3% are men.

¹⁸¹ This refers to a 'pair of adults, married or not, and at least one child from one of the partner's previous relationships [...]', the definition being provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE 2005).

¹⁸² The Association of Gay and Lesbian Parents (APGL) coined this expression in 1997. Cf. the websites: www.homoparentalite.org, www.homoparentalite.free.fr and www.apgl.asso.fr (11.04.2016).

¹⁸³ Leyre, Julien, Homoparentalité, http://www.eleves.ens.fr/pollens/seminaire/seances/homoparentalite_2004/homoparentalite.pdf (20.07.2015).

international lobby groups to accept these new forms of marriage and family. The nascent changes are also apparent in the new family law passed by the National Assembly of the Ivory Coast in 2014. This law states that the man is no longer the head of the family. Paternal authority is replaced by parental authority, the purpose of which is to engineer agreement between the spouses.

These changes prompt Fizel to assume that in future a family of five will no longer fit the traditional pattern of a man, a woman and their child(-ren) but reflect the new configurations instead.¹⁸⁴ All this makes the family a hub of social change. How can it be best explained?

The factors triggering change in the family

This section looks at some of the changes affecting the family. A number of factors have already been touched on¹⁸⁵, including social, demographic, economic, environmental and political pressures, internal and international migration, the emergence of the state and Westernisation. However, we will only discuss three that are of particular significance.

Process of deinstitutionalisation

In all societies North and South changes appear to be under way, as a result of which individuals and social groups are subjecting their relationships with the family, politics, the economy and religion to a critical review, albeit at varying speeds. In this process the traditional concept of society is being stood on its head. Indeed, there is talk of 'a crisis of social cohesion'.¹⁸⁶

Many authors, including Hervieu-Leger believe the emergence of new models of the family will bring about 'institutional deregulation' or 'deinstitutionalisation'.¹⁸⁷ Roussel even alludes to a dual form of deinstitutionalisation within the family affecting both the rules and laws

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Fizel, M., *La famille*, Paris 2005, 23.

¹⁸⁵ The geographical mobility of individuals and families, varied lifestyles caused by increasing individuality, competition for sources and spaces of socialisation, diversification enhanced by various forms of socialisation, etc.

¹⁸⁶ Farrugia, Francis, *La crise du lien social: Essai de sociologie critique*, L'Harmattan 2000.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, «Le mariage pour tous: Le combat perdu de l'Église», in: *Le Monde* 12.01.2013.

which govern it and the normative framework to which it adheres.¹⁸⁸ The authors see the weakening of institutions occurring initially at the state level and in the processes of socialisation and traditional regulation and then in the major institutional religions, whose systems of ministry and mission have in a state of gradual collapse. The outcome is a weakening of emotional life, which is a matter of general concern.

In Africa, the crisis of social unity has placed local social ties in jeopardy, generating a crisis of education, an intergenerational crisis, a crisis of confidence, a crisis of values and, above all, a crisis in family relations.

Families once constituted a sound basis for parental authority and contributed to the preservation of the social fabric, providing traditional rulers, for instance, with the requisite means to meet extraordinary expenses for popular festivities and the welcoming and accommodation of strangers. However, the power of the traditional family has been greatly weakened by the emergence of new values which the current educational system 'instils' in its students. The academic degree myth and elitism encourage individualism and are creating an ever wider gap between well educated individuals and traditional family tenets.

Major institutions such as the initiation societies – places of great symbolic status for the formation of masculine and feminine identity – have been rendered impotent and ineffective by the dual impact of colonisation and globalisation. Initiatory wisdom is no longer sought in the 'sacred forest' of the village; it is now to be found in other venues of social life (school, internet, social networks, etc.). As a result traditional punishments (bans and taboos) have declined and are no longer respected.

The enfeeblement of these major institutions has an impact at all levels – and religion is no exception. There is now a pluralisation of the 'religious market' with new religious movements coming increasingly to the fore. M. de Certeau goes so far as to say that 'people's faith is no longer supervised by the Roman Church [...]. It develops in a state of euphoria which can no longer be harnessed to anything.'¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Rousset, Louis, *La Famille incertaine*, Paris 1989.

¹⁸⁹ De Certeau, Michel, *Le Christianisme éclaté*, Paris 1974.

The path taken by certain development policies in Africa is increasingly undermining the traditional family. The African family was once self-sufficient and could cater for its everyday needs, but now it has been locked into a system in which it has precious little value and money is what counts. All this has paved the way for individualism.

Assertion of individuality

The weakening of traditional institutions has engendered forms of individualism which have been accompanied by a liberalisation of morals and thus a diversification of the forms of matrimony. This prompted Hervieu-Léger to state that the 'legitimacy of marriage is now based on relationships between individuals'.¹⁹⁰ In his view, they regard their religious beliefs and practices, along with their social ties, as their own private affair. Consequently, they see little or no need to turn to the Church and its representatives for guidance. Their activities and their attitude to God and morality are self-referential and have nothing to do with the laws of the Church. This individualism can also be seen in the pursuit of female emancipation, in women's desire for control over their bodies (fewer children, control of their sexuality, management of their careers, abortion, etc.) and in the demands for gender equality.

Queniart and Hurtubise are of the opinion that all this has transformed the family into an '[...] institution in which the organisation of social and personal life is of much less importance than it used to be.'¹⁹¹ The best example of this individualist trend is homosexual parenthood, which is gradually coming to be accepted among the norms which structure private and public views of the world. Following the legitimisation of the 'single-parent family' and the 'patchwork family', this is – according to Singly – the third stage of a process in which a single model, which was originally accorded higher social status, is being called into question.¹⁹²

The same applies to the higher rates. Given that divorce is now purely a matter of individual choice, marriage is a divorce circum-

¹⁹⁰ Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, op. cit.

¹⁹¹ Queniart, Anne/Hurtubise, Roch, *Nouvelles familles, nouveaux défis pour la sociologie de la famille*, in: *Sociologie et sociétés*, No. 30 (1998) 1, 133–143.

¹⁹² Cf. de Singly, François, *Le soi, le couple et la famille*, Paris 1996.

stance just like any other, a 'revocable contract, the purpose of which is to secure the happiness and, in particular, the sexual fulfilment of each of the spouses'.¹⁹³ So if expectations are not fulfilled, divorce is the answer.

The situation in Africa is not fundamentally different. Here, too, the assertion of the personality, the 'quest for self-revelation or Pygmalion task'¹⁹⁴, is proving increasingly attractive to young people searching for (sexual) fulfilment. There is a growing number of gay organisations, for example, which are paving the way for the 'emergence into the public space' of sexual minorities, which a few decades ago were to all intents and purposes 'invisible'.¹⁹⁵

The sheer existence of these platforms demanding homosexual rights places a question mark against the traditional institutions of marriage and the family. According to recent publications by the *African Political Review*, these platforms refute the barely acceptable notion of a purely heterosexual Africa devoid of a mix of genders.¹⁹⁶ The work done by Gueboguo on this subject provides proof that homosexuality does exist in Africa. In an article entitled 'Homosexuality in Africa: What it means and how it has changed from the past to the present' the author demonstrates that homosexuality has always been known and practised in Africa.¹⁹⁷

Even in a marriage, husband and wife invariably endeavour to develop their respective personalities. This frequently results in what Singly calls a 'relational and individualist family', which is geared much more to the individual and the quality of interpersonal relations.¹⁹⁸

It was out of respect for the individual and to take account of these transformations within the family that the UN declared 1994 the 'Year of the Family', declaring it to be "the smallest democracy at the heart of society". This democratisation of the family also laid the

¹⁹³ Leyre, Julien, op. cit.

¹⁹⁴ De Singly, François, *Sociologie de la famille contemporaine*, Paris 1993.

¹⁹⁵ Broqua, Christophe (ed.), Dossier: "La question homosexuelle et transgenre", in: *Politique Africaine*, No. 126 (2012).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Revue Politique africaine*, No. 126 (2012).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Gueboguo, Charles, *L'homosexualité en Afrique: Sens et variation d'hier à nos jours*, <http://socio-logos.revues.org/37> (24.07.2015).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. de Singly, François, *Le soi, le couple et la famille*, Paris 1996.

ground for the adoption of the Civil Solidarity Pact (PACS) in France in 1999. This pact is a state-recognised alternative marriage contract between a man and a woman, between two men or between two women which has led to an extension of human rights in people's private lives.

Extension of human rights to the private sphere and development assistance

The extension of human rights to the private sphere is a major change which has significantly altered the perception of both marriage and the family. To use Eskridge's terminology, it turns marriage into a 'menu', similar to that in a restaurant, where customers are free to choose their preferred dish.¹⁹⁹ Once marriage has become a menu, the individual is able to select the partner of his or her choice: As Eskridge says: 'Today, [...] couples of all genders enjoy a menu of options.'²⁰⁰ One of those options, or one of the dishes on the menu, is the union between people of the same sex who, as Eskridge notes, are participating in 'a sweeping change in state-regulated pair formation.'

Continuing with the menu metaphor, then, individuals are free and have the right to marry the person of their choice, whatever the sex, provided their interests are compatible. As a result the choice, particularly in favour of a spouse of the same sex, becomes a fundamental human right which is embedded in the large complex of inherent human rights on a par with civil, political and religious rights²⁰¹, the right of women to ordination to the priesthood, the right to abortion, the rights enjoyed by ethnic minorities, etc. In consequence, a country which opposes this choice or law commits a violation of human rights and individual liberties, which can result in the withholding of economic aid. From now on, in other words, development assistance is contingent upon respect for human rights, including that to homosexual marriage or the rights of homosexuals.

This is what underlies the accusations levelled by Western countries and human rights organisations against certain countries,

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Eskridge, William, *Equality Practice: Civil Unions and the Future of Gay Rights*, New York 2002, 121.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰¹ Cf. Coulmont, B., *op cit.*

mainly in Africa, such as Egypt²⁰², Cameroon, Zimbabwe and, above all, Uganda, as a result of their failure to respect the rights of homosexuals and thus their violation of human rights. These countries are frequently threatened with the loss of or actually deprived of economic development aid by international financial institutions and rich countries on the grounds of discrimination, ostracism, the violation of human dignity and a refusal to recognise the rights of homosexuals and sexual minorities.

It is in this sense that the President of the World Bank claimed that 'institutionalised discrimination has a deleterious effect on people and on societies'²⁰³. Similar views are held by certain economists, notably M.V. Lee Badgett of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who has speculated on the disastrous economic consequences of India's rejection of homosexuality, claiming that the Indian economy consequently lost up to 23.1 billion dollars in 2012. The *Wall Street Journal* calculated that the discrimination of gays and lesbians cost India 112 billion rupees (1.9 billion dollars) in 2012, i.e. between 0.1% and 1.7% of its GDP. The newspaper concluded that the negative effects of discrimination also included a rise in the number of cases of depression and suicide among homosexuals²⁰⁴.

Marriage has become attractive once more, which explains the demands raised by homosexual movements for marriage and adoption.

That being so, is it not the case that homosexual couples have the right to demand their integration into the life of the Church, with both the blessing of their marriages and the right to adopt? How is it possible to overcome the gap between Church doctrine and what (Western) society sees as a right in the light of irreversible developments in society? In the view of Hervieu-Léger, the issue becomes

²⁰² Cf. Pratt, Nicola, The Queen Boat Case in Egypt: Sexuality, National Security and State Sovereignty, in: *Review of International Studies*, No. 33 (2007) 1, 129–144; <http://www.slateafricque.com/2093/cameroun-homosexuels-homophobie-religion-justice> (30.04.2016).

²⁰³ Kim, Jim Yong, President of the World Bank, made this claim in an interview entitled "The High Costs of Institutional Discrimination", in: *The Washington Post*, 27. February 2014.

²⁰⁴ Wolkhonski, Boris, 'World Bank says homophobia is an obstacle to economic development in India', Voice of Russia, June 2015. This was a report by the World Bank on 'The Economic Cost of Stigma and the Exclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of India'. http://fr.sputniknews.com/french.ruvr.ru/2014_06_15/Pour-la-Banque-Mondiale-l-homophobie-est-un-frein-au-developpement-economique-de-lInde-6414/ (11.04.2106).

more complex 'when a demand [...] affects the private sphere of marriage and the family, asserts the inalienable rights of the individual in respect of any higher law and rejects all natural inequalities between the sexes'²⁰⁵. Does the Church have its back to the wall?

Acid test for the church in the face of social developments

In view of the issues raised time and again and the dramatic changes taking place within the family one is tempted to ask 'What society is it we are living in?'²⁰⁶ How long can the Church maintain its resistance?

The anthropology of the church

In her analysis of the anthropology of the Church, Hervieu-Léger says that it favours the biblical model of marriage and the family on the grounds that 'the norm – the one true married family, following biblical norms, established by God himself – consists of a father (male), a mother (female) and the children they conceive together [...]' and that the family is 'the only natural institution capable of laying the ground for the establishment of a bond between spouses, parents and children'.²⁰⁷

For Hervieu-Léger this form of anthropology, which makes 'marriage the unique, sole and unequivocal benchmark of all human conjugality', leans too heavily on the 'divine will which, it is assumed, is expressed by a natural order explicitly linking a union with procreation and preserving the principle of submission by women to men.' She concludes that this model fails to recognise that 'the creation of an ideal couple is based on the virtue of love.' As a result, she regards it as rather discriminatory.

Furthermore, there have been increasing calls, even among the Church faithful, urging respect for individual choices and for the 'menu of options'. Some ministers and priests have been implicated

²⁰⁵ Cf. Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, op. cit.

²⁰⁶ Dubet Francois/Martuccelli, Danilo, *Dans quelle société vivons-nous?*, Paris 1998.

²⁰⁷ Daniel Hervieu-Léger explains that in 'this Christian model of marriage, stabilised in the 12th and 13th centuries, it is assumed that the divine will is expressed by a natural order linking explicitly a union with procreation and preserving the principle of submission by women to men.'

in sex scandals or homosexual marriages. The recent statement by the United Protestant Federation of France in favour of homosexual marriage steps up the pressure within the churches. Like governments, the Church in Africa depends on external economic aid and is also feeling the impact of globalisation. Young 'globalised' Africans, intoxicated by their freedom, are not fundamentally opposed to homosexuality, even though they denounce politicians in Gabon, for instance, who employ it as a resource or form of capital in order to access political power.²⁰⁸

If the Church, in the spirit of its biblical anthropology, considers homosexuality a 'sin' yet blesses homosexual unions, is not the rejection of homosexuals a sin? Is it not the love of a homosexual that counts, because a homosexual is a person created in the image of God? How should the Church react if a homosexual couple with children starts attending church, makes donations and subsequently asks a minister or priest for support in family matters? If the Church were to 'recognise marriage between individuals of the same sex, would it not also have to recognise their right, through adoption, to start a family?'

How, then, is it possible to establish a way of thinking that is not only in keeping with the reality of life but also capable of acceptance within the Church? After all, certain of its members are not opposed to same-sex marriages and even endorse this type of union. Should the Church, which has always defended human rights, run the risk of excluding some of its members who belong to a sexual minority and, if so, on what grounds?

All these questions pose a dilemma for the Church as an institution, making its taboo-based system less and less efficient and devoid of power as a result. They also force the Church in Africa to define its own model of marriage and the family.

The necessity of a model of the family in Africa

As has already been pointed out, it is difficult to talk of specifically African concepts of marriage and the family, since the influence of

²⁰⁸ Cf. Aterianus-Owanga, Alice, "L'émergence n'aime pas les femmes: Hétérosexisme, rumeurs et imaginaires du pouvoir dans le rap gabonais", in: *Politique Africaine*, No. 126 (2012), 49–68.

Western models and practices is extensive. However, to do nothing would be tantamount to suicide for the Church, which might be forced to accept a model it loathes.

It would appear, therefore, that the Church in Africa has little choice but to formulate its own model of the family which remains true to the Church as well as to the rich African heritage and its ideas on the family, which include a strong feeling for relationships, kinship and brotherhood, a sense of the importance of solidarity, hospitality, respect for elders and traditions, and a sense of honour for and attachment to ancestors, all of which help to maintain group equilibrium.

A model of this nature would constitute an original and significant contribution to the global debate on the family and ensure a certain balance between the family models. For the Church in Africa it would be a sign of its sense of responsibility,²⁰⁹ autonomy,²¹⁰ self-sufficiency, inculturation,²¹¹ emancipation²¹² etc. As Blocher rightly noted, anthropology does not assume that there will be any anarchic, irresponsible increase in the forms of union between men and women.²¹³ Common structures and benchmarks are invariably resurrected. Total promiscuity has never existed even in animal societies, as the great ethologist, K. Lorenz, cited by Blocher, has demonstrated. He reminds us that animals themselves do not form indiscriminate pairs, that the ritualisation of animal behaviour can be very pronounced, that some species practise a kind of 'monogamous marriage' and that sexual relations between a married woman and a man who is not her husband meet with virtually universal disapproval.²¹⁴ Blocher also points out that the universality and permanence of marriage laws underline the necessity of shaping and institutionalising the relationships between human couples. 'This

²⁰⁹ Mveng, Engelbert (ed.), *Spiritualité et libération en Afrique*, Paris 1987.

²¹⁰ Boulaga, F. Eboussi, *Contretemps: L'enjeu de Dieu en Afrique*, Paris 1991.

²¹¹ Sanon, Titiana A./Luneau, R., *Enraciner l'Évangile: Initiation africaine et pédagogie de la foi*, Paris 1982.

²¹² Hebga, M., *Emancipation des Eglises sous tutelle: Essai sur l'ère post-missionnaire*, Paris 1976.

²¹³ Cf. Blocher, Henri, *Le mariage et ses altérations à la lumière de l'Écriture* (1. Part), Conférence Nationale des Eglises C.A.E.F de France, Paris 1993.

²¹⁴ Cf. Lorenz, Konrad, *Essais sur le comportement animal et humain: Les leçons de l'évolution de la théorie du comportement*, Paris 1970.

imperative, which is indispensable to both society and the individual, by no means excludes a diversity²¹⁵ of marriage and family models, the nature of which depends on the aspirations of each individual society.

It remains the task of the Church in Africa to identify the doctrines on offer in the family or marriage 'menu'. However, it would also be wise to take account of negative elements within African traditions (tribalism, violence, interminable power struggles, ethnic exclusiveness, etc.) in order to do justice to the expectations of its believers.

Ultimately we are left with the question of what the 'family' model to be developed will look like. Will it boil down to a family consisting of parents and children? Or will it encompass a wide range of intimate relationships (patchwork families, older people, single mothers, same-sex couples)? How can this family be put on a scientific footing in semantic terms, thus making it coherent with the theology which uses it? And how can the substance of this family, which has its roots in the most pressing social demands of its community of origin, be given new meaning?

Legal boundaries must be drawn as the basis for legal boundaries of pastoral care. All groupings within the Church in Africa – conservatives and liberals, young and old, theologians, anthropologists and sociologists, town and country dwellers, the cultivated and the less cultivated – must be involved in drawing up a definition of a model of the family.

Conclusion: the future of the family is wide open

Despite the ongoing changes which are accelerating the decline of the family, there is still every prospect that 'the institution will stand firm and remain a favoured form of interpersonal solidarity and self-fulfilment'²¹⁶, because it retains a positive image in the eyes of Africans.

Many people still believe in marriage as an institution, as it remains an ideal vehicle for the 'expression of the need for social recognition

²¹⁵ *Marriage rights Encyclopedia Universalis*, No. 11, 759b.

²¹⁶ De Singly, François, *Le soi, le couple et la famille*, Paris 1996.

and the formation of personal identity, linked to the need to be close to someone'²¹⁷ without renouncing the affirmation of individual identity.

The growing needs of African society are matched by the growing – and changing – needs of individuals, who have to organise their (private) lives in diverse ways. This process of organisation involves both ethical and individual choices which have implications for family life. As a result, individuals require reference points which correspond to their expectations, occasionally draw on their cultural traditions and take due account of social change. According to Morgan, the family is 'the active element, it is never static. On the contrary, it evolves from a lower to a higher form, as society develops from an inferior to a superior stage'. It can be concluded therefore that, in view of its capacity for change, the future of 'the family' is wide open.

²¹⁷ De Singly, François, *Sociologie de la famille contemporaine*, Paris 1993.

Marriage and Family Issues Facing the Church in Contemporary Indian Society

Alwyn Dantis

Traditional views of family in India

India as a subcontinent is synonymous with the word diversity itself. However, despite its vast geographic spread, strong historical foreign influences, a great multiplicity in religious, cultural and traditional values, it is believed that the various cultures have retained certain characteristics over time that makes certain generalisations possible.²¹⁸ This is particularly true when it comes to the traditional views pertaining to the family. Of prime significance among these views is the notion of the joint and extended family which for centuries has been the ideal and desirable form practiced widely across the county.²¹⁹ A popularly accepted definition of the traditional joint family as proposed by the Indian sociologist Karve is that it is “a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked in one kitchen, who hold property in common, participate in certain family worship, and are related to one another as some type of kindred”.²²⁰ This would normally include kinsmen across generations including uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and grandparents living in the same household.²²¹

Most families in India are largely patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal in structure, although there are few tribal groups in northeast India and groups in south India that trace a matrilineal descent.²²² The common factor however, with very few exceptions, among both

²¹⁸ Cf. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Delhi 1985, 61.

²¹⁹ Cf. Medora, Nilufer, “Strengths and Challenges in the Indian Family”, in: *Marriage & Family Review*, No. 1-2 (2007) 41, 173.

²²⁰ Cf. Karve, *Irawati Karmarkar, Kinship Organization in India*, Seoul 1965, 8.

²²¹ Cf. Medora, Nilufer, op. cit., 173.

²²² Cf. Vallianipuram, Thomas, “The Evolving Family Culture and the New Evangelization”, in: *Indian Journal of Family Studies*, No. 2 (October 2007) 5, 59.

patriarchal and matriarchal systems is that the males conventionally exercise authority and power in relation to major family decisions such as property and finance and also in providing physical and moral protection to the family.²²³

Traditionally, marriage is considered to be sacrosanct and necessary across most Indian cultures and it is generally seen more as a union of two families rather than two individuals.²²⁴ Marriage is a highly respected and revered institution and it is generally the parents who consider it an important duty to ensure that their children are married at an appropriate age. Conventionally, this was arranged with the help of the extended family and other community members. Inter-religious or inter-caste marriages are forbidden, and such couples may experience ostracism from family members and their local community. To remain single, except for religious reasons, is considered unusual in Indian society and single persons, especially females, are subjected to indiscreet questioning and pressure to get married by members of the family and the society.²²⁵ Most Indian marriages are generally monogamous; however, both polygyny and polyandry are also practiced among some tribal groups. This is despite the fact that bigamy is a criminal offence in India, except for Muslims, who are permitted up to four wives in accordance with their religious views.

Divorce in India was a very uncommon practice. Among the upper Hindu castes, it was usually only considered in the rarest situation like infertility or impotency. However, it has been culturally accepted, through infrequently, among the lower Hindu castes and more prominently among Muslims who view marriage more in contractual rather than sacral terms.²²⁶ The primary aim of marriage for Indian families is the begetting children (preferably a male) and continuing the family lineage.²²⁷ A family without a child is generally deemed unfortunate and desolate by Indian society, with barrenness being considered

²²³ Cf. Sonawat, Reeta, "Understanding Families in India: A Reflection of Societal Changes", in: *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*, No. 2 (2001) 17, 180.

²²⁴ Cf. Mullatti, Leela, "Families in India. Beliefs and Realities", in: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 26 (1995), 18.

²²⁵ Cf. Medora, Nilufer, op. cit., 186.

²²⁶ Cf. Mullatti, Leela, op. cit., 21.

²²⁷ Cf. Pandey, Janak, "India in Families across Cultures: A 30-Nation Psychological Study", in: James Georgas (ed.), Cambridge 2006, 362–369, here: 365.

a curse of the infertile woman; the blame is rarely put on men.²²⁸ Intrusive questioning is common in Indian culture and childless women of all classes have admitted to feeling insulted and embarrassed when confronted with queries about trying to conceive.²²⁹ The ancient practice of dowry, although illegal in contemporary times, continues to be present in Indian society with the practice being prevalent even in the state of Kerala which has an almost 100% literacy rate and a sizable Christian population.²³⁰

Traditionally, each member of the Indian family has had a distinctive role and function based on their position within the family. Pandey explains the familial roles thus:²³¹

The Mother: has the primary duty of the well-being of the husband and children and is expected to make all efforts and sacrifices towards this end. She is highly respected within the family. The male child has a very dependant relationship with the mother and he finds it hard to wean himself out of her influence.

The Father: is the primary earning member and is responsible for all important decisions pertaining to children and especially the finances.

The Grandparents: look after children in the absence of parents and play a key role in instilling traditional values to them.

Extended family members: supplement other familial roles. The aunt plays a key role in the life of the child during the mother's absence, while cousins provide friendship with whom one can share personal feelings.

Children: are expected to be obedient towards elders, look after younger siblings, excel in studies and look after their parents in their old age.

In its traditional understanding, the family has been the centre of support and security for all members, including the elderly, widows,

²²⁸ Cf. Rouchou, Brittany, "Consequences of Infertility in Developing Countries", in: *Perspectives in Public Health* (2013), 175.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Cf. Mullatti, Leela, op. cit., 19.

²³¹ Cf. Pandey, Janak, op. cit., 368.

never-married adults, and the disabled; and also the primary source of assistance during periods of unemployment and other challenges of life.²³² These primordial views of the family may not necessarily be construed as perfect or acceptable to all, but they have nevertheless provided the Indian diaspora with a certain cultural identity and have moulded it into a collectivistic, as opposed to an individualistic, society which stresses upon family unity and togetherness, family integrity and cohesiveness.²³³

The changing nature of family in Indian Culture

The key factor influencing the traditional views of family discussed above has been the rural agrarian economy prevalent in India and the fact that most families and kinship communities lived within narrowly defined geographic parameters.²³⁴ However in contemporary times, families in India are in a state of flux and undergoing profound and fundamental changes in every aspect discussed above due to prominent causes such as migration, urbanization, modernization, increasing literacy levels, impact of mass media communication systems such as films, television and internet among others.²³⁵

The first change evident in Indian family structures is its steadily increasing 'nucleation'. For example, despite the traditionally held sentiment of a joint family, the 1951 Indian Census data revealed that less than 25% of the population lived in hearth groups of seven or more members²³⁶. Some writers have suggested that a complete joint family in India is rare and that a typical Indian family is either a large family or a small joint family with a growing number of nuclear families.²³⁷ The 2001 Census of India revealed that 39.4% of the population had six or more members in the household, a number that

²³² Cf. Sethi, B., "Family as a Potent Therapeutic Force", in: *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 1 (1989) 31; Chekki, Dan A., "Family Values and Family Change", in: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, No. 2 (1996) 27.

²³³ Cf. Medora, Nilufer, op. cit., 172.

²³⁴ Cf. Kashyap, Linda D., "Indian Families in Transition: Implication for Family Policy", in: Loveless, A. Scott/Holman, Thomas (eds.), *The Family in the New Millennium: World Voices Supporting the "Natural" Clan* (No. 3), Westport 2007, 263–273.

²³⁵ Cf. Vallianipuram, Thomas, op. cit., 60.

²³⁶ Cf. Singer, Milton B./Cohn, Bernard S., *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, New Brunswick 1970, 342.

²³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

decreased to 31.5% in 2011.²³⁸ As compared to this, the number of two to five member households increased from 57% in 2001 to 64.8% in 2011, with a greater rise in urban as compared to rural areas. While these figures alone do not give us a complete synthesis, they nevertheless provide us with an indication of fundamental change in this primary aspect pertaining to the meaning and understanding of the nature of family in India.

Economic factors due to rising industrialisation continues to cause large scale rural to urban, and even international migration, giving rise to more and more nuclear families. These factors have tended to break up the large extended family system and also to loosen or dissolve the kinship ties altogether in many instances.²³⁹ However, there are many positive elements that have appeared with the rise of this nucleation such as an egalitarian spousal relationship, mutual decision making by the spouses without too much interference from the extended family, and a greater sense of privacy and independence from the in-laws and other significant elders.²⁴⁰

Challenges to contemporary Indian families

Despite the many positive factors and practical features attributable to the modern nuclear families, the alienation from kinsmen, both ideological and real, has given rise to several challenges. As Eric McLuhan reasons, if the contemporary family is typically categorized as nuclear, then in this atomic age, could it not also mean that the family just like the atom can just as easily be split up with the accompanying cataclysmic devastation?²⁴¹ The following sections briefly describe three important challenges that are prevalent in contemporary Indian society.

The emergence of alternate family structures and patterns of living

The factors influencing nucleation have directly or indirectly resulted in the rise of several variants of family patterns and

²³⁸ Cf. Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, "Census of India 2011: Household Size", DevInfo http://www.devinfo.live.info/censusinfodashboard/website/index.php/pages/household_size/total/9personsandabove/IND (04.01.2015).

²³⁹ Cf. Kashyap, Lina D., "Indian Families in Transition: Implications for Family Policy", 266.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Vallianipuram, Thomas, op. cit., 61–62.

²⁴¹ Cf. McLuhan, Eric, "The Family in the Electronic Age", in: *Mass Media and the Family: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Family*, Milan 1981, 38.

household types that have previously been uncommon in the Indian cultural make-up. Examples of these include single parenting due to widowhood, divorce, abandonment/neglect of one parent, or male migration for employment purposes; neglect of the elderly parents who are left to fend for themselves; children raised by relatives other than the parents for extended periods of time, neglect of religion and the religious education of children due to inter-religious marriages and civil unions; and the loss of cultural and social values and identity. Many of these variations to the typical nuclear family which Bharat describes as 'alternate family patterns' arise purely from socio-economic conditions and situations that are outside a person's direct control.²⁴²

Sonawat explains that experimental or chosen lifestyles such as living without marrying and being childless voluntarily are restricted to an extremely small group of people in India.²⁴³ Nevertheless, families of all variations continue to experience major challenges, especially since all forms of traditional expectations to perform the familial roles explained in the previous section continue to exist despite the original conditions that supported living up to those expectations not existing anymore.

Challenges in attitudes towards marriage and family life in India

Among Indians, marriage is often viewed as a vocation that individuals simply have to pursue. This is particularly challenging for those that are not yet ready for responsibilities pertaining to marriage and family life and are subtly or directly forced into it. These pressures are either external, emerging from family, friends and acquaintances, or personal, due to confusion, immaturity or a false sense of an obligation to marry that many individuals are groomed to believe.

Moreover, marriages in contemporary times are not always considered from their objective dimensions and a lot of importance is given to subjective elements such as friendship and romance, factors that may not always work out in marriage as expected. This is especially the case in 'love marriages' which are also increasingly becoming inter-religious in character. In many cases, even if couples continue

²⁴² Cf. Sonawat, Reeta, op. cit., 180.

²⁴³ Ibid.

to be emotionally compatible, other issues tend to remain unresolved, such as social and spiritual/religious compatibility which is particularly challenging when it comes to raising children and in day-to-day interactions with the extended family members. On the other hand, in case of arranged marriages which are solely objective in nature, individuals can end up marrying someone whom they have hardly known. This usually happens when marriage alliances are made with persons living or working overseas or through an increasing trend of matrimonial advertisements that has become an integral part of the mate selection process in India.²⁴⁴ In such situations, the only time of courtship, if at all, is a few weeks prior to marriage.²⁴⁵

Sexual relationship issues are further problems that often crop up in the early stages of marriages which do not always get easily resolved.²⁴⁶ These are largely due to inadequate knowledge, false expectations, unfounded fears or simply excessive anxiety. Some of these issues may require professional intervention but many Indian couples are reluctant to seek outside help due to unwritten customs that oblige people to keep problems within the family out of fear of what others may think.²⁴⁷ Another important factor that affects spousal relationship is based on the cultural fact that Indian males tend to have a very dependant relationship with their mother and often find it difficult to wean themselves out of their influence.²⁴⁸ This can be particularly challenging for many families that live with the in-laws as is the prevalent practice in India.

Thus, getting married without adequate maturity, whether due to emotional, social or other personal factors mentioned above can often cause great havoc in family life. The number of couples opting for divorce is on the rise in India, and as is already well known, divorce

²⁴⁴ Cf. Nanda, Serena, "Arranging a Marriage in India", in: Norton, James K. (ed.), *India and South Asia*, Guilford 1995, 113–116; Das, M., "Matrimonial Advertisements: An Examination of Its Social Significance in Mate Selection in Modern India", in: *Man in India*, No. 3/4 (1980) 60; Banerjee, Kakoli, "Gender Stratification and the Contemporary Marriage Market in India", in: *Journal of Family Issues*, No. 5 (1999) 20.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Chandrasekar, C. R., "Pressures on Marriage and Consequent Deterioration of Values: How to Handle Materialism", in: *The Family and Contemporary Social Reality, Pastoral Priorities and Challenges: Proceedings of the Seminar for Bishops Chairmen*: Commission for the Family in the Countries of Asia, Chennai 2000, 140.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Cf. Pandey, Janak, *op. cit.*, 368.

brings its own share of burdens for the couple and their children. Divorce is especially painful for women in India due to the prevalent social conditions and mental attitudes. For example, a large proportion of divorced women reported problems with sexual harassment, in the workplace and on the social scene.²⁴⁹

There is also the opposite phenomenon to early marriages in India when marriage, although desired, is often delayed by several years due to economic factors or socio-psychological anxieties. A growing number of men and women, especially in the cosmopolitan cities, feel they are not adequately prepared since they do not yet own a house or wish to stay with parents/in-laws, and more importantly, since they see marriage more as a life-goal rather than as a life-project. There is a cultural fear, especially among females, that marriage indicates a definite end to a life of independence and autonomy which they so cherish. There is also the fear that raising children implies a career suicide especially for individuals and couples where both partners have strong career aspirations.

These fears are especially reinforced by the fact that government policies or the socio-economical culture at large do not oblige employers to provide sufficient support for young mothers in the form of extended maternity leave, part-time employment or flexible work hours as is the case in many western countries. Hence, although India is culturally a pro-natalistic country, its political and economic infrastructures are detrimental to this end and therefore many couples find themselves in emotional, economic and social distress. This is an added burden to those who are not psychologically or economically ready to have children but feel socially compelled to do so since they could otherwise become an object of ridicule or prejudice by members of the society.

Estranged relationships (voluntary/involuntary)

Economic situations have led to an increasing number of cases where couples have to unwillingly live away from each other. These periods of separation could range from regular short periods to long

²⁴⁹ Cf. Amato, P., "The Impact of Divorce on Men and Women in India and the United States", in: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, No. 25 (1994); Pothen, S., *Divorce: Its Causes and Consequences in Hindu Society*, New Delhi 1986; Mehta, R., *Divorced Hindu Women*, New Delhi 1975.

and extended periods which in some cases last an entire adult life span prior to retirement. Prime examples of this are spouses working in foreign countries, off-shore rigs or merchant vessels who visit home after extended periods of time. Involuntary estrangements also happen when both the spouses are in full-time employment with extended work hours. The growing number of people employed in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries in India means that it is not unusual to find couples working in odd shift patterns with very little quality time to spend with each other and with their children.

These factors affect the wellbeing of the family and have adverse effects on the normal development of children. Alencherry explains that children in such families are often left without proper role models or guidance creating a great void in their personality development and in certain cases even subjecting them to mental illnesses such as depression or paranoia.²⁵⁰ Moreover, estrangement in all its forms leads to agonizing emotional problems among all family members. In some cases, this also lead to family breakdowns due to secondary issues arising from the estrangement such as extramarital affairs, suspicious attitudes, domestic violence, anxieties or addictions of different forms.²⁵¹

Even in the absence of involuntary estrangement, general conditions in India especially in the major cities, with insufficient employment opportunities, rising inflation, poor infrastructural set-up, prolonged work hours with not sufficient time for leisure, prayer and spiritual development, and extraordinary expectations on children to perform exceptionally well in schools, colleges and other social pursuits can leave many families tremendously pressurised. These issues are harmful to individual members and to the overall wellbeing of the family. Many of these problems lead to adverse behavioural patterns on the part of both the spouses and the children. Unable to provide sufficient time and attention to children, parents tend to provide them with material alternatives such as toys and gizmos and other proxy social mediums such as extended childcare hours.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Cf. Alencherry, Joseph, "Challenges of Family Life in Modern India and the Pastoral Response in the Light of Familiaris Consortio", in: *Indian Journal of Family Studies*, No. 12 (June 2012) 2, 36.

²⁵¹ Cf. Vallianipuram, Thomas, op. cit., 63; cf. also Alencherry, Joseph, op. cit., 36.

²⁵² Cf. Vallianipuram, Thomas, op. cit., 63–64.

Very often such solutions end up becoming fundamental lifestyle patterns, with a materialistic culture becoming the very goal of life. This also runs the risk of materialistic values being passed on to the child as an intrinsic part of their personality, unless specific steps are taken to counter these attitudes.²⁵³

Mishra explains that the economic, social and cultural forces in contemporary India greatly reinforce individualism which has led to detrimental changes and also great confusion about the roles, obligations, and relationships which had for centuries nourished the inherently social texture of the India family.²⁵⁴ Vallianipuram asserts that inordinate ambitious desires by individuals under the banner of a flourishing Indian economy has been a significant cause of destabilization to the ethos of the Indian family culture.²⁵⁵ This has had the consequential effect of decrease in moral values and increase in greediness, consumerism and a sense of false vanity that embraces the values of a hedonistic lifestyle.²⁵⁶ Many of these lifestyle choices that are detrimental to marriage and family are significantly increasing in India.²⁵⁷ These are largely manifested through presently prevalent practices such as abortions²⁵⁸, use of artificial contraceptives including drugs that are abortifacients in nature but sold as 'contraceptives' or the 'morning-after' pill, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, co-habitation, addiction to pornography²⁵⁹ and bioethical issues arising from recourse to assisted reproductive technologies that sever the essential link between sex and procreation and also the biological parent-child link, as is the case in surrogacy.

²⁵³ Chandrasekar, C. R., op. cit., 143.

²⁵⁴ Mishra, G., "Reflections on Continuity and Change in the Indian Family System", in: *Trends in Social Science Research*, No. 2 (1995) 2, 30.

²⁵⁵ Vallianipuram, Thomas, op. cit., 64.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Alencherry, Joseph, op. cit., 34–36.

²⁵⁸ An average of 658,559 abortions per year have been reported in India between 2006 and 2012. This does not include figures arising from the use of drugs that are abortifacient but sold over the counter as 'contraceptive' or the 'morning after' pill. Data compiled from Wm. Johnston, Robert, "Historical Abortion Statistics, India", Wm. Robert Johnston <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/ab-india.html> (11.04.2016).

²⁵⁹ According to *Pornhub*, the world's largest pornographic video-sharing website, Indians are the fourth largest consumers of internet pornography after the United States, Britain and Canada with 25% of their Indian members being females. Cf. Pornhub Insights, "Pornhub and India" <http://www.pornhub.com/insights/pornhub-india/> (11.04.2016).

The role of the church and challenges for the family apostolate

The Church's understanding of the family has found radical expression in contemporary theological developments after the Second Vatican Council through its Christocentric²⁶⁰ emphasis on anthropology and a Trinitarian ontology of the family.²⁶¹ In particular, John Paul II's papal teaching exhorting the Church to seek 'the primordial model of the family ... in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life'²⁶² coupled with the Conciliar understanding of the family as a domestic Church²⁶³ emphasises the fact that the Trinitarian mission of the family has its roots in its identity as an image and an ecclesial icon of the Trinity. In other words, 'the family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do'.²⁶⁴ In its most basic form, the mission of the family is simply to become what *it is*.²⁶⁵ As Cardinal Ouellet clarifies, mission is not 'added' to the domestic Church's identity, rather 'mission coincides with the domestic Church'.²⁶⁶ This significance is manifested in the Conciliar teaching which exhorts all those who exercise influence over communities and social groups to work efficiently for the welfare of the family,²⁶⁷ and also through John Paul II's apostolic exhortation that 'no plan for organized pastoral work, at any level, must ever fail to take into consideration the pastoral care of the family'.²⁶⁸

Despite this fundamental significance, there are considerable challenges in putting the teachings of the Church into practice. The first among these is the fact that a dedicated Family Apostolate ministry in the subcontinent of India does not have a wide and vital presence in many diocesan centres. Based on a 2010 research study to assess

²⁶⁰ Cf. GS.

²⁶¹ Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, Homebush 1994, No. 6.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ LG 11.

²⁶⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*: Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Episcopate, to the Clergy and to the Faithful of the Whole Catholic Church Regarding the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, Homebush 1982, No. 17.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ Ouellet, Marc, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, Grand Rapids 2006, 58.

²⁶⁷ GS 52.

²⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, No. 70.

the present condition of the Family Apostolate in India, only 87 out of 168 diocesan centres (51.7%) had a dedicated Family Apostolate ministry.²⁶⁹ Alencherry laments the fact that the Family Apostolate in India has not grown significantly even during the preceding eight years and that only 20 dioceses had what he describes as an integrated Family Apostolate programme—that includes pre-marriage counselling, marriage enrichment programmes, responsible parenthood courses, family associations, pro-life activities and family counselling services.²⁷⁰ He further elucidates that most Family Apostolates limit their services to Marriage Preparation Courses alone, and that in many cases, their methodology has not been revised for decades. He also explains that even the Prenuptial Inquiry is very often more juridical than pastoral and that liturgical preparation for marriage is seldom done in most places.²⁷¹ All of this appears to indicate that most dioceses in India cannot claim to be adequately serving their families in these areas, or that they do not see the relevance of the Family Apostolate as a critical area of ministry. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the Church in India largely focuses its attention on meeting basic needs such as education and healthcare, providing for the poor and needy and other relevant social justice issues which have long since been associated with the notion of the Church's essential mission in India.

Based on the prevalent socio-political situation in India as surveyed throughout this essay, the issues that challenge marriage and family life in India are seen to be varied, complex and often subtle in nature. However, what they all have in common is that they have the primary effect of distorting the Trinitarian identity and mission of a Christian family. It is not sufficient, therefore, for Family Apostolate ministries and other Church organisations to act merely as professional bodies, or other not-for-profit groups of social workers among many others, or as quasi-organisations of counsellors, teachers and doctors alone. Rather, the Family Apostolate and the local churches at large have the primary task of building up the family according to the truth of who they truly 'are'²⁷² through a pastoral approach that

²⁶⁹ Alencherry, Joseph, op. cit., 52.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 53–56.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 59.

²⁷² Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, No. 17.

balances an emphasis on morality with an equally greater emphasis on the Christian spirituality of the family.²⁷³ Of key significance within this spirituality is the development of a radical relationship with Christ.²⁷⁴ In other words, the challenge of the Family Apostolate and the local churches is to incorporate in its pastoral approach a family spirituality which grounds conjugal and family relationships within the Trinitarian communion incarnated and revealed in Jesus Christ.²⁷⁵

This specifically calls for a 'continuous evangelisation' of marriage and the family and the cultivation of a consciousness among family members that reflects deeply upon the ultimate sacramental meaning of the communion of persons that is the fundamental building block of the family as a domestic church.²⁷⁶ Given the fact that the dominant culture in India does not have a Christian ethos or Catholic base, as is the case in several other western countries, the local churches also have the additional task of presenting Christian teachings with greater maturity, sensitivity and courage. Often at times this might mean swimming against the secular cultural tide or facing even facing outright hostility from fundamentalist religious groups. This makes it even more imperative to authentically form married couples and re-evangelize existing Christian families in India. This will ensure that families continue to remain the 'Church of the home', a place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis²⁷⁷ and where the message of the Gospel is proclaimed and lived with great joy.

²⁷³ Ouellet, Marc, op. cit., 58.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 59.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Menezes, Cajetan D., "The Vision and Mission of John Paul II Institute and Its Relevance in Indian Context", in: *Indian Journal of Family Studies*, No. 5 (October 2007) 2, 85; Ouellet, Marc, op. cit., 68.

²⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, No. 52.

Public Family Policies in Latin America. Some Axes for Development²⁷⁸

Carmen Domínguez Hidalgo

The responses there have been to the challenges facing pastoral care for the family on our continent coincide in key aspects of their diagnosis of what is happening with the recent *Instrumentum Laboris* and *Lineamenta* drawn up to prepare the Synod of Bishops on the theme of the Family²⁷⁹. Indeed, reading the latter, it is striking how similar the major problems afflicting the family and specifically family pastoral care are across the world. For this reason we will not discuss them further, because the aim of this paper is to reflect on what is needed for our states to develop public policies to strengthen the family, and we will return later to define what exactly is required.

Nonetheless, any reflection about the future must start by taking stock of where things are; the point of departure is in the present day. In this sense, the landscape features both light and shadow. So, in terms of light – possibly as never before – there seems to exist a stated awareness about the importance of the family. In fact, the family and its status as the basic nucleus of society are at the centre

²⁷⁸ Some of the ideas expressed in this article are based on those developed in Domínguez Hidalgo, Carmen, “Hacia el fortalecimiento de la familia en la legislación chilena”, in: Domínguez and Inostroza, *Actas del Primer Congreso Chileno sobre Familia*, collective work, Concepción, 2011, 55–69; Domínguez Hidalgo, Carmen, “Políticas públicas y familia y vida: Horizontes en Latinoamérica”, in: *Revista Medellín*, No. 161 (January–April 2015), 99–120.

²⁷⁹ Synod of Bishops, III Extraordinary General Assembly, “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization: *Instrumentum Laboris*”, Vatican City 2014, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris_familia_en.html; Synod of Bishops, XIV Ordinary General Assembly, “The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and contemporary world, *Lineamenta*”, Vatican City 2014, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141209_lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html (16.03.2017).

of many international²⁸⁰ and national²⁸¹ legal norms, treaties and conventions. Even the United Nations has adopted a declaration on protecting the family, recognising it as the basic group unit in society and as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, especially children, and acknowledging its need for protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community. It has recently reaffirmed that the family is the natural, fundamental element in society and has the right to protection

²⁸⁰ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948. Article 16.3: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 1966, Article 10: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that: 1. The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children." *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 1966, Article 23.1: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." *American Convention on Human Rights*, 1969, Article 17.1: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state."

American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, 1948, Article VI: "Every person has the right to establish a family, the basic element of society, and to receive protection therefore."

²⁸¹ Political Constitution of the Republic of Chile: "Article 1: (...) The family is the fundamental nucleus of society" and Law 19.947 of 2004: "Article 1. The family is the fundamental nucleus of society. Marriage is the principal basis of the family." Constitution of Ecuador: "Article 67. Family in its various forms is recognized. The State shall protect it as the fundamental core of society and shall guarantee conditions that integrally favour the achievement of its goals." Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: "Article 75. The State shall protect families as a natural association in society, and as the fundamental space for the overall development of persons." Constitution of Costa Rica: "Article 51. The family, as the natural unit and foundation of society, is entitled to State protection." Constitution of Nicaragua: "Article 70. The family is the fundamental nucleus of society and has the right to protection by society and the State." Constitution of Colombia: "Article 42. The family is the basic nucleus of society. It is formed on the basis of natural or legal ties, through the free decision of a man and woman to contract matrimony or through the responsible resolve to comply with it. The State and society guarantee the integral protection of the family." Constitution of Paraguay: "Article 49. The family is the foundation of society. Its complete protection will be promoted and guaranteed. It includes the stable union of a man and a woman, the children, and the community formed with anyone of their progenitors and their descendants." Constitution of El Salvador: "Article 32. The family is the fundamental basis of society and shall have the protection of the State, which shall dictate the necessary legislation and create the appropriate organizations and services for its integration, well-being and social, cultural, and economic development." Constitution of Haiti: "Article 46. The State promotes marriage for the better organisation of the family as the basis of our society". Constitution of Uruguay: "Article 40. The family is the basis of our society. The State shall safeguard its moral and material stability so that children may be properly reared within that society." Constitution of Brazil: "Article 226. The family, which is the foundation of society, shall enjoy special protection from the State." Constitution of Peru: "Article 4. The community and the State extend special protection to children, adolescents, mothers, and the elderly in situation of abandonment. They also protect the family and promote marriage, which are recognized as natural and fundamental institutions of society."

by society and the State.²⁸² This is echoed in the political discourse which, in all our countries, especially in election season, makes the family the main focus of future action programmes.

There is, nevertheless, a shadow in this landscape too, because even if the importance of the family is explicitly recognised, when it comes to distilling this into practical policies the problems begin with the notion itself as the key to implementation. Very quickly, everything becomes an ideological debate about whether policies are to be focussed on “the family” or “families”, and from this point on it seems that the only essential thing is to recognise the rights of sexual minorities with regard to family matters. Added to this come demands from another quarter for reproductive and sexual rights – essentially, the right to abortion, teenage access to contraception, including the morning-after pill, and other such things.

Moreover, in all these policies there exists no view of the family as a recognised community, but rather as centred around individuals, and especially, in many cases, women. In this manner, everything is rechannelled towards women’s rights, for example to birth control, asserting that this is an issue of gender inequality. The potential to found a family, on the other hand, is simply not formulated as a positive thing.

Finally, in this brief synopsis of the current landscape, we should note that those public policies which have been developed have consisted solely of legal reforms. To put it bluntly, this has led to all the principles on which family law was founded after our countries’ independence from Spain being replaced not just by different ones, but by diametrically opposed ones.²⁸³ And this reform is still continuing, as can immediately be seen by a review of the draft legislation currently before Congress in our various countries. In other words, the whole emphasis has been on reforming the direct legal regulation of the family, or what is known as family law.

²⁸² Cf. UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, 26th Regular Session, 26 June 2014. “Protection of the Family”: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session26/Pages/26RegularSession.aspx> (16.03.2017).

²⁸³ For further details see: Domínguez Hidalgo, Carmen, “Los cambios en materia de familia y su reflejo en lo jurídico”, in: CELEM (ed.), *La familia en América Latina: Desafíos y esperanzas*, Bogotá 2006, 275–295; Domínguez Hidalgo, Carmen, “Los principios que informan el Derecho de Familia chileno: su formulación clásica y su revisión moderna”, in: *Revista Chilena de Derecho*, No. 32 (2005) 2, 205–218.

Very little progress has been made, on the other hand, in the indirect regulation of the family, such as standards of health, education, housing and tax, where some of the more developed economies have witnessed advances.

Some keys to formulating public family policies: policy ownership

At this point, perhaps we can salvage some vital keys which, by virtue of perspective and configuration, might offer us some orientation in our work to promote public policies that actually respond to the real needs of the family on our continent:

Policies to empower the family and life rather than redefine it: the role of the State

The first thing to define is the exact role of the State in this area and where it should target its action.

In this sense, when talking of the need to promote public policy one should bear in mind the underlying premise that it is undoubtedly incumbent on the State to take decisive action to enable more and more children to grow up in a stable family environment, allowing them the best development they can have. This is what it means to empower the family. It seems essential to clarify this, given that, on the contrary, allusions to empowerment often seem to be almost a cliché, since any proposal in this field apparently has to be justified in terms of supposed empowerment – to the extent that the concept apparently lacks definite content. Even divorce has been presented in public debate as a way of empowering the family. But empowering the family means enabling its full potential, ensuring that every child born can rely on a father and a mother for guidance and orientation towards the best possible development and that these parents can enrich their love in the common task that has been entrusted to them. There is no doubt that this possibility is made exponentially easier when they have committed themselves formally to do this as a permanently united couple. This formal commitment is marriage, which in the civil context is solemnised before a public servant and, in a religious place, before God, by which it acquires the value of a sacrament. For this reason, a number of public policies need to be geared towards promoting marriage. This can be achieved via various routes, as mentioned below.

The point is certainly not to claim that marriage guarantees this stable environment since, as happens in all areas of life, there may be many reasons why this is not the case. Neither is it appropriate to assert that a child which has not grown up with or been able to rely on a father and a mother cannot become the best person they were born to be, because there is no determinism in this. This is intended simply as a reminder that children who do not have a father and mother committed to bringing them up have to overcome more difficulties with regard to the different aspects of personal development than children who do.²⁸⁴

Moreover, in making the case for public policy on family and life issues, the idea is not to ask the state to interfere in family life, because the family is essentially sovereign. The hope is, rather, that the state will reinforce the family, especially by helping those who, for different reasons, confront hurdles or have greater difficulties to manage alone. State action should stop short of, for example, aspiring to become a kind of big father or mother figure and to substitute for parents, which is what happens with authorisations to provide emergency contraception – like the morning-after pill – to minors without ensuring the proper information and consent.

Helping families manage, not managing families

A second broad refocus could begin, in the light of DONATI²⁸⁵, by abandoning the welfare approach to families in favour of an understanding that the family has its own (relational) genome and that policies should therefore recognise the family as a protagonist of the policy and not simply a recipient of it. This implies policies that enable families to do things for themselves, rather than having things done to them, and it could have an immediate impact by rectifying the over-ideological thinking which currently exists on family issues.

Indeed, once families can begin to make their voices heard, once the concrete problems faced by millions of ordinary citizens in our

²⁸⁴ Cf. Herrera Soledad, Viviana S./Valenzuela, Eduardo, "Familia, pobreza y bienestar en Chile, un análisis empírico de las relaciones entre estructura familiar y bienestar", in: *Temas de la Agenda Pública*, Centre for Public Policy, Catholic University of Chile, No. 44 (2011), 1–19.

²⁸⁵ Donati, Pierpaolo, *La politica della famiglia: per un welfare relazionale e sussidiario*, Edizione Cantagalli, Pontificio Istituto Giovanni Paolo II per Studi su Matrimonio e Famiglia, Siena 2011, 7.

countries are expressed, the focus of attention should change. In this sense, on a continent where we have millions of people still living in extreme poverty, with a high percentage of families in which the parents are still illiterate or there is still no clean water – briefly picking out just a few issues – it is hard to explain why our parliaments, in many of our countries, are set on legislating about matters which, in reality, only interest a tiny percentage of our population and are mostly designed to restrict the religious freedoms of the vast majority.

For the ownership of public policies to rest with families from the outset, these policies must reflect the following considerations:

Policies must be founded on specialist knowledge about families

For policies to permit ownership by the family, the first requirement is to base them on a thorough diagnosis of conditions for families in the country where they are to be applied. In many countries, families are still robust entities if we focus on the family as a network. In this sense, we could well say that the State does not do enough about family issues precisely because it can fall back on the support of the family that each one of us can count on.

For this reason, States should begin by studying where the strengths of families lie, what untapped resources are there, what attitudes, what values must be fostered within families to make them more resilient.

Moreover, policies should not respond only to certain aspects, given that knowledge about families is complex and interdisciplinary. It is a technical discipline and is not derived from mere family experience. It is also a complex area in as much as it is inevitably interdisciplinary, because no discipline that is devoted to the family has an exhaustive perspective on its analysis. On the contrary, the only way to tackle such an analysis is by integrating all the disciplines. In particular, we cannot reduce the public effort to legal regulation alone, unlike the way things have been developing in this field in the past and what seems to be the current emphasis.

Policies must be derived from a diagnosis of real family needs

On the other hand, if policies are to permit ownership by the family, they should derive from a diagnosis of family conditions in

each country and bear in mind their particularities. Concern for the family should be rooted in the real needs of the family in that country, and not in those perceived by other countries, because the problems and challenges vary. What this means is that we should not try to replicate reforms made in certain other countries, basically those that have traditionally set us an example.

There should not and cannot be anything automatic about copying the evolution in other countries. Firstly, because doing this only takes into account certain cases, certain countries, rather than the situation that actually exists in many other places where the family is seen and conceived in a radically different way. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because we do not start from the same experience of family issues, because our particularities are different, and because our initial beliefs are not the same.

In this sense, the family, although it has suffered transformations, continues in Latin America to be the primary place in which an individual is formed. It provides the most important context for personal development and a fundamental support network.

To summarize, just as it is true that many aspects of family life have changed, this does not imply that nothing from our past is valid, nor that all the reforms that have taken place in other countries today are necessarily better. On the contrary, a critical perspective should be applied in carefully scrutinising every proposal or reform, to ascertain how much it really matters to the people who make up families, to what extent the real challenges and problems they face will seriously be alleviated as a result or, on the other hand, what urgent needs they have will be left unattended.

This is even more urgent if we bear in mind that there are currently many bills before our Parliament designed to reform family law. Many of them explicitly seek to replace the concept of the family founded on marriage, to grant equal protection to any affective relationship, to revise for a third or fourth time things which have already been reformed. Behind each of these there is a specific or individual interest, a desire for social legitimation, a set conviction about what the family should be. Far from asking about the concrete needs of families in our countries, these reforms are driven by policies adopted in other countries with very different conditions, or even

by mere opinion rather than evidence, if not purely by ideology. Public policies on family and life apply within specific contours, and their precise scope should be defined in the sense that they are not panaceas.

The law is merely an approximation to family and life

It is true that there are no perfect, ideal solutions. The family is such a complex entity in which so many human aspirations come together that it will be impossible always to satisfy them all.

The public concern of the State, via the law or public policy, is always only part of the solution, since the rest depends on the upbringing that takes place within the family and on the views and impulses that motivate each member. These factors are independent of what the law or State policies establish. To illustrate this with clear examples, no legal instrument can definitively force a father who does not want to pay maintenance to his wife and children if he resists doing so. There is no financial compensation for the weakest partner in a divorce or annulment if the other partner refuses to pay it. There is no law or policy that can mitigate the pain caused by abandonment. This all depends on the ethics that govern individual conduct, on the responsibility that we assume in our life choices and the commitments that we take on.

The Law, the state solution, will never be the remedy for all the ills of the family because the family, and with it marriage, are realities that are outside the legal realm, reflecting a package of economic, emotional, cultural and religious aspects, among others.

On the other hand, if a legal solution and its recognition by the State is not the only factor that influences how individuals form concepts of the family, and certainly not the primary reason why people decide whether to get married and found a family, it is however, a useful tool in the process. This means that what the law recognises will in the long run have an impact in strengthening or weakening the family. For example, if the law makes divorce easier, removing all obstacles, over time it will indisputably dilute the commitment implicit in marriage and, as things stand today, there are practically no incentives for young people – from the legal or economic point of view – to get married at all.

The family in crisis?

The transformations that the family has undergone (at least with regard to demographic and sociological trends) are complex and, for this reason, they are not easy to reverse. It is also essential to define the scope of public policies precisely because analysing the reasons for these transformations in the family is complex.

We cannot, for example, irrefutably assume that the family is in crisis. Nevertheless, this assumption is made in almost all the debates we can follow in the media, in statistical analysis and in the legal reforms that have taken place or are currently planned. Their starting point is the existence of a family crisis which translates into changes in family life, in the face of which nothing can be done other than to recognise it and accept that the choices and views of our citizens have moved on.

This premise contains obvious errors and serious gaps. First, it has to be ascertained whether this is a real crisis or whether we are seeing changes and transformations which, if properly tackled, could create opportunities for growth and empowerment for families in Chile.

Furthermore, it is difficult to tell if the changes which our countries are allegedly witnessing in this area are real, and whether people wanted them, or whether they result from behaviours or settings which in no way help to build a solid family unit. (This is the very grave situation with regard to teenage pregnancies and unmarried mothers, to note just two examples.) Or might it even be the case that these changes were brought about deliberately in our societies by certain ideologies, and by the demands of certain groups, as is clearly the case with same-sex unions.

Data such as the percentage of single-parent households²⁸⁶, for the most part women with children, or the number of children born outside marriage²⁸⁷ or of teenage pregnancies – all of them statistics

²⁸⁶ In Chile, 25.48% of households are currently mono-parental. Of these 85% are headed by a woman (44% are indigenous households and 37.4% live in poverty). In Argentina, 17.7% of households are mono-parental, compared with 15.0% in 1990, and of these 16.2% are headed by a woman (2010 Census). In Peru, 11.7% are mono-parental households and of these 9.5% are headed by a woman, an increase on the 1993 census which showed 11.6% (552,000 compared to 788,000 households) (2007 Census).

²⁸⁷ Globally, the increase in the number of unmarried couples living together and of single-parent families has generated an increase in the number of children born outside marriage,

which are increasingly invoked at the outset of any debate about the State's concern for the family – are not in themselves sufficient to conclude that the family is in crisis. On the contrary, these statistics should encourage the State and ourselves to look at opportunities to ensure this does not continue, so that every child can be born into a family with a father and mother and can depend on them at all times.

Moreover, when people talk of crisis, we should ask ourselves whether this is, in many cases, triggered by news that only flags up failures and does not report on those very real models, whatever the social and cultural background, in which the nuclear or extended family has proved its ability to carry on under the most difficult circumstances.

Nothing encourages people like a good example, and if we really want to advance towards empowerment it has to be by promoting the idea that stable families are possible. There are no perfect families, just those who know how to conquer adversity.

Empowering the family requires an all-round perspective

Empowering the family means developing public policies from a perspective that sets out to reconcile the rights, interests and aspirations of individual members with those of the family as a whole. After all, the vigour and energy of the family, and the quality of the bonds between its members, will ultimately engender our individual happiness.

The message, in other words, is that this is not about resolving opposing interests and rights (husband and wife, parents and children, mother and unborn life, etc.) but rather the opposite: how to make sure that everyone's interests are recognised and can be adequately balanced.

To achieve this, the perspective from which we view the family has to change, to avoid both falling into extremes and being confined to exceptions. In fact, the major problem posed by many reforms already carried out or currently under discussion is that they are piecemeal, in

the majority being in South America. In 2012, the percentage of Peruvian children born outside marriage reached 76%, overtaking Chile (69%) and Brazil (66%). In Argentina it has risen to 13%, in Bolivia it is 55%, and in Costa Rica 67%, exceeded only by Colombia with 84%, one of the highest figures in the world (World Family Map Project, 2014).

the sense that they touch very diverse issues affecting different family members. While it is true that from an individual perspective they may be deemed necessary, it is more appropriate to examine them from the point of view of family well-being and the common interest of the family as a whole.

A family policy that sees the family as a community

Moreover, family policy must be developed from a perspective that sets out to reconcile the rights, interests and aspirations of individual members with those of the family as a whole. After all, the vigour and energy of the family, and the quality of the bonds between its members, will ultimately engender our individual happiness.

As far as the specific content is concerned, public policies should take various factors into account

Effort should go not only into confronting the crisis and its various conflicts, but also into preventing them. The foregoing calls for one of the most crucial changes of direction in future thinking about the way forward and the responses it should inspire: targeting the prevention of conflict, providing help to all members of the family in this task – the married couple, the parents and children – with interdisciplinary support accessible to all, especially to those in most need.

We cannot continue to leave married couples to their fate when there are so many tools, so many alternative solutions, such as family counselling, mediation, family therapy and legal advice, which, depending on the type of problem or challenge, could help to provide resolution or insights.

Public policy should be integrated and coherent

Intricately associated with the above, it will not be possible to strengthen the family while at the same time sending a contrary message that could entail a weakening of internal family ties.

What is required is a substantial redirection of effort, requiring a more detailed analysis without neglecting to focus on the future.

Indeed, it is impossible to promote the consolidation of the family if elsewhere essential aspects of that consolidation are being questioned. One example is the need for close communication between

husband and wife and between parents and children, a well-known fact of psychology as well as other disciplines.

Closer communication and confidence cannot be built if, at the level of public policy, there is a move to exclude parents from significant decisions such as the sexual activity or health choices of teenagers, for this is the impact of a series of laws and bills now being promoted in our countries, based on a misunderstanding of how teenagers can plan their lives autonomously.

We should not forget that State intervention in family issues is limited by the principle that a family must have autonomy to pursue its own goals. The State should only act in areas where it is definitely required and on aspects where family members have demonstrable needs or demands.

There are several objectives that need to be grasped.

There are many examples of experience around the world where progress has been made along the lines of what has been discussed above, using various instruments and with varying results, but always in the conviction that the family must be given practical tools to support those who wish to found one and to assist them in their task.

This experience has principally targeted the things that appear crucial: a) increasing the birth rate, b) increasing the marriage rate, and c) enhancing the stability of the family.²⁸⁸

- a) boosting the birth rate: this has been tried in various ways:
 - i) incentives for having children (a voucher upon the birth of each child, tax incentives or disincentives, privileged access to housing, health or education);
 - ii) financial support for the family (tax benefits, social security benefits, support for working people, especially a flexible working day), parental leave;
 - iii) measures to support the reconciliation of work and family (incentives for women's integration in the labour market, keeping women in the labour market, tax breaks for parents to compensate for the cost of crèches and kindergartens)

²⁸⁸ Cf. Andrews, Kevin: "Family policies that work", Presentation to the World Congress of Families, Amsterdam 2009.

- b) increasing the marriage rate and enhancing family stability – i) encouraging matrimony²⁸⁹: developing communication skills and improving the quality of sex education, facilitating the celebration of marriage (reducing costs, providing wedding grants), reducing the costs of married life (favourable tax regime for married couples, improved inheritance rights for spouses) and, notably, better preparation for marriage (courses, university-level workshops before and after marriage), more support facilities for families (interdisciplinary centres);
- c) disincentives for divorce (non-recognition of unilateral divorce, covenant marriage as in Louisiana, Arkansas and Arizona).

In conclusion

However, even all these things we have reviewed here will not be sufficient if we really want to strengthen the family in our countries.

State action is not enough because the responsibility for this question rests with everyone. We as ordinary citizens must be the advocates for these improvements, rather than merely waiting for the State to take charge, especially because, as is currently the case, it could happen in a way that is not to our liking.

It is our task to promote an optimistic view of the family, seeking to identify the keys which will enable us to help future generations, our children, to opt for building a solid family. We will do this not only because it is important for them, but also because it is important for our countries, since we are convinced of the good that it will bring to everyone.

It is our task to support others and to show them that it is wonderful to be able to count on a family, that human love always finds its origin in the mystery of marriage, even during crises, and that this human love is open to everyone and offered to everyone unconditionally.

²⁸⁹ For more details, cf. Domínguez Hidalgo, Carmen/Rivera, Diana/Hidalgo, Carmen (2013), "Políticas públicas para fortalecer el matrimonio: el caso particular de la preparación matrimonial", in *International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology*, Vol. I, Familia y educación: aspectos positivos, No.1, 125–133.

Challenges Facing the Family

Observations arising from the Synod of Bishops on Marriage and the Family (2015)

Michael Sievernich

The theme of the XIVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held in the Synod Hall of the Vatican in October 2015 was “The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World.” I was invited to attend the Synod in an advisory capacity and as a member of the German-speaking group and so was able to directly observe this momentous universal Church event on the spot.²⁹⁰ Although the Synod took place in Rome, the overall impression was by no means that it was largely European. On the contrary, it was distinctly universal. Everything that occurred bore the stamp of the 270 Bishops who had come from all parts of the earth, having been elected by their local Episcopal Conferences. Many different languages from all the continents of the world were spoken at this international and intercultural gathering, although simultaneous interpreting was only offered in five European conference languages (English, Italian, Spanish French and German). Despite the extremely universal character of the Synod, there were complaints that a lot of the speeches and argumentation patterns displayed a “western approach”. This resulted in numerous calls for the Church to acquire a new linguistic competence going beyond mere repetition, stereotypical speech patterns and a forensic style. Had this not been an issue half a century earlier, when the Second Vatican Council demanded the “accommodated preaching of the revealed word” in keeping with the conceptual worlds and languages of the different nations – an approach that was to remain “the law of all evangelisation”? “For thus

²⁹⁰ Cf. Sievernich, Michael, “Ehe und Familie im interkulturellen Aufbruch?”, in: *Berufung und Sendung der Familie – Die zentralen Texte der Bischofssynode*, edited by Christoph Kardinal Schönborn, Freiburg 2013, 2244; cf. also the eyewitness account of a married couple who also attended the event: Buch, Petra/Buch, Alois, “Weltkirche im synodalen Prozess – Beobachtungen und Notizen zur Familiensynode”, in: *Forum Weltkirche*, No. 135 (2016) 2, 13–17.

the ability to express Christ's message in its own way is developed in each nation, and at the same time there is fostered a living exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of people."²⁹¹

Similar questions were asked at the Family Synod in 2015, at which frequent demands for a new language were raised that would enable the Church to be properly understood in the modern world and its message, freshly translated, to be relayed into contemporary cultural settings. This is a task that covers the full bandwidth of issues mentioned in the final report of the Synod, *Relatio Synodi*.²⁹² Part I of the report focuses on the institutions of marriage and the family in society and the Church. As socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts are unique to each country and continent, there are a host of differences which require differentiated responses. Moreover, countries have different inter-religious situations which likewise have an impact on marriage and the family. Different circumstances in life naturally have an influence on children and young people, the old and very old, young married couples and nuclear and extended families. Coinciding with the Synod in October 2015, masses of refugees flooded into Europe, putting the topic of migration on the agenda (RS 23f.) The Synod's overall theme meant that other issues were raised, including poverty, the environment (RS 15f.), biotechnology (RS 33) and gender issues. Among the challenges addressed were polygamous lifestyles and arranged marriages (RS 25) and the role of women between the poles of discrimination and emancipation (RS 27).

Part II is about the family as seen from a Christian perspective, starting with salvation history and divine pedagogy. The Magisterium, from the Council (LG 11 and GS 47-52) right up to the most recent Popes, also features in the report, as does the doctrine of the Church, which learned at the Synod to take account of the different circumstances and to distinguish between them. Part III, entitled "The Mission of the Family", largely deals with the formation of the family, issues of responsible parenthood (RS 63) and upbringing as well as "pastoral accompaniment" of the family (i.e. the provision of pastoral

²⁹¹ GS 44.

²⁹² Synod of Bishops, XIV Ordinary General Assembly, *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World*, Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, Vatican City, 14 October 2015, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20151026_relazione-finale-xiv-assemblea_en.html (22.03.2017) – referred to in this article as RS, followed by the section number.

support). One focal area concerns the handling of tensions between norms and the conscience, doctrine and life, and discernment in complex situations. The synodal document concludes with notes on family spirituality and the missionary function of the family (RS 93). The Synod and the resulting document, which serves to advise the Pope, are major steps which add new Christian contours to the issue of the human race and provide guidance in the Church and the world of today.

Marriage and the family in cultural synchrony

The synodal delegates reflected not only the different parts of the world and the cultures they come from, but also a diversity of views, which the Pope encouraged them to express quite candidly. And candidness there was in numerous contributions made in the Council Hall and to an even greater extent in the thirteen different language circles which convened to discuss in five synodal languages. Unity of language did not mean cultural unity within the language groups, however, as each of the language circles (*circuli*) comprised a variety of nationalities and cultures. The Anglophone language circle, for instance, included US delegates from the American continent, Nigerians from Africa, Irish from Europe and participants from Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Myanmar, i.e. from the vast expanse of Asia and Oceania. Such a mix of cultures was absent in the German-speaking circle (*Circulus Germanicus*), although it encompassed delegates from Eastern Europe (Hungary, Croatia, Serbia and Slovakia) and Finland, the only non-European being the Patriarch of Damascus. As a Syrian, however, he was able to tell the Europeans a great deal about refugees and the general situation in his country – in excellent German.

The Synod undeniably demonstrated the unifying effect of the Church's shared faith on homogeneous and heterogeneous language groups, bringing together the delegates under Saint Peter (*cum Petro et sub Petro*) for their consultations. Notwithstanding this unity within the Church, the people of God remain rooted in different cultures, the plurality of which is precisely what constitutes the wealth of the Catholic Church with its almost 1.3 billion members. Such plurality gives rise to many difficult questions, for example how harmony and cooperation can be established in marriages and families whose members come from different cultural and religious backgrounds

(see RS 25). To what extent can regional traditions and normative Christian traditions be matched, and where does compatibility end? Can different cultural models of Christian practice and family life be accommodated in a local church without destroying its unity?

In a highly relevant address Pope Francis pointed out to the Synod participants “that what seems normal for a bishop on one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous – almost! – for a bishop on another; what is considered a violation of the rights in one society is an evident and inviolable rule in another; what for some is freedom of conscience is for others simply confusion. Cultures are in fact quite diverse, and every general principle – as I said, dogmatic questions clearly defined by the Church’s Magisterium – every general principle needs to be inculturated if it is to be respected and applied.”²⁹³ This need for “inculturation”, which the Pope mentioned, had previously been of concern to Father Jorge Mario Bergoglio at a Synod thirty years earlier. It is an issue which Francis has doggedly pursued ever since: “to evangelise culture and to inculturate the Gospel”.²⁹⁴

It is in the nature of the universal Church that many processes take place simultaneously under different conditions and at different speeds. Light is shed on them whenever Synods are held in a frank and open spirit, irrespective of whether controversy is the outcome. Inculturation has two functions: firstly, to ensure that the good news of Jesus Christ takes root in a given culture and, secondly, to give shape to the Christian faith through different forms of cultural expression. The given culture may be that of an “old” Christian continent, i.e. Europe, which has experienced a decline in numbers and now needs fresh inculturation – this time into the secular culture of late modernism. Or it may be that of a “young” continent, such as sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a huge increase in numbers and tremendous creative potential. Or it may be that of a double continent – America – with different driving forces in the north and south confronting the local churches with new challenges, such as migration from south to north and the transformation of religious landscapes. Such inculturation

²⁹³ Synod on the Family 2015, Conclusion of the Synod of Bishops, Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Synod Hall, 24.October 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151024_sinodo-conclusionone-lavori.html (28.02.2017).

²⁹⁴ Cf. Bergoglio, Jorge Mario, “Glaube an Christus und Humanismus”, in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 141 (2016) 2, 75–86, here: 77.

processes occur in synchrony throughout the world and are intertwined through the unity of the Church.

This is manifested in the search for new forms of expression in liturgy, music and language and also in modern forms of architecture, such as new cathedrals outside Europe – in Tokyo, Brasília and Los Angeles. Local churches on all continents are looking for new forms of artistic expression for Christianity with a wide range of different shapes and designs.²⁹⁵ Different habitats also lead to the formation of different habits, i.e. customs. These and other forms of expression also influence the numerous social forms of Christianity which reflect back on them in turn. If, being critical, we now ask what these forms of expression have to do with our exploration of marriage and the family, we may want to look at the house churches of the early Christians. They built on the ancient concept of the *oikos* (house), transformed it from within as regards the status of women and slaves, for instance, and lived their lives in their marriages and (extended) families in accordance with their Christian convictions. Conversely, these Christian houses and their families influenced society by virtue of their humane and spiritual attractiveness, for example through the practice of *caritas* (charitable work, altruistic love). Social forms such as the family, which are imbued with Christianity, and cultural forms of expression – e.g. art²⁹⁶ – exert a permanent influence on each other, thus forming a church matrix which varies from one era or region to another.

Such creative processes of inculturation are naturally subject to different norms. Generally the boundaries are quite loosely defined, e.g. in art, architecture, preaching and charitable work. But the closer we get to the more intimate area of sexuality, which is inevitable in the sacrament of matrimony, the greater the network of regulations, even to the point of over-regulation. This network is in fact denser where normative requirements encounter different cultures and different forms of marriage and the family – forms which are clearly incompatible with Christianity's consensual monogamy. Conversely, there are also cultural traditions that can enrich the Christian concept

²⁹⁵ For African and Indian cultures, cf.: Thiel, Josef Franz/Helf, Heinz (eds.), *Christliche Kunst in Afrika*, Berlin 1984; Amaladass, Anand/Löwner, Gudrun, *Christian Themes in Indian Art – from the Mogul Times till Today*, Daryagani 2012.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

of marriage and the family. Take, for instance, the African concept which comprises more than the nuclear family of father, mother and children and includes the extended family, ancestors even, as well as the unborn.²⁹⁷

These and other issues confront the universal Church at a moment of increasing density in time and space, when cultures are converging both geographically and intellectually. Despite all the changes that are taking place, however, we must not lose sight of the humanising potential of the Christian marriage and family. It promotes equality between husband and wife, requires voluntary agreement between the two partners, values a lifelong covenant of love before God, protects the procreation and upbringing of children, defends human lives from beginning to end, honours inter-generational solidarity between young and old, supports marriage and the family through international family policies, and ensures that such policies are not undermined by semantics.

The family as a basic anthropological structure

Although marriage and the family have found their specifically Christian forms of expression in the Roman Catholic Church, they are by no means unique to this context. Rather, the manifold manifestations of marriage and the family are ubiquitous in character and can be found in all cultures. The specifically Christian form fits into these basic anthropological structures while at the same time remodelling them.

All cultural systems are based essentially on kinship, resulting from descent and marriage. They take the form of basic social relationships – husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother and sister – and cover both genders and generations. Marriage and the family thus form part of kinship systems whose value is currently being rediscovered. In view of this – and of the family's fragile nature (RS 10) and vulnerability – the Synod placed considerable emphasis on family ties which go beyond the nuclear family and are helpful in bringing up children, transmitting values and ensuring inter-generational cohesion (RS 10).

²⁹⁷ Cf., for instance, Bujo, Bénézet, *Plädoyer für ein neues Modell von Ehe und Sexualität – Afrikanische Anfragen an das westliche Christentum* (QD 223), Freiburg 2007.

Kinship, marriage (sexual relationships) and parenting (offspring) form part of the common heritage of mankind, whose cultural achievement consists in giving them shape and standards which can vary considerably. According to Franz Xaver Kaufmann, a family sociologist, “The ‘family’ as a permanent arrangement in which a man and a woman secure their livelihood and raise children is a cultural phenomenon encountered in all forms of human society known to us.” He concludes that “there are good reasons to assert that the family is a universal element in human society. However, its universality manifests itself in an astonishing intercultural and historical diversity.”²⁹⁸

Marriage and the family are, therefore, derived from human cultures, of which the Christian understanding forms a part and in which certain Catholic specifics are embedded, such as creaturely reality, equality, freedom, consensus, lifelong commitment and sacramentality. As a result, certain religious dimensions come to bear which concern our relationship with God – a relationship in which marriage and the family appear as his good gifts while also constituting a task, just as God’s gift of love (agapé) to people enables and motivates them to love their neighbour. This innovative aspect can be traced back to early biblical tenets such as the fourth commandment: “Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you.” (Ex. 20:12, see also Dt. 5:16). The imperative of this commandment derives its strength from the indicative in the preamble to the Ten Commandments, which is about God’s *a priori* act of freeing the people of Israel from captivity. The fourth commandment is about the duties of children towards their parents, but it is not limited to the social space affording protection to a husband, wife and their offspring. It is also about the place where faith in God is practised through prayer, celebration and love and passed on to the next generation.²⁹⁹ This is exactly the point the Roman Synod of Bishops seeks to emphasise in highlighting the spirituality of families and their task of evangelisation. Families thus become “active agents in catechesis” (RS 89).

²⁹⁸ Kaufmann, Franz-Xaver, “Ehe und Familie zwischen kultureller Normierung und gesellschaftlicher Bedingtheit”, in: *ibid* (ed.), *Soziologie und Sozialethik – Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Moralsoziologie* (Studien zur theologischen Ethik 136), edited by Stephan Goertz, Fribourg and Freiburg im Breisgau 2013, 285–301, here: 287, 291.

²⁹⁹ Cf. entry: “Exodus 19–40”, in: *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, translation and exegesis by Christoph Dohmen, Freiburg 2004, 121.

The New Testament and Jesus' ministry among people triggered a Copernican-style revolution in the concept of the family. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a small town on the periphery of the Roman Empire, in a traditional extended family that was typical of its time. His public ministry started when his hour had come – with a “sign” at the wedding of Cana (John 2:1-11), an event that clearly underlined the significance of marriage and, beyond that, of Jesus' revelation about himself. Although Jesus very much valued his own close and extended family, he opens it up and adds a universal dimension by putting family relations into perspective (Mt. 10:37-39), raising them to the level of the universal community of mankind. The human family can thus be seen as a metaphor of the “family of God”. For that reason the synodal document says: “This revolution in affection, which Jesus introduced into the human family, is a radical call to universal brotherhood. No one is excluded from this new community gathered in Jesus' name, because all are called to be part of God's family.” (RS 41)

When we look at the basic anthropological structures of marriage and the family throughout the history of civilisation with all its diversity in family lifestyles, we can see that marriage and the family have preserved an astonishing stability even in our modern age. This is undoubtedly due not only to their effectiveness, but also to the basic difference between the sexes and the nature of human beings as social creatures who cannot come into being, grow up or live as individuals on their own. Rather, as the biblical creation account tells us, man needs a “helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:20). For all the cultural diversity in matters of marital and family relationships, the basic categories continue to apply to the modern family in an age of secularism. Pope Francis attributes such significance to marriage and the family in our modern age that he not only convened two assemblies – an Extraordinary Family Synod (2014) and an Ordinary Family Synod (2015) – but also wrote an Apostolic Exhortation on the subject (2016). After all, if “the family is a kind of school of deeper humanity” (GS 52) and can increasingly develop along those lines (RS 11), it is a matter of relevance to mankind as a whole.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ For more on the wide range of perspectives on this issue cf.: Augustin, George/Proft, Ingo (eds.), *Ehe und Familie: Wege zum Gelingen aus katholischer Perspektive*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2014.

The bright and the dark side of the family

When we look at the family past and present, we can see its stable basic anthropological structure reflected in the great acclaim it has enjoyed up to the present day. Surveys among today's younger generation in Germany solicit answers that may sound astonishing to many of our contemporaries. A recent youth study, which speaks of a "pragmatic generation on the move", asked respondents about their attitudes to marriage and the family. It transpires that young people have a positive relationship with their parents' generation, 94 per cent describing it as good or excellent. This is also reflected in their approval of parenting styles, 74 per cent saying they would adopt the same style in their own parenting. Two thirds express strong emotional approval of starting a family, while an average of 77 per cent set great store by marriage and faithfulness – and the trend here is upwards. However, there has also been a slight downturn in the number of young people who want to have children. These responses may have the character of an opinion poll snapshot, but they do show a clear trend in the mental attitudes of young people, who increasingly value marriage, the family and parenthood as essential institutions.³⁰¹

You find similarly surprising responses if you look at the question of marriage, love and sexuality from a historical perspective. History tells of great variation in the manifestations of marriage, sexuality and the family – not just in the different cultures, but also among the churches. Drawing on various sources, a recent overview publication paints a fascinating panorama³⁰² documenting the wide-ranging and humanising effect Christianity had on normative approaches to marriage and the family – in Europe at least. However, it was also prone to harsh discipline, disproportionate rigidity and excessive norms, leaving it with a negative overall balance. Both these snapshots, one empirical and the other historical, illustrate the task incumbent upon the universal Roman Catholic Church in our ever more globalised society: to remain true both to the Gospel and to the people of today by "scrutinising the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (GS 4).

³⁰¹ Shell Deutsche Holding (ed.), *Jugend 2015 – Eine pragmatische Generation im Aufbruch*, planned and coordinated by Mathias Albert et al., Frankfurt 2015, 51–64.

³⁰² Cf. Angenendt, Arnold, *Ehe, Liebe und Sexualität im Christentum – Von den Anfängen bis heute*, Münster 2015.

The 2015 Synod of Bishops took up this dialogue between doctrine and life at an intercultural level. However, the dialogue frequently became heated because of a single issue. While it is undoubtedly important to the personal lives of many Catholics, especially in Europe, there is a risk of it dominating all the other matters debated by the Synod. The issue in question has been smouldering for a long time, but an answer to it in the form of a clear yes or no has proved elusive. Nor has any consensus been achieved on a differentiated hermeneutical approach to it – a proposal that has been on the table for decades now. The situation – to quote a well-known Canadian social philosopher – is as follows: “The Vatican’s present position seems to want to retain the most rigid moralism in the sexual field, relaxing nothing of the rules, with the result that people with “irregular” sexual lives are (supposed to be) automatically denied the sacraments, while as-yet-unconvicted mafiosi, not to speak of unrepentant latifundistas in the third world, and Roman aristocrats with enough clout to wangle an “annulment” find no bar.”³⁰³

In actual fact, the Synod showed a sound grasp of the problem, which finds expression primarily in a certain exaggeration and isolation of the normative components of marriage and family issues. The increasing gap between doctrine and reality can only be bridged if specific rules are interpreted in a wider context, doctrine is embedded more clearly in pastoral contexts, and difficult situations in life are resolved through processes of discernment, flanked by pastoral care (see also RS 84–86).³⁰⁴

This is strongly endorsed in the synodal document, which also emphasises that the family is an “agent” which exercises its responsibility in many fields: “The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity specifically through proclaiming the Gospel and through its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely: solidarity with the poor; openness to a diversity of people; the protection of creation; moral and material solidarity with other families, especially the most needy; a commitment to the promotion of the common good, also through the transformation

³⁰³ Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge/London 2007 – quoted in the *Commonwealth Magazine*, 24. September 2007, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/sex-christianity-0> (28.02.2017).

³⁰⁴ On the handling of such situations cf. Kardinal Kasper, Walter, *Das Evangelium von der Familie – Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2014, 54–67.

of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives; and putting into practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and spiritual.” (RS 93) It seems that the best way to ensure the credibility of marriage and the family in the modern world is to exercise precisely this kind of responsibility with its emphasis on serving others – for the benefit of the families concerned, the local churches and everyone else. It is no accident that, confronted with the utopian visions of the 1970s, Hans Jonas – the author of *The Principle of Hope* – reminded his readers of the “original and primeval responsibility to provide parental care” which everybody first experiences for themselves in their lives. He calls it total and ongoing responsibility for the child, describing it as entirely future-oriented in relation both to the individual child and to subsequent generations and, therefore, to the existence of mankind.³⁰⁵

Eightfold significance of the Family Synod

Pope Francis spent many hours attending almost all the lengthy plenary sessions in which the Synod Fathers expressed their ideas in short presentations. Quite a few bishops, though not all, took the opportunity to set out their positions, which were then discussed not in the plenary but elsewhere. In his closing address Pope Francis summarised what this meant for the future: not that the Synod had resolved or even discussed all the issues, but that it had nonetheless established numerous contacts and generated momentum for the future. So what does this all signify for the Church?

- “It was about urging everyone to appreciate the importance of the institution of the family and of marriage between a man and a woman, based on unity and indissolubility, and valuing it as the fundamental basis of society and human life.
- It was about listening to and making heard the voices of the families and the Church’s pastors, who came to Rome bearing on their shoulders the burdens and the hopes, the riches and the challenges of families throughout the world.
- It was about showing the vitality of the Catholic Church, which is not afraid to stir dulled consciences or to soil her hands with lively and frank discussions about the family.

³⁰⁵ Jonas, Hans, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Frankfurt 1979, 185.

- It was about trying to view and interpret realities, today's realities, through God's eyes, so as to kindle the flame of faith and enlighten people's hearts in times marked by discouragement, social, economic and moral crisis, and growing pessimism.
- It was about bearing witness to everyone that, for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would 'indoctrinate' it in dead stones to be hurled at others.
- It was also about laying closed hearts, which bare the closed hearts which frequently hide even behind the Church's teachings or good intentions, in order to sit in the chair of Moses and judge, sometimes with superiority and superficiality, difficult cases and wounded families.
- It was about making clear that the Church is a Church of the poor in spirit and of sinners seeking forgiveness, not simply of the righteous and the holy, but rather of those who are righteous and holy precisely when they feel themselves poor sinners.
- It was about trying to open up broader horizons, rising above conspiracy theories and blinkered viewpoints, so as to defend and spread the freedom of the children of God, and to transmit the beauty of Christian newness, at times encrusted in a language which is archaic or simply incomprehensible.³⁰⁶

The Pope thus attributes significance to the Synod in eight areas: appreciation of the Christian family; listening to families and bishops; a free discussion of controversial issues; encouragement in view of the crisis of faith; bearing testimony to the Gospel; opening one's heart instead of judging others; being the Church of the poor and of sinners seeking forgiveness; and propagating the freedom and beauty of Christian newness.

In a prayer for the Family Synod, Pope Francis requested, among other things, that it be "mindful of the sacredness and inviolability

³⁰⁶ *Catholic Herald*, 24.October 2015, "Pope Francis's address at the end of the Family Synod: full text", <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/10/24/pope-franciss-address-at-the-end-of-the-family-synod-full-text/> (28.02.2017).

of the family and its beauty in God's plan". He used the words of a prayer written on the back of a painting by Raphael (1483-1520) entitled *The Holy Family with the Lamb* – an idealised landscape of great spiritual and aesthetic beauty.³⁰⁷ The three-figure painting shows Joseph standing and Mary half kneeling while gently holding Jesus as he sits astride a lamb – the symbol of Christ as *Agnus Dei* in the liturgy. The couple gaze at the young Jesus who, in turn, looks up at his parents, thus establishing eye contact between them. Like the *Sistine Madonna* in Dresden, *The Holy Family with the Lamb* (at the Prado in Madrid) can induce secular viewers to seek eye contact and thus to perceive and perhaps accept the beauty and sacredness of the family.

³⁰⁷ Photographs of this painting by Raphael can be found in: Ullmann, Ernst, *Raffael*, Leipzig 1991, 74f.

Women in African Families.

Challenges and Opportunities

Veneranda Mbabazi

Women are the backbone of African families and a major force behind the African families. Women in Africa make immense contributions to their families' socio-economic development.³⁰⁸ Yet, the paradox is that women remain the poorest, powerless, voiceless and marginalised group in most African families.³⁰⁹ In many African families, women are mainly illiterate and hold a second class status. Improving women's status in the African families is important because Africa's economies cannot achieve sustainable development if women remain the marginalized group. Many women in African families are rarely involved in the decisions that affect their families.³¹⁰ There is a need to improve the situation of women in African families so as to enable them to actively take part and have a say on matters that affect their families. Allowing women to participate in their families' decision-making does not only empower them; it also facilitates them to determine their own destinies and realize their aspirations.

Women and Child Responsibilities

While women are powerless, voiceless and hold a second status, women in African families are:

Responsible for caring for children and other members of the household and for all the domestic work. They often have primary

³⁰⁸ Cf. Karl, Marilee, *Women and Empowerment: Participation and Decision Making*, London 1995; Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, "Bridging Gender Equity Gap in Africa: A Psychohistorical Exposition of Efunsetan Aniwura", in: *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling*, No. 2 (2010) 3, 33–43.

³⁰⁹ Cf. Snyder, Margaret, "Research on Women 1986–2001: An Overview", in: Tripp, Alli Mari/Kwesiga, Joy C. (eds.), *The Women's Movement in Uganda: History, Challenges, and Prospects*, Kampala 2002, 174–202.

³¹⁰ Cf. Karl, Marilee, op. cit.

responsibilities for their families' health and for the provision of food, water and fuel, and their work is not only unpaid, but largely unrecognized as well. Their major responsibilities for the household's wellbeing do not always translate into decision-making within the family. In many cases, women do not have equal control over the management and allocation of family income, especially if the income has been earned by the men in the family".³¹¹

The contributions of women which are not valued in monetary terms often place women in very vulnerable situation in their families. Women find themselves in situations that forces them to accept the status quo in their families and also accept any kind of treatment in their marital relationships.³¹² Valuing women's contributions in the family is very important because it somehow gives women a sense of confidence and it improves their status in their families.

It is beyond reasonable doubt that woman's child-rearing is heavily responsible for the woman's failure to compete favourably with her male counterparts in society. "Called 'super moms' many simply drop from exhaustion in what can only be a no-win contest with their male counterparts".³¹³ Working mothers in many African societies who unswervingly combine childcare with career often get stressed.³¹⁴ "With rare exceptions – in nearly all competitive professions – women who have children get off the track and lose ground".³¹⁵ Some working women in Uganda have been forced to abandon their careers to take care of their children because some house-minds connive with child kidnappers.

Furthermore, in many rural areas of Uganda when a husband shares childcare responsibilities with his wife, colleagues will speak

³¹¹ Ibid., 3.

³¹² Cf. Adoko, Judy/Akin, Jeremy/Knight, Rachael, *Understanding and Strengthening Women's Land Rights under Customary Tenure in Uganda*, 2011, www.land-in-Uganda.org (14.06.2015); Van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., "The Majority Legal Status of Women in Southern Africa: Implications for Women and Families", in: *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, No. 17 (1996) 2, 173–188.

³¹³ Schein, Virginia, "Would Women Lead Differently?", in: Wren, Thomas J. (ed.), *The Leader's Companion: Insights On Leadership Through the Ages*, New York 1995, 161–168, here: 165.

³¹⁴ Cf. Collier, Richard, "Feminising the Workplace? Law, the Good Parent and the Problem of Men", in: Morris, Anne/O'Donnell, Theresa (eds.), *Feminist Perspective on Employment Law*, London 1999, 161–181.

³¹⁵ Scanzoni, John, *Designing Families: The Search for Self and Community in the Information Age*, London 2000.

about him and say that he has been 'bewitched' by his wife. Implied in such reasoning is that such a man has lost his power and authority in the family by sharing or doing work which is customarily designated for his wife. There is a need therefore to change men's mind-set so as to improve co-responsibility of both men and women in African families. In order for women to have equal opportunities like their men, sharing of childcare responsibilities becomes a major determining factor in this regard. Sharing of childcare responsibilities needs to be discussed between husbands and wives if both are employed outside the home. If the childcare responsibilities continue to be an unresolved issue among working husbands and wives, unquestionably working women, more than working men are likely to give up their jobs. The woman is likely to lose her job or resort to part-time work in order to reconcile child responsibilities and her career.

Women and Domestic Work

Women who combine domestic work with careers do it with a lot of sacrifice. They often burn candles in order to enhance their career. In most African societies, domestic work is still a woman's duty. Even though it may be changing in urban areas, nevertheless, it remains a common phenomenon in rural areas. For instance:

In Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, there are taboos in place that prohibit men from undertaking tasks deemed suitable only for women. This can often include collecting water and preparing food – tasks that a man would be ridiculed for undertaking. At the same time, while there are far fewer taboos limiting women's work, there are examples of them being prohibited from milking livestock.³¹⁶

Whereas some women are making an effort to improve their status in their families and also be actively involved in the private sphere, women's second status often constrain them from being active in the public space like their husbands.³¹⁷ The fact is that

³¹⁶ Cf. Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, *A Double Bind: The Exclusion of Pastoralist Women in the East and Horn of Africa*, London 2008, 7.

³¹⁷ Cf. *ibid*; Ernst & Young, *Women of Africa a Powerful Untapped Economic Force for the Continent*, [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Women_of_Africa/\\$FILE/Women%20of%20Africa%20final.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Women_of_Africa/$FILE/Women%20of%20Africa%20final.pdf) (29.06.2015); Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, *op. cit.*, 33–43; Melvin, Perlman, "The Changing Status and Role of Women Toro – Western Uganda", in: *Cahiers D'études Africaines*, No. 6 (1966) 24, 564–591.

women continue to shoulder all the house chores; they frequently face a challenge of balancing the domestic responsibilities and career demands. Balancing family responsibilities with career demands is increasingly making women do a double shift. As a result, women are not able to have a competitive advantage when it comes to career advancement.³¹⁸ Making the private and public spheres allies is very important if the situation of women in African families is to improve. Furthermore restructuring and redressing the gender inequalities in the African families is therefore crucial to improve women's status. In the pastoralists communities, "women must work longer and harder than men, fulfilling 'female' roles in the household, as well as making money from tasks traditionally deemed to be 'women's work', including collecting firewood, and making and selling hand-crafts... Women do not attend many of the social occasions at which men make decisions that affect the whole community".³¹⁹ Revisiting unequal power relationship between husbands and wives in African families does not only bring about improved women's status and dignity in the family, it also brings a paradigm shift with regard to a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between husbands and wives.

Indeed the situation of African women is indeed worrisome. In most African countries women are beasts of burden especially in maintaining and supporting their families. It is estimated that "on average, a woman works fifteen hours a day for seven days a week, while a man works nine hours a day for five days a week".³²⁰ Okot p'Bitek (a Uganda poet and novelist) summarises the situation of most African women and the types of work to which they are assigned in the family:

³¹⁸ Cf. Hattery, Angela, *Women, Work, and Family, Balancing and Weaving: Understanding Families*, London 2001; Higgins, Christopher/Duxbury, Linda/Lee, Catherine, "Impact of Life-Circle Stage and Gender on the Ability to Balance Work and Family Responsibilities", in: Bowen, Gary L./Pittman, Joe F. (eds.), *The Work and Family Interface: Toward A Contextual Effects Perspective*, Minneapolis 1995, 313–322; Flanders, Margaret L., *Breakthrough: The Career Women's Guide to Shattering the Glass Ceiling*, London 1994.

³¹⁹ Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit., 3.

³²⁰ Sentamu-Musagazi, Margaret B., "Women in Business: Is there A Cultural Problem in Africa?", in: Lejeune, Michel/Rosemann, Philipp W. (eds.), *Business Ethics in the African Context Today: Proceedings of the International Conference held at Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi, 9.–12. September 1996*, Nkozi 1996, 169–181, here: 57.

Woman of Africa
 Sweeper
 Smearing floors and walls
 With cow dung and black soil,
 Cook, *ayah*, the baby tied on your back,
 Vomiting,
 Washer of dishes,
 Planting, weeding, harvesting,
 Store-keeper, builder,
 Runner of errands,
 Cart, lorry,
 Donkey....
 Woman of Africa what are you not?³²¹

Harrison perhaps is right when he observes that: “Women’s burdens—heavy throughout the third world—are enough to break a camel’s back in much of Africa”.³²² With such workloads, women often age ahead of time and their health is greatly affected as they are frequently fatigued.

Women’s Socio-economic situation in African Families

In 2013 a report entitled: ‘Chronic Poverty in Uganda: The Policy Challenges’ indicates “that over 8 million of 30.7 million people is chronically poor, with women forming the bulk. Overall, 27% of the chronically poor households in rural areas are headed by women with the percentage rising to 40% in the urban settings”.³²³ Women’s poverty coupled with lack of access to credit aggravates their poverty levels.³²⁴ There is a need to transform the socio-economic status of women. Moreover, transforming the situation of a woman in the African family has a tremendous positive effect on the wellbeing of the entire African family. Rice says it all when she argues that “often, it takes only one woman to make a difference. If you empower that woman with ...a microloan, she can lift up her entire family and contribute to the success of her community. Multiply that one woman’s

³²¹ p’Bitek, Okot, *Song of Lawino, Song of Ocol*, Oxford 1984, 133.

³²² Harrison, Paul, *The Third World Tomorrow*, New York 1983.

³²³ Basudde, Elvis, “Women the poorest in Uganda”, in: *New Vision*, 08.03.2013.

³²⁴ Cf. van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit.

impact by a hundred or a thousand, and perhaps a million lives can change.”³²⁵ Implied in this quotation is that changing the economic status of women in African families has a multiple effect on the well-being of the entire family. This is because women tend to invest a big part of their income in their families.³²⁶ Whereas some studies have indicated that women’s socio-economic status in the African families is improving; however, greater gender inequalities remain in areas of employment opportunities, remuneration and in the recognition of women’s socio-economic contributions.³²⁷ Moreover, women who work outside the home are still responsible for household chores and thus bear a double work burden, which is an obstacle to their better employment opportunities and to social and political participation. Lack of income, or low income, also reduces women’s decision-making power in their families and their ability to participate in social and political activities. Unequal gender power-relation that exists in many African families has adverse effects on women’s self-esteem and their status.

³²⁸Whereas most women in Africa are engaged in economic activities such as agriculture; the paradox is that it is often their husbands who determine what type of crops they have to grow. While women do everything with regard to producing food for their families and for commercial purposes; it is their husband who determine how much should remain for families’ consumption and how much should be sold out for cash.³²⁹ Even in pastoralist communities, the “commercialization, whether for meat or milk production, tends to be realized by men. Women are unable to be engaged in this process because of their heavy workloads and lack of mobility. Men also have authority over the location of the household, which determines the accessibility of markets”.³³⁰ When women assert their power with

³²⁵ Rice, Condoleezza, “Remarks at the ‘One Woman Initiative’ Fund for Women’s Empowerment”, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/05/104629.htm> (27.06.2015).

³²⁶ Cf. Karl, Marilee, op cit.; Ernst/Young, op. cit.

³²⁷ Cf. Karl, Marilee, op cit.; Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.

³²⁸ Cf. Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, op. cit.; Karl, Marilee, op cit.; Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.

³²⁹ Cf. Basudde, Elvis, op. cit.; Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.; Economic Commission for Africa, Action on Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment and Ending Violence against Women in Africa, Ethiopia 2008.

³³⁰ Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit., 15.

regard to portioning what to remain and what to be sold out; women frequently face domestic violence. There are cases in Uganda where women die at the hands of their husbands when they decide to retain the money they get from the produce.

Women's socio-economic status in African families is further constrained by dichotomizing the society into private and public spheres. Women are always perceived to belong to the private arena while men belong to the public sector. The fact that domestic chores continue to be perceived as belonging to the domain of women leads to the suggestion that, "women's employment is often considered to be less important to them than their home life, and their level of commitment to the job is often judged by the standards developed for the man with a stay-at-home wife."³³¹ The fact that women are perceived to belong to the domestic domain; implies that they have to attend to both demands (job and family). However, they often find it hard to compete with their male counterparts who traditionally belong exclusively to the public sector. Career advancement for women is repressed as they try to reach a balance between their career and family responsibilities.³³² There is a need to challenge the dichotomising of private and public spheres if women in Africa are to participate fully in the public realm. Furthermore, women need to question the "the persistence of beliefs that women's domestic roles and responsibilities are 'natural' and virtually unquestioned".³³³ In some African families, every time women question the so-called natural roles and why they (women) are often associated with domestic sphere, men repeatedly defend themselves that women want to be in two places at the same time. However, men's argument fails short of differentiating the gender roles from biological roles. While biological roles are inherent, gender roles are socially and culturally constructed and therefore, they change with time. In order for African families to have a paradigm shift with regard to how gender roles are not static but rather dynamic, patriarchal beliefs and male chauvinism that are still at large in most African families need to be reconsidered.

³³¹ Hattery, Angela, op. cit., 81.

³³² Cf. Wirth, Linda, *Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling*, Geneva 2001.

³³³ Moller, Susan, "Inequalities Between the Sexes in Different Cultural Contexts", in: Nussbaum, Martha C./Glover, Jonathan (eds.), *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, Oxford 1995, 274–297, here: 289.

Women, Gender Roles and Stereotypes

African women continue to walk a thin line between gender roles and stereotypes. In order for women to achieve equal rights in their families, there is need to re-examine gender stereotypical beliefs about mothers' roles. Being a mother does not imply that a working mother has to forego her career in order to take care of her children. Perhaps it is more helpful when working mothers revisit and reduce the demands made by their children at home.³³⁴ For instance, Thornthwaite³³⁵ found out that when working mothers only attend to the basic demands of their children, they seldom experience a career-family conflict. However, to achieve this, working mothers need to have little psychological attachment to domestic work and get some manpower help. Having little psychological attachment to family roles does not imply that a mother is abandoning her family responsibility. Rather, it is a strategy a woman employs to balance her career and family responsibilities. However, it is significant to mention that such an approach is indicative in a way that family responsibilities are no longer solely a woman's duty.

There are several ways a working mother can get some help with regard to childcare and other family responsibilities. For instance some working mothers in East Africa often turn to their family members or to baby-sitters and house girls to take care of children and other family chores as mothers go to work.³³⁶ Working mothers regularly get some manpower help in order to be able to reduce the conflicting demands of the family responsibilities and career. However, by employing a person to take care of their children they solve one problem while creating another. This is because it often results into economic exploitation of these girls who are employed as baby-sitters and house girls. Most of the baby-sitters and house girls are often poorly paid. The fact that some baby sitters in Uganda are paid poorly also means that they do not have any attachment to the children they are taking care of. Such detachment has resulted into some cases where some baby-

³³⁴ Cf. Hattery, Angela, op. cit.

³³⁵ Cf. Thornthwaite, Louise, Working-Family Balance: International Research on Employee Preferences, <http://www.acirrt.com/pubs/WP79.pdf> (04.11.2005).

³³⁶ Cf. Harkness, Sarah/Super, Charles M., "Shared Child Care in East Africa: Sociocultural Origins and Developmental Consequences", in: Lamb, Michael E./Sternberg, Kathleen J. (eds.), *Child Care in Context: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, London 1992.

sitters in Uganda connive with some conmen to kidnap a child so as to ask for a ransom. Such a ransom is always too expensive for a baby's parents. Although some children have been rescued, some have lost their lives at the hands of their kidnapers. There are also instances where house-girls physically assault the children they are taking care of. Most probably mothers from African families need to learn from mothers from developed countries with regard to day-care centres. Even though day-care centres are costly for women in developing countries, nevertheless, they guard against cases where baby-sitters connive with the kidnapers or house-girls physically assaulting children.

Women's Status and Socio-cultural Constraints

The socio-cultural traditions and prejudices in most African countries do a disservice to women's wellbeing and have undermined women's status in families. Women face a range of socio-cultural constraints. In many African traditional societies, women are treated as minors. For instance in the Republic of Congo and Swaziland, a woman must have her husband's consent to open a bank account.³³⁷ Stereotypes and traditional customs also disadvantage women and they place them in vulnerable situation in families and in the communities. Women in Africa live in a world where men define rules and gender roles. The fact is that men in African societies still command respect and have authority; they are able to shape societal traditions and norms. Moreover, men always put in place cultural norms that benefit them so as to maintain the status quo.³³⁸ In some African cultures, taboos and traditions are used to keep women in the private domain. For instance, in some cultures, a widow is forbidden from doing any significant work for several months after the death of her husband.³³⁹ However, the same demands do not apply to a widower. Widowers continue to carry on their activities freely after the death of their wives. Cultural norms prescribe the role and positions of women

³³⁷ Cf. United Nations, *Women Encounter Technology: Changing Patterns of Employment in the Third World*, in: Mitter, Swasti/Rowbotham, Sheila (eds.), London 1995; Ernst/Young, op. cit.; Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, op. cit., 33–43.

³³⁸ Cf. Waliggo, John Mary, *Struggle for Equality: Women and Empowerment in Uganda*, Nairobi 2002.

³³⁹ Cf. Sentamu-Musagazi, Margaret B., op. cit., 169–181; Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, op. cit.

in society. Traditionally, a woman's place is in the domestic domain, especially in the kitchen.

Legal Frameworks and Land Rights

Most African countries are moving to gender mainstreaming to improve the situation of women in African. Most policies and programmes are targeting women as an economic resource.³⁴⁰ However, there is still deficient implementation in most African countries. The situation of women in African families has not changed greatly despite existing policies and programmes to improve women's status.³⁴¹ Women are the mainstay of African families with regard to the provision of food. Research indicates that women "grow 80% of food produced in Africa, and yet few are allowed to own the land they work".³⁴² African women especially those who live in rural areas continue to be denied their human rights such as the "right to bring matters to court, to own and administer property, to have legal custody of children, and to contract for a marriage without parental consent".³⁴³

With regard to owning land: for instance, in Uganda only 7 percent of "women own land, leaving the remaining 93 percent with only usufruct (usage) rights to land".³⁴⁴ Customary laws in most traditional African societies deny women a right to inherit land from their parents.³⁴⁵ Even though the law in Uganda is silent about women owning land, customarily; women do not own land. Often land belongs to the family and in some instances it belongs to the clan; implying it

³⁴⁰ Cf. Kelso, Casey, "The Fight for Equal Rights", in: *Africa Report*, No. 38 (1993) 5, 35–39; Matlakala, Daphne, *Women and the Law in Botswana: Action Strategies*, Gabaronne 1989; Meena, Ruth, "Conceptual Issues of Gender in Southern Africa", in: *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, No. 4 (1991) 10, 38–43; Stewart, Julie/Armstrong, Alice, *The Legal Situation of Women in Southern Africa*, Harare 1990.

³⁴¹ Cf. Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.

³⁴² Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, op. cit., 34.

³⁴³ van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit., 174.

³⁴⁴ Asimwe, Jacqueline, "Women and the Struggle for Land in Uganda", in: Tripp, Aili Mari/Kwesiga, Joy C. (eds.), *The Women's Movement in Uganda: History, Challenges, and Prospects*, Kampala 2002, 119–137, here: 119.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Benedetti, Fanny/Kijo-Bisimba, Helen, "Women's Rights in Uganda: Gaps between Policy and Practice 2012", <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/Africa/uganda/Women-s-rights-in-Ugandagaps> (18.04.2016); Olabisi, Familusi, "African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example", in: *Journal of Pan African Studies*, No. 1.5 (2012) 1, 299–313; Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.; Ernst/Young, op. cit.

belongs to men.³⁴⁶ It is vital to mention that if women continue to be side-lined with regard to land inheritance, they will continue to “have very limited ability to acquire and control the property needed for generating income for themselves and their families”.³⁴⁷ True, most women in Africa have rights to land usage, however, “women can be hurt in several ways in these increasingly cash-based economics. Without land or other forms of capital to serve as collateral for loans, women find it difficult to obtain the credit needed to purchase land, animals, and essential farming operations as well as the informal businesses”.³⁴⁸ Lack of collateral coupled with women’s second status in their families affect their opportunities in other spheres of life such as political, education and socio-economic hence derailing them away from their aspirations.³⁴⁹

In most African countries, women’s rights to access land largely depend on their husbands. For instance in Togo, the customary law system prevents women from owning land. Women are only allowed to use land on conditions that they seek permission from the husbands. Such customary law can easily put the whole family in a treacherous situation since it is the husband who decides when to use the land and what to plant on that land.³⁵⁰ Whereas women in most traditional societies cannot inherit land, the irony is that women in some African tribes can be inherited. Women inheritance is often done under the pretext of ensuring that children of the deceased remain within the family.³⁵¹ It also symbolizes that the deceased continues to live since the brother of the deceased inherits the wife of the deceased.

The presence of customary law alongside the legal system has undermined the effectiveness of legal law in most African countries.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Benedetti, Fanny/Kijo-Bisimba, Helen, op. cit.; Olabisi, Familusi, op. cit.

³⁴⁷ van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit., 181.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 182.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.; Ellis, Amanda/Manuel, Claire/Blackden, Mark, *Gender and Economic Growth in Uganda: Unleashing the Power of Women*, worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPGENDER/Resources/gender_econ_growth_ug.pdf 2006 (27.06.2015).

³⁵⁰ Cf. Economic Commission for Africa, op. cit.

³⁵¹ Cf. Olabisi, Familusi, op. cit.; Bennett, Valerie/Flaulk, Ginger/Kovina, Anna/Eres, Tatjana, “Inheritance Law in Uganda: The Plight of Widows and Children”, in: *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, No. 7 (2011), S. 451–530; Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.; Ellis, Amanda/Manuel, Claire/Blackden, Mark, op. cit.

Whereas the customary legal systems in Africa tend to favour males over their female counterparts, the paradox is that women tend to use customary law systems because they are more affordable to them.³⁵² The customary legal systems in Africa accord more status to men than women.³⁵³ For instance in Botswana, the traditional law system regard women as “children of men” and in Lesotho women are often considered as minors and they are always under the custody of their husbands or under the male who has been recognized as the heirs of her husband. The implication of such customary law system is that it limits the legal rights of women. It is also increasingly undermining women’s status in their families.³⁵⁴ Van Hook and Ngwenya also indicate that:³⁵⁵

Under customary law, married women do not have majority status. Husbands become their wives’ guardians, and women, therefore, are dependent on their husbands to bring lawsuits and to enter into contracts. Husbands also control all the property of value, and wives have only rights of use. Although rights of use have typically been more important than ownership in traditional society, women are especially at risk when marriage ends with death or divorce. In the case of divorce, the husband frequently ends up with most of the valuable property as well as the children.

While there are legal policies that grant women the right to inherit property in Lesotho, it is imperative to mention that the customary law system makes it complicated for women in Lesotho to use the existing legal systems to inherit property.³⁵⁶ In Swaziland, husbands possess full power and control over their wives and this puts a wife in a subordinate position. A man possesses full powers in all aspects of life and has a right to represent his wife in legal matters as well as property administration. While the current legal system in Swaziland is opening windows of opportunities for women to own land and also to register land in their own names, it is important to mention that “the patriarchal and patrilineal nature of Swazi society further disad-

³⁵² Cf. van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit.

³⁵³ Cf. Meena, Ruth, op. cit.

³⁵⁴ Cf. van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit., 182; Schapera, Isaac, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, London 1938.

³⁵⁵ van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit., 177.

³⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

vantages women because typically all property in a household is held in the name of the head of the household (the man) and access to land is acquired through a man".³⁵⁷ Comparatively, the legal system in Zambia about women's inheritance accords women and men equal inheritance rights unlike those of Swaziland, Botswana and Lesotho. In Zambia women have a right to acquire land in their own names. They also have a right to manage it or dispose it at any time they want. However, if a woman decides to get married under customary law; her inheritance rights cease. Marriage under customary law provides a woman a right to inherit from her parents and not from her husband. This position still holds even if a woman has contributed to the acquisition of that property during her marriage. It is also worth mentioning that "women married under customary or general law have equal rights with men in gaining custody of their children".³⁵⁸

Denying women the right to own land makes them economically dependent on their husbands. Legal and customary laws that prevent women from owning land or which undermine women's equal say on how to administer property "make women extremely dependent on the goodwill, benign intentions, and wise judgment of their husbands. Women cannot legally protect their interest or that of their children against the husband's ill intentions or poor judgment".³⁵⁹ Though many African countries are making efforts to achieve equal legal rights for both men and women, it is vital to point out that a lot remains to be desired. Moreover, African cultures and tradition give husbands more power and authority compared to their wives. This reinforces the already existing unequal power relationship between a husband and wife in the family.

Bridewealth and Gender Based Violence

Bridewealth is a gesture of appreciation to the parents of the bride. However; bridewealth has complicated the situation of women in African families. Kipuri et al argue that: "The problem with paying bridewealth is that when a woman disagrees with a man over anything, the man reminds her that he paid a lot of animals for her. Also, since the whole clan contributes marriage animals, the whole clan controls

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 179.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 180.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 183.

women married to their clan. The woman's independence, self-esteem and dignity are reduced."³⁶⁰

Bridewealth makes it difficult for women to divorce their husbands in case the marriage has become impossible.³⁶¹ Women have to endure gender-based violence because going back to their fathers' home would imply that their fathers have to pay back the bridewealth. The payment of bridewealth implicitly takes away the rights of a wife and it underpins the rights of the husband in the family.³⁶² Bridewealth makes a husband in the family command respect while it puts women in a powerless, voiceless and marginalized situation. For instance, among the "Maasai women [...] are expected to have two voices, one for normal talk and another little voice used to demonstrate respect for men [...] . Men are not required to change their voices at any time".³⁶³ The meaning and understanding of bridewealth seems to be changing. While in the past years it was a symbol of appreciation; presently it has become a transactional relationship. Moreover, the more one pays, the more the woman loses her rights and freedom. In some cases, men pay a lot of bridewealth to show off their riches and status. "For example, in one instance in 2006, a member of Parliament for Karamoja, Uganda, gave 200 livestock as bridewealth in order to demonstrate his prestige".³⁶⁴ Bridewealth increasingly enhances a man's power and prestige in the family while it puts a woman in a subordinate position.

Gender-based violence continues to be the order of the day in most African families.³⁶⁵ According to the United Nations Economic Commission,³⁶⁶ gender-based violence in African families is multifaceted and is reinforced by unequal power gender relationship.

³⁶⁰ Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.

³⁶¹ Cf. Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.; van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barbara N., op. cit., 173–188.

³⁶² Cf. Perlman, Melvin, op. cit.

³⁶³ Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit., 6.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, 7.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Ernst & Young, op. cit.; Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, op. cit.; Mujuzi, Jamil Ddamulira, "The Ugandan Domestic Violence Act: The Drafting History and Challenges to Its Implementation", in: *International Journal of Law, Policy and Family*, No. 28 (2014) 3, 257–273; Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, op. cit.; Economic Commission for Africa, op. cit.

³⁶⁶ Cf. United Nations Economic Commission, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa African Centre for Gender and Social Development, Violence against Women in Africa, <http://www1.uneca.org/Portals/awro/Publications/21VAW%20in%20Africa-A%20situational%20analysis.pdf> (22.07.2016).

Women's subordinate positions in African families coupled with a belief that interpersonal violence is one of the ways of resolving conflicts among couples predispose women to life-threatening levels of violence in their families. It is pertinent to mention that:

Although violence against women has begun to receive more attention globally over the last two decades, the scourge of violence against women in Africa particularly is still largely hidden. This is so for a number of reasons: the predominance of the system of patriarchy across Africa has meant that women are still perceived of and treated as subordinate to men; violence against women is accepted as the cultural norm in many societies and is often condoned by community and sometimes state leaders; the stigma attached to female victims of violence has resulted in very low rates of reporting; and often if women do report violence against them, they are either turned away because the authorities see violence against women as a matter to be dealt with privately or within the family, or they struggle to access justice in a criminal justice system that is not informed by or sensitive to the needs of women.³⁶⁷

While wife battering is a form of gender based violence, surprisingly among many African families, "wife battering is a way of men instilling discipline in their wives...It is not seen as a big issue even though evidence shows that it causes psychological and physical injuries to women ... People simply say that she is just being disciplined a little, there is no problem."³⁶⁸ Most women in African families accept gender-based violence because they lack economic powers. Women who are economically empowered rarely accept gender-based violence.

Some Progress with Fractures

Whereas a lot of water has not gone under the bridge with regard to improving women's status in the African families, it is vital to mention that there are some indications that the situation is gradually changing. In the legal sphere, there are some laws that have been put in place to safeguard women's rights in families. For instance: On December 16, 2003, the Mozambican Parliament passed a new

³⁶⁷ Cf. Economic Commission for Africa, *op. cit.*

³⁶⁸ Kipuri, Naomi/Ridgewell, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 9.

Family Law. The new Family Law protects a broad range of women's rights and for the first time legally recognizes customary marriages. Under the new law, women who have lived with their partners for more than a year are entitled to inherit the property of their husbands. The Family Law also asserts that both spouses have responsibility over the family and can decide who will represent the family on a particular issue.³⁶⁹ In 1999, Cote d'Ivoire passed a law against violence against women and forced marriage. In 1993, South Africa also enacted laws on the prevention of family violence. These laws also define marital rape as a criminal act.³⁷⁰ Even though there remains an implementation deficit, nevertheless, these laws exist.³⁷¹ In 2010, the Ugandan government enacted Domestic Violence Act to curtail the level of domestic violence. Despite the existence of Domestic Violence Act which criminalizes domestic violence, it still persists in many Ugandan families.³⁷²

In order for women to own land, the Ugandan succession act was introduced in 2011; it allows widows to inherit 15% of the property. However, under the succession act, women have no right to inherit land from their fathers.³⁷³ Whereas the Uganda's Land Act of 1998 has a clause which restricts a husband not to transfer land without the consent of his wife, it is vital to keep in mind that not all women are aware of the existence of a such clause. Moreover, many women in African families are powerless to question their husbands about the land transfer. Those women who protest against their husband's land transfer often face violence at the hands of their husbands.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ Cf. Economic Commission for Africa, op. cit., 9.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Cf. Dunkle, Kristin L. et al., "Prevalence and Patterns of Gender-Based Violence and Revictimization among Women Attending Antenatal Clinics in Soweto, South Africa", in: *American Journal of Epidemiology*, No. 160 (2004) 3, 230–239; Khumalo, Bafana/Msimang, Sisonke/Bollbach, Katie, "Too Costly to Ignore – the Economic Impact of Gender-Based Violence in South Africa", 2014, <https://www.kpmg.com/ZA/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/General-Industries-Publications/Documents/Too%20costly%20to%20ignore-Violence%20against%20women%20in%20SA.pdf> (22.06.2015).

³⁷² Cf. Mujuzi, Jamil Ddamulira, op. cit.; Benedetti, Fanny/Kijo-Bisimba, Helen, op. cit.

³⁷³ Cf. Benedetti, Fanny/Kijo-Bisimba, Helen, op. cit.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Adoko, Judy/Akin, Jeremy/Knight, Rachael, "Understanding and Strengthening Women's Land Rights under Customary Tenure in Uganda", www.land-in-Uganda.org 2011 (14.06.2015).

In 1999, a law was passed in Rwanda giving women inheritance rights equivalent to those of men.³⁷⁵ Rwanda seems to be ahead of many African countries when it comes to women's inheritance rights. In 2004, the Family Law in Benin was promulgated to improve the situation of women in their families. Despite the promulgation of the Family Law in Benin, the situation of women has not changed greatly. Women in Benin continue to be subjected to a collection of customs and rules codified in 1931 (when Benin was still a French colony). In Benin, customary law continues to have an upper hand in matters to do with land inheritance. Moreover, it denies women to access and administer land on an equal level with men.³⁷⁶

There have also been some gradual changes with respect to the socio-economic situation of women in African families. This change has come as a result of women's empowerment and activism. While it is good to celebrate women's improving status, it is significant to mention that women's workload and responsibilities have increased greatly.³⁷⁷ Women are not only expected to manage their homes; they are also expected to provide the socio-economic needs for their families. Women's increasing economic status has shifted the burden to women. Whereas the situation of women in urban African families is somehow improving, the situation of women in rural areas is pathetic. Compared to their urban women counterparts, most women in rural areas lack economic powers³⁷⁸ and they also solely depend on their husbands for economic support.³⁷⁹ They are ignorant about their rights and those who assert themselves usually experience domestic violence.

Conclusion

Despite existing policies and legislations aimed at improving the situation of women; there is still implementation deficit. The past

³⁷⁵ Cf. Ernst & Young, op. cit.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Global Initiative, Shadow Report to the United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Benin, 2013, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/BEN/INT_CEDAW_NGO_BEN_15104_E.pdf 2013 (23.06.2015).

³⁷⁷ Cf. United Nations, Women Encounter Technology, op. cit.; Olatundun, Ilesanmi Oluwatoyin, op. cit.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Madisa, Motsei, "The Status of Women in Botswana", in: *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, No. 4 (1990) 1, 37–39; McFadden, Patricia, "The Condition of Women in Southern Africa: Challenges for the 1990's", in: *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, No. 3 (1990) 11, 3–9; Ernst & Young, op. cit.

³⁷⁹ Cf. van Hook, Mary P./Ngwenya, Barabara N., op. cit.

injustices and subtle customary discrimination continue to disadvantage women in most African families. Moreover, gender inequalities in African families remain uncontested and have put women in extremely vulnerable situations. Improving women's situation in the African families brings about a paradigm shift with regard to societies' mind-set and stereotypes that often derail women's advancement. In changing unequal gender power relations between a husband and wife will tremendously change the patriarchal and male chauvinism that persist among most African families. Such efforts are likely to lead to women's empowerment. When women's status in African families is raised, it will greatly change the socio-economic situation of most African families. Poverty levels will decrease and educational status of girls in the families will improve like that of their boy's counterparts.

Women are the backbone of African families and they make immense contributions with regard to maintaining homes, food production; they also shoulder most of the family responsibilities. Yet their contributions remain unvalued and unpaid. Women in African families remain subordinate to their husbands. However, it is pertinent to mention that some women have managed to liberate themselves from male chauvinism. They have been able to cross from the private to the public arena and are asserting their influence in political and socio-economic spheres. However, much remains to be realized with regard to gender equality in all spheres of life.

Accompaniment in Mercy: A New Model for Family Ministry

Shiju Joseph CSC

Understanding the changing family dynamics in Indian society is indeed a multifaceted process owing to the existence of many layers of pluralities such as religion, caste, language, family types and structure, etc. Even as there is a greater degree of globalization, spread of education and migration, the predominance of traditional orthodox patriarchal notions and cultural beliefs have intensified the problems of a multicultural world. However, family in India continues to remain the most important social institution. The Church in India needs to reach out to families in their everyday context without compromising the Gospel values and yet recognizing the various forces that seek to transform them. In this context, this paper attempts to provide a brief overview of the challenges of pastoral ministry to families in India. In listing the challenges the paper divides them into societal and ecclesiastical challenges. Finally I will also present the possible implications of a new model of pastoral ministry in catering to the changing families.

Societal Challenges

India is largely a Hindu nation and the underpinnings of the Hindu way of life sometimes influences other religions as well. Though some customs and notions do vary according to the religious affiliation, some Hindu customs and traditions permeate a lot of customs of even Christians and Muslims.³⁸⁰ However, rapid industrialization and globalization have altered the traditional normative expectations and value systems of the Indian society. Well paid jobs at urban areas have given a newfound financial autonomy to younger men at home

³⁸⁰ Mullatti, Leela, "Changing Profile of the Indian Family", in: UNESCO, *The Changing Family in Asia*, Bangkok 1992, 75–158.

where preferences that were at variance with the norms and preferences of their parents began to emerge and be expressed. This was widely noticed in mate selection by the men as well as taking up jobs which met their ambition.

As the traditional normative orientations toward marriage and family began to become more flexible, this change in people's attitudes in turn provided a new stimulus for further changes in socioeconomic arrangements in the society.³⁸¹ "Demographic change has created a new context for the creation and maintenance of family relationships. [...] The new demography of family life represents both strengths and vulnerabilities. Not only have we come to count on relationships with particular members and expect the ties to endure, we may also invest more intensely in them under conditions of decreasing family size".³⁸²

There has been a significant change in the views and attitudes of younger generations towards the sanctity of marriage in the recent past, especially in cities. Marriage no longer seems to be held to be a 'divine match' or a 'sacred union'. Now it is more like a transfer of a female from one family to another, or from one kinship group to another. The marital relationship is no longer sanctified as it was believed in the past, and is viewed only as a bonding and nurturing life-long relationship and friendship. Indian marriages are still largely resilient and lasting, whereas in many developed countries they seem to break up for seemingly trivial reasons. In India, divorce rates are among the lowest in the world. Analysis of National Family Health Survey data show that about two out of 100 Indian marriages end in divorce.³⁸³

An important change in the family structure in India is its shrinking size. Calls to adopt smaller family norms gathered momentum from the government front shortly after independence. However, in the absence of a cultural norm and religious backing, a small family did not hold much promise. Later, advancements in medical care and its extension to the rural areas coupled with rising cost of living prompted

³⁸¹ Cf. Tsuya, Noriko, *Nuptiality Change in Asia: Patterns, Causes, and Prospects*, KESDP 2001, No. 00–10.

³⁸² Hagestad, Gunhild O., "Demographic Change and the Life Course: Some Emerging Trends in the Family Realm", in: *Family Relations*, No. 37 (1988) 4, 405–410, here: 409f.

³⁸³ James, Kuriat S./Goswami, Baishali, *Demographic Change and Familial Relationship in India*, Bangalore 2010.

people to rethink the large size of their families. However, it is the rapid spread of education and globalization that probably made the practice of two-child-norm more attractive. It is in this context that methods adopted by Catholic parents to adhere to the small-family-norm has become important. Further, this small-family structures have implications for elderly care as it is not yet institutionalized in India. Pope Francis' statement echoed that love and caring among family is the best medicine for a long life of closeness. However, any pastoral intervention in India in this regard will not only have to draw from the values enshrined in the Gospels, but also will have to take into account the cultural and economic implications of such interventions.

Ecclesiastical Challenges

Familiaris Consortio outlined four tasks for a Christian family: Forming a community of persons, serving life, contributing to the development of society, and sharing in the life and mission of the Church.³⁸⁴ In India, every diocese has a family commission headed by a director/diocesan secretary. And the ministries to the families in the various dioceses are quite different in scope, content, resource-allocation, reach and effectiveness.

A challenge experienced within the Church is the limited doctrinal acceptance especially regarding matters that have come to be regarded as 'personal'. It is not uncommon within India to find devout people who regard religion as a deeply personal matter and at the same time are averse to teachings that may seem to intervene in their 'personal' life. This affects also the scope of intervention of the Church. While the families do welcome the intervention of the pastors in their lives, there are indications that they do not want to be baby-sitted by the pastors. It may be useful to look at the possibility that such resistance may be a result of the particular way in which family has largely been ministered to.

Pastoral interventions often focus more on pointing out the issues within the families than on practical solutions to resolve them. It is not uncommon for resource persons and pastoral agents to point their fingers at the families for troubles that they have brought upon

³⁸⁴ Pope John Paul II., Apostolical letter *Familiaris consortio* about the assignments of Christian families in the today's world. 22. November 1981, No. 17.

themselves. It is instructive to note that at the wedding at Cana (Jn 2), Mary and Jesus did not do a critical evaluation of the situation. No accusatory finger was pointed at the family for inviting more guests than they could feed or for their gross miscalculation of the wine requirements. Mary, as the first apostle, spots the trouble in the family, takes it to Jesus and simply instructs them 'to do whatever he tells.'

For Asians, family is a part of their self-identity and any problem in the family is something that they would rather keep private. Talking about it to strangers (including counsellors) is considered to be less than desirable. Even when everyone accepts that 'all families have problems,' it is more often quoted as a justification rather than as a prelude to discussing one's family problems. Issues of parenting, ailments, unhealthy habits, arguments, property disputes, marital rape, dowry-harassment, substance-abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence, etc. are sought to be kept strictly within the family circles often with disastrous consequences to the victim. Usually, the issues remain under wraps until they cannot any more be kept that way. In Indian context, it is therefore imperative that the Church has its ears to the ground to *listen* to the preliminary signs of intervention-requirements in the families. The urban areas have begun to be a little more open to counselling practices. However, a lot of people still approach professional help only when after the issues have gone too far.

This brings to sharp focus two important opportunities that the Church in India has to explore with all its resources: equipping the to-be-married couple with appropriate tools to handle the situations that will arise in their marriage; and accompanying the families/couples in arriving at resolutions that will benefit everyone in the family. The first challenge is sought to be addressed by the Church through its Marriage Preparation Programs conducted by most dioceses in India. However, the focus of these programs are not uniform. While the differences may be expressive of the variety of situations in India, it is also indicative of a lack of shared focus/purpose for the program. The national survey conducted in India in preparation for the General Assembly of Bishops in 2015 revealed that a vast majority of respondents wanted the Marriage Preparation Programs to be revamped and that there be greater lay participation in the planning, execution and periodic evaluation of these programs. For

Catholics in India, the Marriage Preparation Program is not just a flagship program in ministering to the families, it is often the only program available to them. The duration, contents, methodology and evaluation of these programs are matters that require close examination and review.

The second opportunity for pastoral intervention is accompanying the married couples especially as they live their first years together and begin a family. The importance of this has been emphasized in the preparatory documents and various messages of Pope Francis. This aspect assumes special relevance in India due to the significant role played by the families of both spouses in their relationship. The cultural underpinnings give a lot of room for emotional and economic relationship between the parents and the spouses. This has the potential to create havoc or offer crucial support in the relationship. Some of the dioceses in India have special programs for the parents of the bride and groom before the marriage. However, the Church will need to create space and form for a model of pastoral care that can accompany the couples in their marriage, during the initial and later parenting years.

A new AIM model of pastoral care

The vocation of marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.³⁸⁵ However, living this vocation has not been in any way easy for the millions of Catholics across the globe. The Church, while interpreting the implications of this vocation, also needs to support the families in their journey towards reaching the ideal. Sacramental marriage is a gift that needs to be received and not a difficult ideal that needs to be achieved. Presenting it as a difficult ideal creates fear among the young who doubt their own ability to be faithful to it for a lifetime and encourages them to stay away from a commitment they may fail in. It is a gift which, nevertheless, requires adequate preparation before it can be received. This preparation is to be oriented towards helping the couple to absorb the graces and skills required to provide each other first, and their children later, with an experiential witness to the *kenotic* love of Christ.

³⁸⁵ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Art. 7, 1603.

None recognized the inadequacies of human beings in living their call better than Jesus himself. The compassion that Jesus showed to the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8); and the non-judgemental way in which he dealt with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4) – who had five marriages and a cohabitation – are indications to the pastoral agents about the way forward. In fact, when the Samaritan woman volunteered the information about her troubled conjugal past she was appreciated by Jesus for her honesty rather than being given a model punishment or even some advice regarding permanence of marital relationship. Marriage is a bond that can benefit from compassionate accompaniment by both the community and trained clergy. Marriages at times need repair/healing and a real experience of giving and receiving the mercy of God through each other. The witness of a marriage that sails through hard times with the help of God is a powerful missionary witness. Hence, every struggling marriage presents before the Church an opportunity to make real and experiential the mercy and forgiveness of Christ in the life of that couple. Such a marriage that has been tested in fire turns out more robust in stability, deeper in the appreciation of the gift of each other, and more effective in assisting other couples in difficult times.

Without compromising the ideal of a lifelong marriage, the Church needs to understand those couples who fall short of it in a variety of ways. It is reflective in the language used by the *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) 2015 to describe how it wants to communicate the message: “in a manner which might inspire hope.... One which does not moralize, judge or control...”.³⁸⁶ “All families should, above all, be treated with respect and love and accompanied on their journey as Christ accompanied the disciples on the road to Emmaus....”.³⁸⁷ “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious, and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment,’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting a closeness and compassion which, at the same time, heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life”.³⁸⁸ This, one recognizes immediately, is at variance with the legal/

³⁸⁶ XIV. Ordinary General Assembly of the episcopal synod, Appeal and Consignment of the families in today’s church and world, *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City 23.June 2015, No. 78.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, No. 109.

³⁸⁸ EG 169.

canonical perspective that seems to have guided the pastoral ministry in India. It proposes a new response, a new perspective and a new model of pastoral ministry which has the potential to adapt to the changing needs of families across the world. Given the importance of 'mercy' in this accompaniment process, one may choose to label the new model as the AIM (Accompaniment in Mercy) model of pastoral ministry to families. The preparation, discussions and documents related to both the Synods on family (2014 and 2015) amply demonstrate the clarion call of the laity for a compassionate approach towards families.

The implications of such a radically new model needs further inquiry. Based on the various utterances of the Pope Francis and results of the survey in India regarding the expectations of the faithful regarding pastoral ministry to families, the following are proposed as some of the evident features of the AIM model.

1. The new model is more focused on enabling the families to become true witnesses rather than enforcing certain rules and regulations. The language we use to reach out to families is sympathetic and expressive of the mercy of Christ. The normative understanding of marriage and family is not abandoned, but is understood as a destination towards which families and individuals are growing at different paces. Pastoral care is understood as keeping pace with the struggling people of God and creating a space for them to nonjudgmentally experience the freedom and responsibility of the children of God. This requires pastoral agents to have a fairly good grasp of the cultural context and value systems in which the families are embedded, and to discern what it would mean to walk with such families in their journey towards greater faithfulness and joy.

2. The new model of Pastoral care proposes a great deal of flexibility and customizing to suit the culture and situation of the particular families. It is easily adaptable to personal/local/cultural contexts. The mentality is expected to be a differentiated one which does not impose one solution to everyone's problems. Pastoral care in this case implies personal care. "At times, this means to be at one's side and to listen in silence; at other times, to stand in front to indicate the way forward; and at still other times to stand behind to support and to encourage."³⁸⁹ What is sought is not an impersonal application of

³⁸⁹ *Instrumentum Laboris*, No. 110.

rules and procedures but an individualized approach which will allow pastoral agents to discover what would best communicate God's mercy and compassion in a particular situation.

3. The new model calls pastors to venture into the pastures. It is an invitation to the pastoral agents to feel the pulse of the people, to the shepherds to recognize the smell of their sheep and to get their hands wet. The image of the Church as a 'field hospital' reinforces this model of pastoral care. It is an invitation to leave the portals of grand institutions and to venture into the thistles in the wilderness, into the midst of the people, seeking out the lost ones, and proactively bringing the Church and its Good News, to them. The focus is not on keeping the sinners away from the Church, but on discovering how they can be invited into the 'field hospital.'

4. The new model of pastoral practice is also characterized by a rediscovery of family elders as agents of evangelization. The role played by grandparents in the transmission of faith to younger generations is well known. The model adds to this the important role of those who stood the test of time in joyfully keeping their marital vows. These elders who have spent several years in marriage and family life can be a source of invaluable inspiration and assistance to young couples who are still toddling the path of adjustment. Sharing by the experienced couples can reassure the young couples, rekindle in them hope of a lifetime of love, and inspire confidence that a broken spousal relationship can be re-established. In this scheme, opportunities for elder couples to minister to the younger couples create in the former a feeling of being useful to others. Thus, creating such opportunities for elder couples can be a way of ministering to them. An important point to note in this is that catering to the needs of the elderly is not entirely and exclusively left to their family, but is also shared by the local Church community.

5. Another feature of the new model is the increased role of the laity in pastoral practice. The laity are seen not just as recipients of pastoral care, but as collaborators, and in some cases, principal agents of pastoral care. The enhanced role of the laity is sought in planning, conducting, and evaluating the Marriage Preparation Courses, Marital enrichment programs and programs for the wounded families/couples. An important dimension is the significant role laity are called to play in the formation of priests and in training them in skills to minister to families.

6. A closely related feature is the importance given to women in this model of pastoral care. Women are not portrayed as mere recipients, but as also givers of pastoral care. A greater appreciation of their responsibilities in the Church, their involvement in the decision-making process and their participation in the governing of some institutions are called for. In order to enhance affective maturity and gender-sensitivity among the priests, women could be a part of the resource team that trains ordained ministers.

7. In this model, the task of discerning the appropriateness of the pastoral care, exploring how it can be given, and finally communicating this care effectively are all a responsibility of the pastoral agent. If the pastoral care has not been effective, the responsibility to modify the approach lies with the minister and not the couple/family which need the care.

8. This model brings to sharp relief the contribution that social/secular sciences can make to pastoral practices. Various measures suggested as important ministerial steps imply using methods and insights of social sciences to arrive at a systematic understanding of the situation/context. Social science can also contribute towards translating gospel values into skills which can be taught using age-appropriate learning methods. Various specialists like doctors, psychologists and sociologists could be part of the resource team which trains pastoral agents.

9. The new model proposes an integrated approach of considering the family as a whole, rather than merely assisting each individual to play his/her respective roles. The entire family is considered as a single unit and as a system. The intimate interconnectedness demands the pastoral agents to be sensitive to the differential and ripple impact they can have on different family members though they may focus only on a particular relationship within the family.

10. The traditional ministry to the family mostly ended when a couple married. The new model grants a lot of importance to what happens post marriage. Accompaniment of married couples especially in the initial years of their marriage is considered as one of utmost importance. It is important for pastoral agents to understand the dynamics of beginning a new family, the challenges it poses to two individuals, especially in today's context of heightened individuality, and the difficult adjustments that often are unforeseen.

11. Closely related to this point is the importance given to parenting. Married couples are called upon to begin a family but also to ensure that any differences between them does not become a cause for suffering for the children. The missionary nature of the family is primarily demonstrated in making visible God's unconditional mercy and love in a manner that can be experienced by the spouses and children in their daily lives. Pastoral care involves enabling and equipping the parents to understand their children and assisting them to responsibly respond to the growth-needs of the children.

12. Another important feature of this model is that pastoral care is not sought to be limited to couples/individuals/families in crisis. Though those who go through difficult times need to be given greater priority, the model seeks to acknowledge, affirm, and uphold those families which live the Christian values. These families are called to be agents to reach out in purposeful ways to other struggling couples.

Conclusion

The Indian context presents a family scholar with a veritable source of variety in family systems and structures. Though family as a basic social institution has never been static, the past few decades have witnessed several serious changes in the way one sees family in the Indian context. Catholic families have not been unaffected in the swirl of social change that has gripped the Indian society in the recent past. It has become fashionable to list these changes as indicators of a crisis in the family front. What may be more appropriate for the Church in India is to look at these changes as indicators which call for a change in its traditional ways of responding to the needs of the family. These are challenging times, but every challenge is also a new opportunity: an opportunity to witness to the values of Christ.

We notice also that these challenges do not necessarily emerge from Christian identity. The families, regardless of their religious affiliation, are vulnerable to the same onslaught. Mission in this context cannot focus only on Catholics. It would be naïve to expect that the Catholics can be somehow protected or insulated from the influences of the world around them simply by giving them training, attention or mercy. The private troubles of the families often stem from the public issues of the society. And what has origins in the society needs to be tackled at the societal level, and not merely at individual level.

Mission therefore will call the pastoral agents to go beyond the established boundaries, to enter into the world deep enough to transform it from within. The Church needs to prepare its agents both in terms of strength of faith to withstand resistance and opposition, and skills to generate discreet yet powerful changes. What is called for is a new paradigm in how the Church views and ministers to families, and a determination to respond to their lived realities without burying our heads in the sand.

An Introduction to Indigenous Andean Families in Bolivia

Sofía Nicolasa Chipana Quispe

In sharing with you here, I shall try to outline the situation of indigenous families, focussing in the main on urban families not only to counter the prevailing prejudice that confines indigenous life to the rural environment, but also stemming from my own circumstances as a member of a migrant Aymara family who, like many other families, settled in the city in the hope of improving their living conditions. Nevertheless, our great desire as families is to continue nourishing our identity from our ancestral roots, in the face of the great vacuum in our societies around the meaning of our interrelationships with the human community and all other communities of living creatures sheltered by our great common house, the Earth, sacred *Pachamama*.

The impact of indigenous migration on families

When examining the situation of indigenous families, we must remember the struggles waged by Bolivia's indigenous peoples, who have been guarding their lands and territories in recent times from threats posed by the global market. Besides, they have been seeking for a long time now to tackle oppression and exclusion, in order to establish indigenous citizenry in the country and thereby overcome the inequalities and divides between an indigenous Bolivia and a Bolivia associated with those who created an exclusive society by using various State agencies to wield power. Although the national Constitution of the Plurinational State recognises the 36 ethnic peoples living in what is now called Bolivia, it does not guarantee an end to the oppression, exclusion and racism. While there has been some interesting progress, the rift caused by inequality still exerts its impact on the life of indigenous families.

Recognition for the dignity of our peoples comes in the wake of a series of struggles to maintain the vision of a land free of want that has continued to ferment in dreams, dances, music, fabrics and languages expressing the hope of seeing – one great day! – our current conditions transform into wellbeing. The aspirations of our peoples express many ideas, but as Xavier Albó would say, the “*central one is the desire to be oneself*. He or she can accept modernisation, entering the money markets, the mechanisation of agriculture, yet at the same time wishes to be himself or herself and to have a voice”.³⁹⁰ As it says in Article 5 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:³⁹¹ Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

The situation of indigenous families within dynamic economies

Various studies have presented data about indigenous families, generally depicting them as overwhelmed by poverty, and this is hard to deny, given that the facts speak for themselves. However, we shall try here to consider some aspects relating to the good life (*Suma qamaña, Sumak kausay*), where the economy is founded on caring for life, although we can also observe the emergence in the Andes of economic forms that follow capitalist models.

The decline of economies committed to caring for life

One of the reasons why we can observe major displacements (migrations) of indigenous families relates to a quest for wellbeing, linked to economic improvement, which for cultures with strong ancestral roots does not have the capitalist connotation of acquiring goods, but of nourishing the life of all living beings, and not only human life.

However, urban influences have replaced alternative economies based on exchanging products and by taking on board capitalist products, have altered the rhythms of communities who produce

³⁹⁰ Albó, Xavier, El gigante despierta: Cuarto Intermedio 77, Reprinting of an article from the year 1986, 2005, 3–26, here: 29.

³⁹¹ UNO, *Declaración de las Naciones Unidas sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas* (Declaration of the UN about the rights of the indigenous people), 2008, No. 5.

manually, transforming the purpose of the economy from one of caring to a mercantile system where purchasing power prevails.

Another aspect to consider is the displacement of families from rural environments to districts on the urban periphery. According to the population and housing census in 2001, about 62% of Bolivians regard themselves as indigenous. 52.2% of those live in urban areas and 47.8% in rural areas in a state of poverty³⁹², due to the lack of public policies devoted to ensuring a life in dignity for indigenous communities – a lack that has provoked a huge exodus towards the urban areas, even though it is an acknowledged fact that migratory flows do not resolve poverty, because indigenous labour accepts informal employment that does not provide decent, stable jobs. Indeed, it lends itself to exploitation, given that the logic of work in Andean contexts is not attached to a specific time frame, because it does not matter what days and hours a person works when generating income required by the family.

One deeply rooted hallmark of the indigenous family model is that people start work at a young age, partly out of necessity, but above all in the belief that life teaches us about life. For this reason, working is valued, whereas idleness is seen as a serious threat to the family, the village and the human community.

The migration/mobility of indigenous families

Many reasons can be given for the displacement of indigenous families towards the cities, but there is no question that one of the factors driving entire communities from their lands in recent years is climate change, the effects of which have transformed the productive system. Another reason behind this displacement of families is the search for opportunities to care better for life, often by seeking education for sons and daughters to improve their living conditions away from the village. To some extent this has been encouraged by the comforts that capitalist economic models appear to offer in the cities, the very low value attached to agricultural work in the indigenous communities, and the lack of policies to promote food sovereignty in the country.

³⁹² Data provided by the Centre for Research, Documentation and Technology Access (CIDAT) set up by the Gregoria Apaza Centre for the Promotion of Women in El Alto, Bolivia.

In these migration processes, the men are the first to leave, so that for long periods the women assume responsibility for the home and caring for the children, and in some cases caring for grandparents. It is therefore common in many villages for women, children and the elderly to be sustaining rural life. When the women are then drawn to the cities by family ties, they immediately take on co-responsibility for the economy through a range of various activities, and they are the ones who foster the links with the place of origin.

This migration process does not leave young men and women behind. Guided by a family member and even a parent, they accept work in domestic service. This is often taken by women and young people of indigenous descent, which has an impact on pay and employment stability. According to Albó, this process of urban integration is perceived by the young woman concerned and her family “as a kind of rite of passage, and quite literally as *domestic service*, implying a very particular style of personal relationship which, in passing, plays a certain ‘civilising’ role for the girls who go through it”.³⁹³ However, this employment reflects “the characteristics of a colonial and neo-colonial society, based on relations of command, servility and dependence”.³⁹⁴

For young men, *military service*, which is currently compulsory in Bolivia, has a similar function. Albó writes that in the early twentieth century “it became acceptable for indigenous peoples to serve as soldiers, which was seen as a success given their exclusion. In practice, however, it is clearly an instrument that reproduces the country’s neo-colonial model, with strong additional components of male authoritarianism, where young people are subjected not only to mental abuse, but also to physical abuse that is often regarded as a kind of trial of courage that makes ‘men’ of them, and young men who have not undergone this experience are severely criticised”.³⁹⁵

Turning the spotlight on indigenous children, boys and girls also migrate to the cities under the aegis of guardians or close relatives to take up work as street sellers, kitchen helps, childminders, porters

³⁹³ Albó, Xavier, *Ciudadanía étnico-cultural en Bolivia*, La Paz 2005, 34, http://www.iisec.ucb.edu.bo/projects/Pieb/archivos/Albo-ciudadania_etnico_cultural.pdf (29.02.2016).

³⁹⁴ Leslie, Gill, *Dependencias precarias: Clase, género y servicio doméstico*, La Paz 1995, 210.

³⁹⁵ Albó, Xavier, *Ciudadanía étnico-cultural en Bolivia*, La Paz 2005, 34.

and other such tasks. This is an extremely vulnerable group, as they are completely cut off from their families and totally uprooted from the lives they know. In a different way, the children of migrant families in the cities are also plunged into work, typically selling newspapers on public transport; or indeed in their own homes, where they are called upon to look after their smaller brothers and sisters.

Diverse migratory flows, not only within but outside the country (Argentina, Brazil) have resulted in intercultural exchange, with marriages between people from different regions. This type of union transgresses the norms of traditional thinking, which took it for granted that marriages were made between families who knew each other or members of the same indigenous community; it has given rise then to new modes of living.

Replicating cultural life: encounters and differences

Migrant indigenous families arrive in the cities accompanied by their cultural values, and as they settle they recreate these in urban spaces with all kinds of variations, through various organised bodies, although these values are sometimes lost or take new directions, as shared by Calixto Quispe:

“The teachings of the ancestors are not taken into account, they are left behind as if buried [...]. There is no communication in families, because everyone is out looking to earn money, governed by hours and work.”³⁹⁶

Of course, the families are subject to the influence of certain urban family models conveyed by the media, which depict, for example, women fully devoted to domestic chores and men as attentive heads of family; admittedly not all this is taken on board, given that from the perspective of the indigenous Andean peoples women combine their work in the home with other activities.

The gender categories postulated by some NGOs are also unrealistic, as many women do not adopt a stance purely on the basis of their own needs, without considering the life of their family. For this reason, the demands expressed by both men and women relate to

³⁹⁶ Quispe, Calixto, *Identidad indígena en el campo y la ciudad: Colección Pacha: Nuestra vivencias*, Cochabamba 2010, 10–11.

sources of work, education for their children, health and housing. This approach to life derives from the cosmic vision in the Andes, where life is conceived as a whole, with no separation between the political, economic and religious.

Today more than ever before, in spaces where Andean men articulate their reflections, we can observe a repeated defence of the dual³⁹⁷ vision in Andean society, which highlights the relationship *chacha-warmi* (man-woman) and its equitable, inclusive aspects. Nevertheless, this seems to reflect an asymmetry between men and women, with greater importance attached to the male element. As a consequence, there has been a tendency to categorise rural and urban indigenous families as male-dominated. However, let me recall the comments of Alison Spedding, who wrote that “the role of the man is very rarely analysed, and when the man does appear, it is usually in the role of the bossy, selfish, violent head of family, a role that is widely lamented but not analysed. Even worse, it is often associated with an alleged ‘patriarchal Aymara culture’, a portrayal that owes more to prejudice”.³⁹⁸

From the perspective described above, it is common to present Andean women as “victims” of violence within the family, whether in the rural or urban setting. However, it is worth pointing out with regard to both domestic violence and sexual abuse that although the research by NGOs produces data on marginal societies, reflecting a certain social monitoring of marginal groups, these phenomena are common to women of different social classes, but they do not always feature in studies if the family model adopted perceives the home as a private space.

In fact, there are very few studies that reflect the process of women’s autonomy in these indigenous families, possibly because it is frowned upon. That may explain why, among migrant women or in rural communities, one often hears women say that their husbands have abandoned them, or gone off with someone else, and that they do not know where they are. According to Spedding, this might lead

³⁹⁷ The life system is based on dual complementarity and conceives of all conditions as feminine-masculine.

³⁹⁸ Spedding, Alison, “Investigaciones sobre género en Bolivia: Un comentario crítico”, in: Arnold, Denise Y. (ed.), *Más allá del silencio: Antología de género, identidad y teología en los Andes*, La Paz 1997, 53–75, here: 85.

us to “suspect that possibly these women threw their husbands out for not complying with their domestic duties, and that they prefer to portray themselves as victims, because if they confess to ejecting their husbands they will be labelled as ‘bad women’, something our societies are very good at doing”.³⁹⁹ Up to a point, it appears quite normal for a man to abandon the home, whereas a woman will be heavily censured for causing a breakdown in matrimonial life.

Sometimes, when daughters of Quechua and Aymara migrants manage to establish a successful business, they defy social pressure for a married woman to remain with her husband. They consider it quite normal to get rid of a man who hits them or does not work, for they see the relationship as useless.

Bearing in mind the various situations that can arise, above all in the relationship of a couple, it would seem that there is still strong pressure in societies to keep families “united” at all costs, even if it means accepting hidden violence that falls strongly on women.

Encounters and differences between generations

Among youngsters, a youth culture is imposed through the media, fashion and music which creates intergenerational tensions and conflict between fathers and mothers and their sons or daughters. While those who belong to poor families will not be able to afford everything the market offers, youth culture can still be adopted in the form of a hairstyle, gestures, manners, listening to certain music and dance forms, which plays a very important role in the peer group.

It can also be assumed that, despite the arguments caused by major disagreements between parents and their offspring about the consumption of youth culture, there are young people who combine indigenous culture with youth culture, given that the cultural influence of indigenous families is very strong and enduring. In this way, new cultural practices emerge which reconfigure the “old and new”.

Other parameters of coexistence are also emerging, such as the abandonment of the ancestral language, which is certainly an important factor for first-generation migrants. It is clear, however, that parents prefer to speak Spanish to their children, even if their usage is not “correct”, because a command of this language is a prerequisite

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

for social mobility. This does not provoke conflict between the generations. But neither can we deny that many young people, once they have acquired a certain status in the space they occupy with friends, feel ashamed to speak the language, be it Aymara, Quechua or any other, because this was seen in a negative light for such a long time. Possibly, if the various strata of our society start attaching greater value to indigenous culture, the sense of inferiority we adopted so long ago may be overcome.

Another field for encounter and misunderstanding is clothing, although clearly men now adopt the Western model, except in a few indigenous communities where they continue to wear the old costumes. For women, on the other hand, clothes, language, and ancestral wisdom and spirituality are associated with conserving and passing on the culture. Although these days young women no longer dress like their mothers, that is not necessarily due to the influence of youth culture, but often to the mother's decision to dress her daughters like urban girls. This choice can be understood, because in some societies indigenous clothing led to exclusion, so this choice is linked to the mother's hope that her daughters will not have to endure what she herself underwent.

In the relationship between parents and children, one of the biggest disagreements felt by the younger generation relates to violence, which possibly is not so much a cultural factor as a technique used to educate and discipline, where the mother and father exert authority in order to instruct. As in many adult-centred cultures, the concept of authority is very important within indigenous families: to lose it is a source of great disappointment, because "it means they have failed in their role as fathers and/or mothers, exposing them to social censure".⁴⁰⁰

Another source of conflict with parents is that, although they watch over their children's behaviour in the home and its social repercussions, parents may be unaware of the dilemmas youngsters experience as they grapple with a youth culture which is asserted at all costs in certain kinds of relationship and attitudes, and with their own emotional problems.

⁴⁰⁰ Germán, Guaygua/Riveros, Ángela/Máximo, Quisbert, "Nuevas conductas sociales con raíces aymaras: Ecografía de la juventud alteña", in: Tinkazos: *Revista boliviana de ciencias sociales*, No. 2 (1999) 5, La Paz 1999, 102.

Keys of Andean culture to assist families

My dear children, from today onwards you are a new family, new members of the community. You now have a little potato patch, and it will depend on you whether it produces well or badly. Family members and our companions have worked together with a little seed so that you can all live as people, happy, with honour and respect.

Do not let that seed disappear. Tend it until you have grown, so that you can give it to your children as a blessing, just as we have done today.⁴⁰¹

In concluding, I recall from memory these wise words about not letting the seeds we inherit disappear, which perhaps will reverberate in many indigenous families in different places. In turn, these wise words preserved in the jars of oral memory remind indigenous families that if they lose sight of their ancestral wisdom they will forget the keys to cultural values that can nourish family life.

I admit that it is a challenge to restore the cultural identity of indigenous peoples in urban environments, for when we move away from the soil of our mothers and fathers we start to lose the wisdom from which they drank. Yet we want this wisdom to provide profound ethical and spiritual orientation that can touch the vital core of our being and guide us in our relations with others, with nature and with other creatures. With this purpose in mind, let me offer you some keys:

Our bond with the earth and cosmos

For indigenous men and women, the earth is very important for symbolic reasons, because it is said that from the earth we come and to the earth we return. At the same time, the earth relates to life, nourishing it through our food. That is why most indigenous families in cities do not break ties with their lands of origin, a sentiment that is passed on to the next generations.

But this relationship with the earth is stimulated by our interrelationships with Pachamama (Mother Earth), and reflects our sacred relationship with the elements of nature, a dimension reflected in

⁴⁰¹ Mamani, Vicenta, *El satthapi (la entrega de la semilla de papa a una nueva pareja) a un nuevo matrimonio*. Colección Pacha: Jaqichasifña–Masachakuy, Cochabamba 2008, 24.

many urban indigenous homes, where responsible use is made of water and light, and where food is valued, looked after and shared with poor families. Apart from this, many migrant families take on the difficult task of collecting recyclable materials in the cities.

The community dimension

In most Andean contexts, the community is very important because it is perceived as the broader family, with every family reinforcing its membership through the process of co-responsibility and reciprocity, while the community assumes tasks founded on solidarity, especially towards new families, just as the new family forges a relationship with the community. In this way, newly married couples establish relationships and co-responsibility within their family and their community.

In Andean contexts, the family is seen as the nucleus of socio-community organisation, where spirituality is a fundamental pillar, for this is how all men and women form relationships with the protective spirits who are part of our community. In the cities, these ties need to be redefined through other contacts, possibly through the churches, which in some senses can provide a protective space for uprooted families.

The personal dimension

Indigenous families still preserve the rites of passage which are part of a person's development. These ceremonies mark the transition from one stage in the life cycle to the next, part of a fabric of rites and ceremonies from birth until death, nourished by ancestral and Christian spirituality.

There is a call here to offer our care to every stage in the life of a child, for girls and boys deserve special care in an adult-centric society. Andean families offer small people (*jiska jakes*) an education from life and for life, an integral education with spiritual, social, economic and political dimensions. In the Andean world, a person is valuable because of who they are, not what they have. From this perspective, becoming a full person (*Jaqui*) entails a process not simply of personal growth but of complete incorporation into the community. What truly makes someone a person is their interrelationship with

others, and in the cities this can sometimes only be attained by defying individualism.

The religious dimension

As far as religion is concerned, parents often push their sons and daughters to take part in Catholic religious rites (sacraments) or those of other churches, in order to observe the Christian religious system, although this experience does not prevent children, young people and adults from participating in the cyclical rites of our ancestral culture, for both these experiences have their value.

In Andean spirituality, there is a strong emphasis on the sacred experience of life, where there are no dichotomous divides, but rather sacred dimensions deserving of respect. Everything is sacred: what we eat, the ground we tread, people, the house we live in, etc. This is why Josef Estermann tells us:

Religion (or spirituality) in the Andean context is not limited to a certain “field” or to certain institutions and specialists, but is present in every aspect of life, from birth until death, from sowing until reaping, and of course in everything that has to do with “development” and improving the conditions of life. Religion is to the *jaqi/runa* of the Andes what water is to the fish: a second skin, the air we breathe, a collective subconscious treasure. “Religion” is not normally objectivised or discussed, but lived in a ritual and celebratory manner.⁴⁰²

The celebratory dimension

In the indigenous world, celebration is part of life and it is very much intertwined with the community. It is associated with sharing, with joy and with social ties which are open to sons and daughters, for these spaces are regarded as propitious moments for integrating and getting to know the family or the parents’ friends. In this way, social relationships are passed on by parents to children to help them establish their own social ties.

Finally, I quote Vicenta Mamani’s contribution on the celebratory dimension:

⁴⁰² Estermann, Josef, “El mercado religioso y la religión de del mercado”, in: idem (ed.), *Religión y desarrollo en Los Andes*, La Paz 2008, 54.

In the Andean world, dance and music are connected to the life cycle of human beings and nature. Everything has its time and its interpretation. Dance and music are elements which touch the soul, which is why festivals are celebrated everywhere, small ones and big ones. Festivals are moments of encounter, of community sharing, of reconciliation, and also moments of difference.⁴⁰³

To conclude, we continue to be, but it is not easy, because like the other families with whom we share our lives in the cities, we are experiencing the great challenge of understanding new values and new ways to help us to feel as a family.

⁴⁰³ Mamani, Vicenta, *La espiritualidad vivida alrededor del lago Titicaca*: Colección Pacha: Espíritu, Cochabamba 2008, 57.

The Church and the Family

The Future Starts Here: Marriage and the Family

Heiner Koch

Marriage and the family are core realities which extend beyond the personal lives of individuals and are now very much a topic of public debate. They often encompass contradictory trends. On the one hand, numerous forms of relationship strive for a status equal to that of marriage or even to be designated as such. On the other hand, the special significance of marriage is decreasing in political terms. In Germany this is apparent in the debate on taxation, as the difference in the income between married partners is split for tax purposes, thus denying them the kind of tax benefits which even a commercial partnership enjoys in the world of business. Moreover, marriage and the family are often portrayed in the media as deficient. Yet both the Shell Study and the Generation Barometer have shown that 75 per cent of children in Germany are currently living with their biological parents – far more than in previous periods. Ninety per cent of young people say they have a good relationship with their parents and that their parents have enough time for them; 75 per cent say they would bring up their own children in the same way as they have been brought up by their parents. However, this is hardly ever reported.

Is marriage a thing of the past?

Studies have certainly shown that, as regards the future of marriage, the vast majority of people in Germany would agree with the title of this essay. Nevertheless, marriage is seen by many as a historically outmoded model. Many people – especially the younger generation – are asking themselves why they should get married at all and, in particular, why it should be of any concern to the state how two people who love each other organise their personal relationship. Yet most people have no idea what the Church means when it talks about

marriage as a sacrament. They may have heard somewhere that if a marriage has been concluded in church, the couple cannot get divorced and that it is therefore impossible to have a church wedding more than once. Perhaps they associate a Christian marriage with a special moral commitment. Most people do not know that this sacrament has something to do with being called, that it is a focus of God's presence and that it encompasses the promises of the Gospel. When I was a student chaplain in Düsseldorf, I was often approached by young couples whom I helped and counselled for quite a while. They asked me why they should marry in church in addition to the ceremony at the registry office. This was not a moral issue for them and they were not calling the principles of marital commitment and faithfulness into question. Rather, they regarded the tradition and institution of marriage as a little puzzling. The World Youth Day in Cologne featured several panel discussions on the topic of "Marriage and the Family". Most of those sessions were oversubscribed, as the delegates were exactly at an age when the issue of a permanent, lifelong partnership was relevant to them. Again and again questions were asked which touched upon the meaning and justification of civil and Christian marriages.

The young peoples' questions probably reflected the social development of their generation in Germany. Article 6, section 1 of Germany's constitution specifies that marriage and the family enjoy the special protection of the state. In reality, however, this article is being increasingly undermined, for instance by the German Civil Partnership Act and other regulations which downgrade the special value of marriage. This is accompanied by extensive efforts on the part of many political parties to restrict the special legal protection of marriage and the financial incentives for matrimony. In principle, of course, a civil marriage is also intended to be permanent, but a divorce is fairly easy to come by. Marriage is, therefore, degenerating into an option that can be exercised any number of times, making it less and less relevant in the public mind.

Unlike marriage, however, the family is currently on everyone's lips again. But although there is much talk about the value of the family and we hear so many professions of esteem, they stand in sharp contrast to the facts. Thirty-seven per cent of all households in Germany are currently single-person households, and only thirty-two

per cent of just under 40 million households include children, in other words less than one third.

Loss of family values

There are many reasons for this downturn in the number of families and children. One is undoubtedly the permanent structural disadvantaging of families in Germany in both social and financial terms. In 1998, the German Federal Constitutional Court found that married parents were not being granted the constitutional minimum of tax equity. Parents were de facto subject to higher taxes than childless couples. The level at which their maintenance costs were estimated was too low. The Court therefore ruled that their parenting allowance should be increased, as they would otherwise have to pay tax on income they did not have. It is a fact of life that parents in Germany are penalised for putting children into the world and bringing them up. The German Institute for Economic Research (IFO) in Munich reports that, between 1990 and 2002, the state collected excess tax revenues of EUR 33 billion from parents, apparently in contravention of the Constitution.

Moreover, in April 2001 the German Federal Constitutional Court found that the country's statutory nursing care insurance was unconstitutional. The payments made by parents, said the judges, were benefiting those without children. Childless individuals were paying no more than their premiums and nothing to maintain their holdings. The Court concluded that families needed to be given relief to compensate for the payments they were making. According to these judgements, support for families is therefore not a social welfare benefit but compensation for tax payments they make as parents but which are not required from childless taxpayers. The judges ruled that the government had to issue new regulations by the end of 2004 in which it was to compensate families for the national nursing care insurance premiums they had been paying. In the same way, there was to be a review of whether statutory pension and health insurances were fair on families. The judges' ruling has never been executed, however. Although childless taxpayers have subsequently been required to pay higher premiums on their nursing care insurance, the burden has not been reduced for families with children.

Furthermore, whenever there is an increase in value-added tax, the government mainly penalises families as the ones who are hardest

hit by rising energy and food prices. Families have also been affected by the abolition of home ownership subsidies and by the limitation of child benefit to children under 25. Since 1965, Germany's annual birth rate has almost halved, while the number of children in poverty has risen 16 times, even though the proportion of working mothers has gone up 60 per cent. In other words, both parents need to take employment as the only way to slow down their descent into poverty. Parenting is not adequately valued, while the gainful employment of both parents is encouraged and expected. If a person's main vocation in life is to be a housewife and mother or a house husband and father, then this is treated with very little respect – a disdain reflected in numerous political decisions. A family's childcare expenses can only be made tax-deductible if both parents are in employment or if it is a single-parent family. A similar development can be seen in a relatively new form of early-age parenting subsidy called *Elterngeld* ("parents' benefit") which was introduced in 2007 and replaced the country's former *Erziehungsgeld* ("parenting benefit"). The new subsidy is only paid for one year and thus for half as long as the previous subsidy. It is also dependent on the recipient's previous income and therefore favours higher earners. In addition, the new scheme meets industry demands to encourage speedy re-entry into the labour market. Over half of all parents who have so far applied for the new type of subsidy are worse off than under the previous scheme. This development, along with the expansion of childcare facilities, is helping to establish a family model in which both parents are in gainful employment. In the future, therefore, any other option will only be affordable for rich parents.

Freedom of choice

Is there really any genuine willingness to grant free choice between home parenting and a day-care nursery? If so, then parents should be given a general income-related amount and allowed to decide for themselves whether to bring up their children at home (accepting the money as compensation for the shortfall in income) or whether to use the money for an outside childcare provider. More than two-thirds of all women in Germany would prefer to bring up their children at home during the first three years if they were given the money they are charged for a place at a childcare nursery (i.e. between EUR 700 and 1,300 per month). However, it seems to be precisely this option which

the German state wishes to prevent, and so anyone choosing home parenting is put at a major financial disadvantage and the option is really only open to higher earners. Does the state distrust parents?

To provide fair compensation for the work done at home it would be possible, for instance, to consider the following options: an extra holiday for families as well as full tax exemption for childcare or a system whereby children's products are subject to reduced VAT, rather than being taxed twice as highly as dog food (which is the case in Germany at the moment). Is it really inconceivable that parents might retire one year earlier for each child they have reared, but without any cuts in their pensions? Would it not make sense to have special family days at GP surgeries and council offices when families are fast-tracked and given preference over others?

Three other points are worth noting in respect of the regard for families in German society. To obtain a socially acceptable pension a mother who is not in gainful employment would have to give birth to two dozen children. Between 1980 and 2002 a German family's disposable per capita income went up 191 per cent, whereas for singles it rose by 395 per cent. These are figures that should make us think. The German child protection society *Kinderschutzbund* has a membership of 50,000, while Germany's animal protection society *Tierschutzbund* has 800,000 members.

A divine promise, not a heavy burden

Nevertheless, people still long for dependable human relationships – particularly in their marriages and families. This explains why, despite so many problems, the family is valued so highly among the younger generation, as shown in the Shell Study which looked at value patterns among young people in Germany. Young people continue to believe in conjugal faithfulness and in mutual commitment for the benefit of children. At the same time, however, they are afraid that they might fail to live up to such high standards. To avoid disappointing their partners they shy away from the marriage bond, even though this is something they actually desire in their hearts.

But perhaps these two aspects – the fear of not meeting the standards of this lifestyle, yet longing for reliability and commitment in marriage and the family – are in fact a good starting point to preach

and justify the sacrament of matrimony. After all, when two people are joined in marriage, they decide to share their lives and to go forward together. Moreover, they make this decision after careful consideration. No one can exhaust their freedom of choice more completely than by freely committing themselves to being with another individual for the rest of their life.

By entering into the sacrament of matrimony two people freely choose to embark upon life's journey together. Love always aims for growth. But growth requires time, patience and persistence – and growing means persevering. Marriage means growing more mature in love, and it is along this journey that love proves its worth and finds its fulfilment. Loving a person is always a shared process in which both people learn to grow in love. To reach its greatest depth this journey requires time and lifelong faithfulness.

A Christian marriage is an image of the triune God. Our own human experience tells us that a person's life will blossom in an environment where they love and are loved. If a child is not loved, for example, it will be emotionally crippled and unable to fully develop its potential. The ability to blossom in life is inextricably linked with the blossoming of love. The two are mutually dependent.

When we confess that God is eternal life, it means that God is eternal love – in fact, God is synonymous with love. That is why God is not a self-contained entity but shows himself through relationships. The words Father and Son – the first two persons in the Trinity – express a relationship. A father can only exist if there are children, and a son can only exist if there are parents. Moreover, love always produces fruit. Parents experience this directly in their children, who are the fruit of their love. In the same way the love that exists between God the Father and his Son also produces “fruit”, i.e. God's Spirit “which proceeds from the Father and the Son”, as it says in the Nicene Creed. This unlimited love is the relationship between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and it is so close and so full of love that the three are one. Furthermore, they are so full of love that they want to share their love and that it spills over into creation, the Church, marriage and the family. The sacrament of matrimony thus forms part of God's love while also, as it were, flowing out of it. It reflects the triune God's love of his Church which he carries, enlivens and sanctifies: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and

becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh. This mystery has great significance, but I am applying it to Christ and the Church.” (Eph. 5:31-32)

Marriage also foreshadows the heavenly wedding feast, when all people will find completion in the love of God. “Let us be glad and joyful and give glory to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the Lamb.” (Rev. 19:7).

Understood in this way, a Christian marriage bears testimony to the Christian faith. It is a missionary reality, as two people are sent out in sacramental power, as testimony to God and to the Christian faith in this world. Whenever two people have a Christian marriage in today’s society, they give the most profound testimony to the Christian faith.

Marriage thrives on the confidence that God is with us along our journey through life. When two people approach God’s altar in their love for one another, they declare that they are not self-reliant but have chosen to trust God. This is the only way to prevent their marriage from being a permanent strain on their capacity. Rather, it means trusting God as they venture forth together along their journey through life.

Love means giving each other a home. And it can also provide a home for the children who are born within that marriage. Moreover, as the married couple meet others along their journey, those friends, too, will find shelter and hospitality in the home of this Christian family.

This makes the family a learning venue for faith. Just as people learn to live within marriage, so they learn to have faith within the family. This includes supporting one another during times when the other person may be lacking in faith, and it also means being a community of prayer and forming a Christian house church.

**“Teach me to seek You, and reveal Yourself to me as I seek”
(Anselm of Canterbury)**

Christian marriages and families are under the divine promise of the Gospel and, as sacraments, places which manifest the presence of God. They are also fundamental to the success of a human life. The Church must therefore give Christian marriages and families the greatest possible support so that they can be lived out in a way that

is good and credible today. The reality of marriage must be given space in the Church's preaching at mass on Sundays, in youth work as well as in pastoral care for young people and religious education at school. Pastoral care in schools, too, must address the subject of marriage and the family at an early stage. It is not surprising that church weddings have dropped almost as dramatically as entries into the priesthood and religious orders. Both indicate that there is a spiritual deficit among us as Christians and in our churches and fellowships. Those who fail to see their journey through life as a calling ordained by God will also fail to see marriage as a calling. Similarly, very few people will discover their calling as priests or in a religious order.

The preparation of young couples for marriage must be intensified. It seems incongruous that the Church should require years of preparation for the priesthood, while the sacrament of matrimony often only requires a 30-minute chat between the couple and their priest or deacon. Insufficient preparation may well be one reason why couples eventually get divorced. Nowadays there are good resources for parishes and pastoral care ministries to help younger and older couples as well as priests and other pastoral care workers in preparing people for marriage. In view of today's religious situation, marriage preparation must also address fundamental issues of the Christian faith. How else can a young couple be equipped for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ under the sacrament of matrimony?

Furthermore, the success of a Christian marriage and family requires a continuous learning process. Couples must be offered help so that they can master conflicts together and learn how to fulfil their role as parents.

Pastoral care for families should centre around family services. Really and truly, all services at a local church should be geared towards families. But there is great value in services that are aimed specifically at young families with children and toddlers. Yet it is equally important that family services should not become liturgical ghettos. Instead, young families and their children should also be guided towards the general Church liturgy, with a special focus being put on families and children during the service. To support marriages and families, churches must also offer spiritual food, such as family pilgrimages and retreats. Fellowship should be encouraged among

married couples and families, e.g. through family fellowship groups, as a way of helping and strengthening each person. One reason why marriages are under substantial stress and eventually fail may be because so many couples are left without help.

As there is such a need among many families, coupled with increasing child poverty, it is vital to continue providing care and support for families so that they can fall back on support networks, especially in emergencies. According to a UNICEF study, child poverty in eastern Germany has more than doubled since 1998, rising from 4.5 to 9.8 per cent.

Families include not only young couples with children, but also elderly people. A Christian family comprises several generations and so pastoral care for families must also include grandparents. They can be especially important to the religious lives of their grandchildren.

Here community centres for families offer good opportunities for supporting children and families, e.g. through religious education, language tuition, finding daytime caregivers and by providing information on childcare and educational facilities. Such centres are very well suited to spreading an awareness of the Church's wide range of family-focused support facilities.

“You can rely on the Lord, who will give you strength and guard you from the evil One.” (2 Thess. 3:3)

During the French Revolution the Jacobins dreamed of replacing the family – the very foundation of the state – with fleeting relationships. It was an idea that caused an immense amount of human misery, right up to the revolutionary movement of 1968 and its aftermath. What a contrast with the promises of Scripture! In the first chapter of the Bible we read about the creation of man and woman in the image of God, and Scripture concludes with the vision of the “marriage of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7). Scripture repeatedly talks about marriage as a mystery and focuses on its God-given meaning, origin and purpose. The Second Vatican Council confesses in its Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: “The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws. [...] God Himself is the author of matrimony.” (GS 48:1). In the Catechism of the Catholic Church marriage is described as “an efficacious sign

of Christ's presence" (chapter 16, no. 1613). It bears witness to God's faithfulness towards his Church and mankind. "So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide." (Mt. 19.6)

For quite a while now discussions within the Church have centred primarily on issues of failed Christian marriages, marriage annulments and the right way to handle remarried divorcees. Yet what often remains hidden behind these discussions is the message of the dignity, magnitude and power of the Church's sacrament of matrimony and how much joy can flow from a life of faith in this sacrament. The emphasis in the current debate, however, is unlikely to have any motivating impact, especially on young people. It is high time for us to rediscover, appreciate and share the good news expressed in the sacrament of matrimony.

The Church in Africa and the Family

Paul Béré

According to competent observers, the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2014 appears to have been an occurrence on a par with the Second Vatican Council, the fiftieth anniversary of which will be celebrated this year (1965-2015). It was during this assembly, in December 1965, that the Council Fathers voted in favour of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which gave voice to the Church's concerns for the human family. One of its outstanding features from a theological perspective is the Church's conception of itself as the 'Family of God'⁴⁰⁴ or the 'Family of God's Children'.⁴⁰⁵ This found an echo in the Church in Africa, which saw itself reflected in part in this ecclesiological model at its special synod in 1994. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995)⁴⁰⁶ invited theologians to deepen their understanding of this model⁴⁰⁷ by discussing it along with others.

One would have expected that this current need to explore the relationship between the family and the pastoral ministry of the Church would benefit from the accumulated expertise of the Church as God's Family, which is how the churches in Africa define themselves. The Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod (2014), held prior to the ordinary assemblies (2015), neither gave voice to this ecclesial gathering, nor did it consider human experience of this subject in Africa to be a resource for assisting 'the human family' in general. As the Roman playwright Terence once said: 'Nothing of that which is human is alien to me.' For the truth of such an assertion to be

⁴⁰⁴ GS 32,3.5; 40.2; cf. LG, 28; UR 2,40; AG 1.

⁴⁰⁵ GS 40.2; 43.4; 92.3; cf. LG 28; 50.1.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Nothomb, Dominique, "L'Église-Famille: concept-clé du Synode des évêques pour l'Afrique", *Nouvelle revue théologique*, No. 117 (1995) 1, 44–64.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. the standard text on this subject, Dulles, Avery, *Models of the Church*, New York 1974; 2000.

established within the Church and in order to provide a sympathetic audience for the same, it would be necessary to believe that 'nothing of that which is human is alien to Christ', to paraphrase the rallying cry of Terence, who was of Berber descent.⁴⁰⁸ The family, as part of human reality, is no exception to this law. How does the Church in Africa perceive the reality of this family, to which it attaches such theological significance?

To answer that question I will begin by tracing the contours of the 'family' with a view to understanding its morphology in an African context. I will then attempt to identify the barriers to the existence of the family and the justification for them before finally outlining the key features of pastoral care within the Church, God's Family, in Africa.

What is 'the family'?

One is tempted to respond to this question in the manner of Saint Augustine in his explanation of time (*Confessions*): 'If no one ask of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not.' The family constitutes the fundamental nucleus of society all over the world. Everyone knows that they come from, and belong to, a family. So what is it? Two different answers will lend structure to what I have to say. When we think of 'the family', we picture

1. the reality of a commitment entered into by a man and a woman and the offspring resulting from their union. The principle constituting the family, in this case, is blood. This is the premise for the fundamentally matrilineal character of African societies, in which, it is said, one knows one's mother but one's father invariably remains hypothetical.⁴⁰⁹ This results in the offspring's inclusion in the male universe by virtue of a legal body.
2. the fundamental social reality⁴¹⁰ which gives expression to the most formal interpersonal differences regarding the existence and nature of human beings. In vertical terms,

⁴⁰⁸ Publius Terentius Afer, (ca. 190-159 v. Chr.): "Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto", *Heautontimoroumenos*, I, 1, 25.

⁴⁰⁹ Today, developments in the field of biotechnology enable us to think differently. There are ways of determining whether the father is indeed the biological father.

⁴¹⁰ Fundamental human reality is the person, while fundamental social reality is the family.

the differential relationship is organised hierarchically in accordance with a generational logic (parents/children) and must be viewed in relation to time. In horizontal terms, meanwhile, the said relationship regulates the sexuality (man/woman and brothers/sisters) in relation to the body, in which the difference between human beings is most obvious. Two principles preside over the dovetailing of these two planes: love and life, i.e. the love of life and the life of love.

3. a lexicographical approach, based on a case (study). This offers a different understanding of the term 'family': in the Moore language 'buudu' translates as family, but 'seed' or 'species' would be more precise. Thus, one would say: '*tônd yaa buudu*' (we are a family); '*mui-buudu*' (rice seed); '*bôang ne wedmoaaga yaa buudu a ye*' (the donkey and the horse are of the same species). In the social and cultural environment of the Mossi (those who speak Moore) the Church ('*Tigungu*': congregation) is called '*buudu*' (*Wênd-Buudu*: the Family of God)⁴¹¹. The term is so polysemous that it can be extended sufficiently to integrate a semantic innovation of this nature.

This initial approximation demonstrates the complexity of 'the family'. That which we consider to be revealed on the basis of simple evidence (no. 1) takes shape in a manner which is difficult to reduce to these three terms (man-woman-offspring), as one might suspect and which is borne out by no. 3. The second definition, in particular, offers criteria for identifying different relationships and analysing the way these find expression within a group of people. Here, too, a specific vocabulary is required to define 'family', which then assumes a particular form. In this way, we in Africa conceive of a varied family geometry: the so-called nuclear family (man-woman-offspring) and the wider family (infinitely extendible). In the latter case, it is marriage which makes it possible to determine the actual limits of the family relationship. The line is drawn at what is forbidden. In an encounter with dominant systems the fragility of this ancestral family fabric is revealed.

⁴¹¹ The connection between this semantic universe and the biblical world is apparent in the Letter to the Galatians: 'And simply by being Christ's, you are that progeny (semen) of Abraham, the heirs named in the promise.' (Gal. 3:29)

Challenges to families in an African context

In Africa today⁴¹², life and the family are virtually inseparable. The family is at the service of life. Its goal is the promotion of the same. As a result, human conjugality is only justified in terms of this relationship with life. And this, in turn, is only permitted to blossom in a family framework, on the basis of the relationship formed by a man and a woman, and within the network of relationships constituting the extended family. Furthermore, society itself is organised around a central family figure. This may be the father (patrilineal societies) or the mother (matrilineal societies).

The Church in Africa struggles to bear witness to this human reality by attempting to discern its divine aspects. It has not succeeded in comprehending, let alone structuring, the reality of the evanescent nature of the family relationship, specifically of the couple, in the context of marriage. In fact, the entire process of accompanying a couple through the various stages of marriage does not benefit (at any time or in any place) from an organised ritual involving the presence of the Church.⁴¹³ Moreover, the Church has failed to acknowledge the role of the reference person, which may be a man (father) or a woman (mother). Here, the influence of Western culture is more than evident in the approach adopted by the Church in Africa. It is through external domination that this model has been imposed. Nowhere is the woman a reference person in the Church's concept of the family. The breakdown in social equilibrium has given rise to the dominance of the patriarchal system⁴¹⁴, which Africa considers modern and which the Church promotes⁴¹⁵.

⁴¹² A false impression often leads to the belief that certain African concepts are obsolete and belong to the past. I submit that this is not the case for two main reasons: 1) From a statistical point of view, the men and women who live within the traditional system are more numerous than those who are influenced by Western culture; 2) the subconscious of men and women living in a dual culture (African and Western) is shaped more keenly by subliminal African thinking. Faced with the perils of life, we see a resurgence of the indelible character of African cultural patterns.

⁴¹³ The exchange of vows in accordance with Western custom has become standard practice, canonised as the sacramental moment. The actual sacrament is celebrated between the two spouses. The church assistant is a mere witness. The issue, therefore, is to identify the morphology of 'consent' within different African societies, instead of imposing a model which is effectively inoperative.

⁴¹⁴ In this respect a linguistic example provides food for thought: in the Moore language the word 'God' (Wênde) is used in the singular; no plural form exists, as the Mossi only recognise one God. The missionaries were forced to invent a plural (Wênnaam damba) before subsequently declaring that there was, indeed, just one God. If the limits of a language delineate the boundaries of the world of its users, polytheism is a monstrosity for this people. The same applies to other aspects.

⁴¹⁵ Efforts to restore the roles of men and women are apparent in family-related laws passed

Given the number of men and women who relate to ancestral customs and models, the popular imagination is still clearly dominated by a thirst for life as the *raison d'être* of the family that goes beyond models of 'the couple'. By way of illustration I will now look at the obstacles to life and the attitudes that accompany them.

Isolation

People who isolate themselves sever the ties through which the social life force flows. All societies ensure their continued existence by developing general mechanisms which direct energies towards the centre. A decision to break ranks thus poses a threat to social cohesion. The notion of the 'free electron' is only envisaged and tolerated in the case of marginalised individuals, such as those suffering from mental disabilities. The social fabric is nourished at its source by the combined efforts of all its members.

Celibacy

With some exceptions, it is not in the mental make-up of African societies that those who have received life should fail to pass it on. To the African way of thinking celibacy is not a choice or a happy fate. An exception to the rule can be found in the world of religion. A connection with the realm of the divine is justification for the (temporary) renunciation of marriage on the part of both men and women. Behind this exception is a belief in other dimensions of life. Our physical body is the only one we inhabit. 'The dead are not dead', the poet Birago Diop says in *Souffles* ('Murmurs'). As far as ordinary life is concerned, however, a woman who is not a wife or has no children would not be able to set up a family. She would 'lose value' in some societies and be regarded as an anomaly.

Witchcraft

Certain practices associated with the use of supernatural forces are described as witchcraft if they seek to destroy human life. Contrary to popular thinking, which views such practices with superstition, it seems to me that witchcraft is a cultural expression of the forces

in certain African countries. This approach is more redolent of a mimetic *modus operandi* than of a development of endogenous models.

of evil. All societies have their ways of handling human complicity with these powers of chaos. Today, supernatural forces are making a covert return, insidiously pervading all the social and anthropological dimensions of the family. It has even been known for old women without children or who are single to be accused of being 'witches' if they are naturally poor!

Socio-economic constraints

The changes taking place in society have paved the way for the dismantling of the complex system of social responsibility for rearing children. It was once thought that 'it takes a single person to give birth to a child, but it takes a whole village to raise it.' By the same logic, marriage did not use to be a union between two individuals who loved each other but one between two families which formed an alliance based on their love. Nowadays, social change and the minimal resistance mustered by family and social structures created in the past mean that the economic situation is another obstacle to the development of stable couples and structured families. There are two types of handicap corresponding to two dimensions of the family: a) the handicap faced by a couple: if the father or mother is no longer present as a result of death, desertion, legal separation, etc., the family, or rather the spouse, who remains with the children is weakened psychologically, socially and financially; b) the handicap faced by the family: sometimes a lack of children is the result of the couple's sterility or the death of the children that were born, or there might be no male children, etc. In such cases it is the couple who suffer. This suffering is rooted in the African notion of life and human beings. Without children humanity is incomplete and life extinguished,⁴¹⁶ An infertile couple sees the flow of life run dry. There are many ways of compensating for this 'mistake of nature'. Polygamy is one solution. If the man is sterile, his spouse may still be fertile in the formal sense or on the face of it at least.

Forms of sexuality outside the norm

While life has a near absolute value, we can nonetheless control its transmission; its 'management' is subject to strict standards in

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Mveng, Engelbert, *Spiritualité et liberation en Afrique*, Paris 1987.

terms of the traditional understanding of sexuality. Certain forms of sexuality are prohibited. The most common of these are fairly numerous. Incest, in terms of milk kinship for matrilineal societies or blood kinship for patrilineal societies, harms the internal structure of the family. Adultery obscures the legibility of external social ties, because children born of such unions blur the genealogical code. Promoting life at any price is not the way forward.

Homosexuality continues to be the form of sexuality outside the norms of society which receives the least public recognition.⁴¹⁷ It sounds the death knell for the rejuvenation of the family unit and the concept of the 'social participant'. Like incest and adultery, homosexuality has always existed in Africa (and almost certainly in every society). However, it was stifled or hushed up in the past, because society thought it offered no prospect for the furtherance of life. In its view, homosexuality poses a threat to life and so it is subjected to a vow of silence, similar to incest. In contrast to adultery, where the aggrieved partner may lodge a complaint, homosexuality is unable to find any legitimate outlet through which to 'express itself'. This is because the declared purpose of sexuality is procreation, the continuation of life.

The modern interpretation of human sexuality makes a two-fold distinction as regards its purpose: procreation, certainly, but also harmony between the partners. It seems to me that there are two dimensions to this distinction. It results in a legitimization of the different types of 'couple' in accordance with each of these aspects. Moreover, there is the concept of the person as an 'individual conscience' as opposed to that of the African "I because WE" (example: *Ujamaa*; *Ubuntu*). The person who says 'I' must think of himself or herself as a 'WE' with the community acting as the placenta. An individual who commits acts which might prevent the music of life from resonating through the body runs the risk of banishment. The greatest suffering experienced by African society today, a suffering in which the Church in Africa shares, is the need to forgo its vision and perception of the human individual and, as a consequence, to abandon that upon which it places the highest value: life. Is this due to fear of an uncertain future? There is, indeed, that problem.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. http://www.hommes-et-faits.com/anthropsy/Pb_Homosex_Lyela.html (15.03.2017).

These are some of the realities of the family which shape the daily lives of Christian communities. The latter do not live in their own separate world but face the same challenges as the Church's pastoral mission. The objection might well be raised that my analysis is directed at an African society of the past and not at its current manifestation or that Western culture has long since led to the decline of this Africa. There is little point in unleashing a series of arguments in response. Suffice it to say that the African subconscious is structured in accordance with the symbols of ancestral culture. In the darkest hours the survival instinct takes the upper hand. Moreover, in order to offer people pastoral care in keeping with their level of development, the Church must consider the masses who take the cultural traditions of their ancestors as their point of reference.

Pastoral answers to a Gospel of the family

The Church in Africa has always paid close attention to the family and its concerns. The choice of the family as an ecclesiological model may well be linked to this pastoral concern.⁴¹⁸ Recent developments make it necessary to regard the challenges arising from this model, which may in effect still be the same, in a new light and in accordance with different priorities. I will now analyse a number of issues confronting the Church in Africa: the extended family; the marginalised; and the ecclesiological model of the family.

Preserving the extended family

The Basic Ecclesial Communities (*Communautés Ecclésiales de Base*) constitute one of the pastoral responses to the requirements of the extended family⁴¹⁹ which is under threat from the Western trend towards urbanisation.⁴²⁰ These 'extended Christian families' contribute to the care of smaller family units, because they are, generally speaking, families of families.⁴²¹ At this level it is easier to identify the

⁴¹⁸ Somé, Beterbanfo Modeste, 'Eglise-Famille-de-Dieu: De la genèse d'un concept ecclésiologique à l'époque contemporaine', in: *Kanien*, No. 1 (2013) 1, 45–62.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Healey, Joseph, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 2013.

⁴²⁰ It should be noted that, in general, major African cities geographically replicate the places of origin of their inhabitants in cases where the infrastructure is not planned and controlled by the State.

⁴²¹ The parish model fails to meet African requirements as it does not correspond to

needs of families. Just as individuals sometimes find themselves confronted by loneliness compounded by isolation and utter muffled cries that are frequently inaudible to an individualistic society, so certain families left to their own devices may also find themselves falling prey to isolation. This point was raised during the extraordinary synod in discussions of the family and the challenges it faces.⁴²²

Protecting widows, orphans and strangers

In the biblical sense, I regard strangers, widows and orphans as men and women whose families are incapacitated, suffer deprivation or are forced to toil in very difficult socio-economic circumstances. In emotional terms they may be suffering from a sense of loss, perhaps of a partner (in the case of a widow or widower) or a father or mother (in the case of an orphan). In a biblical setting, the most dehumanising loss is that of the earth. In our context it is affection, from which all else stems.

Widows and orphans can be considered as categories rooted in the family and, beyond it, in the social context. The same cannot be said of strangers, which takes us straight into a social setting defined by the earth. In terms of its institutional organisation the Church is linked to the 'earth'. This is the background to the frequently made observation about the complex transformation from the ethnic community (or extended family) to the basic Christian community, which affects both the lay faithful and those who have been consecrated and ordained. Xenophobia is, therefore, a phenomenon which imposes great suffering and constitutes a pastoral challenge. Solidarity was once a communal response to poverty and deprivation, but it has disappeared in the face of the logic of profit and possession⁴²³: the logic of ownership or of being master of the land.

cultural patterns which place less emphasis on administrative aspects and more on human relations.

⁴²² Cf. Episcopal synod, III. Extraordinary General Assembly, *The pastoral challenge in view of the Family in context of the evangelisation Relatio synodi*, Vatican City, 18.October 2014, No. 5–8, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141018_relatio-synodi-familia_ge.html (15.03.2017).

⁴²³ Cf. the famous work by Téoédjré, Albert, *La pauvreté, richesse des peuples*, Paris 1978. It advocates a society of 'poverty' based on frugality as a principle of development, and not on the 'folly of imitation'. In the same vein, cf. Majid Rahnema on lifestyle as a deep-seated cause of global hardship: idem, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté*, Paris 2003.

In the African family context, homosexuals are categorised as 'strangers'. As such they deserve analytical attention, however cursory. At marriageable age they feel a sense of alienation towards the society in which they live. The suffering they endure must be seen in the African context, in which the young are taught to channel all their emotional and intellectual energies into the promotion of life. The estrangement homosexuals feel is exacerbated in the era of globalisation in which other social systems and cultures offer alternatives to what is available in African culture and society, i.e. they can live their sexuality and become parents. Engaging in a ministry with the 'face of mercy' would require a different pastoral approach and a great capacity for social education on the part of Church ministers. Each minister is the 'son' of his people. He is steeped in both the values and prejudices of his culture and society. The challenge for African ministers lies in undergoing this transformation, as proposed by the Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus*, introducing a fraternal companionship within the ecclesial community and integrating the new realities of the 'widow, the orphan and the stranger'.

As regards homosexuality, we are dealing with a fact of life that has long lurked in the shadows, beyond the pale of cultural understanding and the evangelical consciousness of our Christian communities. Is it not the case that the social demands to permit homosexual marriages are pleas to reject alienation, i.e. the experience of otherness in which homosexuals live and express their differentness? I can recall the reaction of a mother to statements which appeared to incriminate the upbringing that had taken place in family. Her tearful response can be summarised as follows: "I loved all my children the same and fed them at the same table, so how can I explain that one of them has chosen a partner who is homosexual?" Perhaps this mother unknowingly symbolises the Church? It may be sure of the education it gives to all its children, yet it is faced with facts of life that elude its grasp, resulting at best in soul-searching and questioning and at worst in bitterness.

Concluding my remarks on this issue, it appears that marriage, which aspires to be an institution created so that life, originating in God, can continue through the *male* (the man) and the *female* (the woman), as stipulated in Gen. 1:27-28, compels the Church to be a mere witness to and guarantor of this form of the human family. It thus becomes a guardian of creation. Homosexuals may have once expe-

rienced “ostracism” at the very heart of their society/community, but the compassion of the Church assures them of its maternal presence. The ecclesial authorities in Africa must encourage research into these complex matters “so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature”⁴²⁴. Accompanying the family in Africa today is not a given; it is a task, a path which illuminates the principles without delineating them.

Conversion in order to embody the reality: a family of God

Tackling this task involves working on oneself. A disparity appears to exist between the true (not the theoretical) face of the ecclesial communities, as regards their fundamental features, and the wealth of African culture in its various forms. In all African countries there are matrilineal societies dominated by women and patrilineal societies dominated by men. This complementary configuration is virtually never taken into account.⁴²⁵ The efforts at inculturation should have resulted in the rethinking and implementation of an ecclesial model shaped by the rich traditions of the region. All that has emerged from the family model, however, is the concept of ‘father of the family’ (or ‘tribal chief’) favouring a certain reading of canon law which allows the leader of the Christian community to state: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’ (cf. Mt. 28:18)

We know that the members of the Church as God’s Family consist of both the lay faithful and those who have been consecrated and ordained in the service of the entire Family of God. However, this body still seeks a certain vitality, because the ‘skeleton’ has not yet been sufficiently fleshed out and is still lacking in spirit. Nonetheless, it is against the harmonious background of these different vocations that each ‘child of God’ will find its place, i.e. the way in which he or she can make a contribution. In my opinion, the thorn in the side of the Church in Africa is not the administration of assets and individuals, but the ownership mentality (cf. Is. 22) and lack of stewardship of the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1 f.). This makes it increasingly difficult for the Church, as a community under the bishop, to demonstrate a ‘family’ relationship to families, both large and small, in a divine

⁴²⁴ Ut quasi preparato studio, iudicium Ecclesiae maturetur; DV 12.

⁴²⁵ The Episcopal Conference of South Africa is an exception in that it has entrusted its leadership to a woman, Sister Hermenegild Makoro, CPS.

manner, in which it does not appear in the guise of a lord and master. It must be conceded that, without denying the manifest positive developments, Christian communities continue to display the frailties to which African societies are subject.

How can the Church open its heart to the family in all its forms? It must undergo change if it is to become a 'family of God', the sacrament of the human family. This is the direction which the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, *Misericordiae Vultus*, suggests the entire Church should take. In my view, it constitutes the toughest challenge posed by the family to the Church as God's Family in Africa.

Conclusion

This contribution set out to examine the relationship between the Church in Africa and the family. A good deal of research has been carried out on the continent into the ecclesial model and, in particular, the role of the Church as God's Family in the period after the Second Vatican Council. One of its aims was to give greater importance to the relational nature of the family rather than focus on its constitutive elements (father, mother, and child). The divine family consequently becomes the centre to which all children of God and all human families are led. It is in contemplation of what it constitutes that the human family evolves despite all the different obstacles it faces.

The pastoral answers anticipated by African families within the Church must provide a response to the challenges hindering the transmission of human life without reducing this life to a single dimension. With that in mind, attaching greater importance to the family and individuals should inform the judgement of the Church's teaching, as underlined by one of the hermeneutic principles in *Dei Verbum* (no. 12).

The Asian Church and Family

Jacob Kavunkal

As part of its process of ressourcement, Vatican II retrieved the role and significance of marriage and family in the church.⁴²⁶ In fact the Council presented the church as a family of God along with suggestions that it should be a family centred on ministry.⁴²⁷ Similar to most cultures, in Asia too family is the basic social unit that serves as the school of inculcating the primary lessons of socialization as well as social values that, as we shall see, are dear to the Asian society. This paper will discuss the significance of family in Asian cultures and will discuss the pastoral service the church can render to the care of the family in Asia.

Religious background of family

From time immemorial, family served as the seminal ground for transmitting religious thoughts and religious teachings. In fact, it is in the intimacy of the family that most of the Asian religions have their origin. The foundational Hindu scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads, have their origin in the family in so far as these were composed from the oral tradition that was transmitted from father to son, sitting close-by (*upa-ni-sad*).

Rigveda, the root of primary revelation, *Sruti*, according to Hinduism, is a collection of family rituals that were practised for millennia. Well-known scholar of Vedic texts, Frits Staal, points out how language and rituals were transmitted from father to son. "Fathers insisted that sons learned Vedic until transmission became ritualized."⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), declared, "from the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born. [...]" The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church (LG 11).

⁴²⁷ LG, 35.

⁴²⁸ Staal, Frits, *Discovering the Vedas: Origins, Mantras, Rituals, Insights*, New Delhi 2008, 53. According to the Hindu belief, the sage, Yajnavalkya received the Vedic mantras directly from the Sun, indicating the timelessness of the Vedas.

Buddhism, a religion of much later origin and which began as a reform movement within Hinduism, also had its association with the family tradition, especially that of Mahakasyapa who codified the oral texts after Buddha.⁴²⁹ However, it has to be mentioned how in Buddhism, especially in the Theravada Tradition, marriage is stripped of all its spiritual enchantment, in so far as Buddhism demands a very high degree of renunciation for liberation (Nirvana) to which "marriage is never a salvific experience according to the orthodox tradition, in so far as celibacy is a condition for ultimate human emancipation."⁴³⁰ However, even in Buddhism, following the general dharma, way, marriage is part of the moral persuasion, rather than legal enforcement.⁴³¹

Chinese religions, under the impact of Confucius, laid stress on family relations. Parents are to be kind to children who in turn must honour parents. Older children must set an example to the younger ones. "When brothers live in concord and at peace, the strain of harmony shall never cease."⁴³² Confucian teachings have upheld the values of filial piety and care of the elderly as part of the communitarian culture.

Christianity too has an influence on the making of Asian family system in so far as Christianity has an Asian origin and it existed in parts of Asia from apostolic times. With its theology of creation, prophetic service and the Kingdom vision proclaimed by Jesus, Christianity contributes to the religious vision of the Asian family.

The roots of the Asian family system are to be found among the indigenous peoples of Asia who in addition to the total acceptance of children as divine gift and the future of the family, based family on the relationship to the land from the primordial times, *in illo tempore*.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 305-306.

⁴³⁰ Pieris, Aloysius, *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism*, Mainz 1989, 103.

⁴³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 104.

⁴³² Confucius, *Doctrine of the Mean*, 15:2.3.; Cf. FABC Office of Theological Concerns, *On Being Human in the Changing Realities of Asia*, FABC Papers, No. 133, March 2011, 6.

⁴³³ Cf. Eliade, Mircea, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London 1958, 253–256.

Sacredness of the family

In the words of late Pope John Paul II, “The family – based on marriage between a man and a woman – is the first and fundamental unit of society and is a sanctuary of creation and nurturing of children.”⁴³⁴ Traditional Asian family is built on the sacredness of the marriage between a man and a woman and it is considered to be the norm.⁴³⁵ It is a *sanskara*, sacrament and it initiates a family. According to the Ngaju Dayak of South Borneo marriage is connected with the conception of God and creation. It is not simply a social occasion, but one of the most important religious affairs. “To be married means to enter a new stage of sacred life.”⁴³⁶

Generally speaking what characterizes the Asian Family is the joy flowing from love and communion, between parents, siblings and grandparents. This in turn serves also as a support system to preserve the religious and social values of Asian society. Family is the close-knit unit of society sustaining lasting relationship and enduring solidarity despite all sorts of peer pressures.⁴³⁷ Frequently through marriage not only do two individuals unite into a new family but also unites the two respective families and the near relations into a greater, wider “family,” extending love, concern, respect and similar values.

As the FABC in its eighth Plenary Assembly affirmed there prevails in Asian families a culture of life.⁴³⁸ The Bishops based their reflections on the Asian Family on “the hope, the aspiration, the dream of the Asian family for life in its fullness.”⁴³⁹ Even in the face of untold misery and poverty, Asian families maintain this hope.

⁴³⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 1999, No. 55.

⁴³⁵ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), *The Asian Family Towards a Culture of Integral Life*, Statement of the 8th FABC Plenary Assembly, Daejeon, Korea: 17.–23. August 2004, No. 6, in: FABC Papers, No. 111, Hong Kong September 2004, 7.

⁴³⁶ Eliade, Mircea, *From Primitives to Zen*, London 1967, 165.

⁴³⁷ The close knit nature of Asian family can be gauged from a text in *Bhagavad Gita*. Even at the moment of losing everything including his kingdom due to deception, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna who prompts him to go to war against his uncle and cousins: “Therefore, O Madhava! It is not befitting that we kill our relations, the sons of Dhrtarastra. How could one be happy by the slaughter of one’s own kinsmen?” (BG 1.37)

⁴³⁸ FABC Papers, No. 111, op. cit., 5.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

An important dimension of that respect for life is that, despite the many social tremors such as the neo-liberal trends justifying divorce and similar vicissitudes against family life, Asia continues to hold marriage as sacred and as the source of children. Children are considered to be a divine gift and parents take pleasure and joy for the sacrifices they undertake for their children and ensure that they provide the best healthcare and education that they can afford for their children.

The close-knit nature of the family is proverbial. Parents and grandparents, as well as the sick members of the family are special objects of love and care. The elders still command respect and their counsel and example maintain family unity. The intimate family system provides the right atmosphere for absorbing not only human values but also religious values. Family thus becomes the cradle for fostering a sense of the divine as well as for inculcating the primary religious lessons.⁴⁴⁰ The religiosity of the family is nurtured through the many religious observances such as the family prayers, listening to the religious scriptures and religious celebrations.

Family bond and traditions preserve the resilience of the Asian family even in the face of setbacks and economic challenges. Asian families continue to serve as the nursery for the Kingdom values like love, sharing, equality, respect, hospitality, forgiveness and others. These along with the religiosity of the family keep the family bond stable as a house built on solid foundation (Mt. 7:24-25). The Asian family, thus, is a sort of the sacrament of the reign of God.

The Asian family could be described as the primary medium of religious experience, the fertile ground for the religious seed to sprout and take root. Family opens the primary channels of God-experience and to respond to the demands and challenges of day to day life, firmly anchoring the roots of commitment to the Transcendent, at the same time bestowing a personal engagement with the Transcendent. In Asia where religion is a “spiritual force” family becomes the space for spiritual realization.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ It is a matter of interest to realize how Asian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism imparts religious knowledge to children, not primarily through religious schools but through the daily, weekly as well as yearly family religious celebrations.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Pathil, Kuncheria, “New Ways of Being Church in Asia”, in: Karotemprel, Gregory et al. (eds), *Evangelizing in the Third Millennium*, Rajkot 2006, 83.

Dark side of the Asian family

Admittedly, the Asian family has contributed also to the practice of patriarchy and the maintenance of the caste system in the case of India. The mother of the family has only a secondary role in decision making. Frits Staal invites our attention to the fact that the Vedas hardly ever mention the mother.⁴⁴² There was a pattern of dependence of women on men, even if there were matriarchal and matrilineal tribes and clans in India and elsewhere in Asia. As far as India is concerned, though the Vedas do not mention the secondary role of women, a much later text, the Code of *Manusmṛiti*, of second century CE origin, imposed the norm, “as a child a girl must remain under her father’s control, as a woman, under her husband, and when her husband is dead, under her son.”⁴⁴³

Undeniably, patriarchy remains the determining factor in Asian families even as in Asian societies. To quote the Asian Bishops, “The worldview of patriarchy lies deep in the cultural and religious subconscious of Asia and dominates politics, economics, human relationships, community roles, etc.”⁴⁴⁴ It leads to the male exercise of power in the family, at the same time reducing women to meekness, submission and subordination, tolerating infidelities of men and their irresponsible behaviour while strict behavioural demands are imposed on women. Male domination can and does contribute to social evils like preference for male child and pre-natal sex determination tests, often leading to abortion of baby girls.

Gender inequality in Asian societies begins in the families already where men enjoy a superior role. Authority and domination are unconsciously absorbed by men leading to paternal authoritarianism in family, relegating to women roles of submission and subordination.

Caste-consideration is integral to marriage, more so for arranged marriages and it is the prevalent form of marriages in India. This, in turn, has contributed to make caste an unbootable vice in the Indian society, not excluding the Catholic Church even if it is unchristian and has given rise to much violence, especially in the context of ministries and appointments. Exaggerated attention paid to caste divisions at

⁴⁴² Frits Staal, op. cit., 53.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁴⁴ FABC Papers, No. 111, op. cit., 16.

the time of marriage keeps society fractured, obliterating the basic equality of human beings.

New Challenges

The Indian theologians in the declaration after their annual meeting at Kottayam, Kerala, 30. April – 3. May 2015 reflect the changed situation of the Asian family calling for matching changes in church's pastoral practice. "We express our conviction that the whole church in (India) needs to revisit the current theology of marriage and family and create a new praxis of pastoral care in the light of a liberative reading of the Word of God, the signs of the times and in the context of the Synod of Bishops on Family."⁴⁴⁵ What the Indian theologians speak of India is to a large extent applicable to Asia in general.

"Asian family is a microcosm of Asian reality," declared the Asian Bishops.⁴⁴⁶ Assailed from all sides by anti-family forces of dehumanization and disintegration, ranging from material poverty to secularization, values and external pressures are taking their toll on Asian family. Traditional families in Asia, as elsewhere, have come under the impact of globalization and mass media, bringing unprecedented changes.

A leading reality of the times as far as Asia is concerned is the large scale migration in the wake of globalization and the lure of better living conditions elsewhere. This has left both positive and negative impact on Asian families. The first and the most alarmingly damaging element is the separation of families, making either the husband or the wife working elsewhere, leaving the rest of the family in a spirit of perpetual separation. Apart from the forced separation of Asian families, this has caused the invasion of the sacred Asian family space by an avalanche of forces such neo-liberal culture of individualism, selfishness, life-styles and mind-sets motivated by consumeristic values. We have to bear in mind how the family is at the centre of the social turmoil affecting Asian society.

Instances of families with single parents, separated parents, or remarried parents are not any more, rare in Asia. The impact western

⁴⁴⁵ Indian Theological Association, Marriage and Family Today – An Indian Theological Search, 38th Annual Meeting 30. April – 3. May 2015, Vazhoor, Kerala, Statement 2015, No. 1.

⁴⁴⁶ FABC Paper, No. 111, op. cit., 16.

culture brought in either through channels of communication or through migrant workers is shaping a new culture of anonymity and lack of concern for others. Inter-connectedness and interdependence are giving way to anonymity and disinterestedness. Marriages are becoming more fragile, weakening marital and family bonds of intimacy and love. "Many no longer see marriage as a lifetime commitment," declared the Asian Bishops.⁴⁴⁷ Under the impact of neo-liberal thinking and the spread of deviant ideologies the sacredness and the permanency of marriage are becoming suspect. Though rare, we come across couples who do not subscribe to the sacramentality of marriage but view it just a legal contract and would be satisfied by a civil marriage.

Another increasing experience is that of inter-cultural and inter-religious marriages along with the implied questions of mutual adjustment with regard to the practice of faith, especially the bringing up of children in the Catholic faith. Along with this we come across also an ever increasing number of divorces. There are also instances of same sex partners, posing a great challenge to the traditional Asian family.

A major challenge to Asian family is poverty. Probably this was the first challenge to the Asian family in some parts of Asia like the Philippines where mothers were forced to take up work as house maids in other parts of the world even much before the onslaught of globalization. Affected by poverty due to unemployment or underemployment many Asians, especially the youth are compelled to look for work elsewhere forcing them to live outside the protective family tradition.

The recognition of the equality and dignity of men and women along with the enhanced educational opportunities and economic pressures have prompted women to take up work outside home, contributing not only to the financial power of the family but in decision making as well, even if this has not done away with wife-battering and other forms of discrimination and oppression against women at home and at work.

The emergence of new situations of migration, separation, wars and conflicts creates new challenges to the value of family life and

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.

meaning of human life demanding fresh understanding of Christian life and family. Traditional arranged marriages give way to inter-cultural and inter-religious marriages which though not bad in themselves can affect the traditional family values.

In the name of progress or to be modern, many try to replace traditional Asian values such as the sense of the sacred, close family ties, respect for the elders, hospitality, harmony, a sense of sin and others. "Family relationships are weakened by the replacement of human communications by mass media. Traditional form of respect, reverence and relationships between elders and youngsters, between teachers and students, between leaders and people are reduced to the minimum. This is further aggravated by the separation of children from their parents who for economic reason are forced to be migrant workers," points out the Asian Bishops' Theological Commission.⁴⁴⁸ This situation is compounded by the rising violence and fundamentalism fanned by vested interests destroying the very fabric of Asian culture, harmony.

In the background of these realities we shall examine the pastoral service that the church in Asia can render to family life.

Family origin of Asian Church

The church in Asia had its origin centred on certain families even as the other New Testament churches (Act 2:46).⁴⁴⁹ According to the St. Thomas Christian tradition the Apostle Thomas converted certain families in India and ordained priests to lead the community. Thus, the priest Thomas Ramban Maliekel, the 48th priest of the Ramban family re-wrote the Ramban Song, an important historical document of the St. Thomas Christians, in the fifteenth century.⁴⁵⁰ Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil points out how "some families in Kerala like Kali, Kaiankave, Maliekal, etc., even today trace their origin to some Namboothiri families supposed to have been converted by St. Thomas."⁴⁵¹ This is corroborated also by Cardinal Eugene Tisserant, relying on the writings of ancient church historian, Eusebius, who

⁴⁴⁸ FABC Papers, No. 133, op. cit., 35.

⁴⁴⁹ St. Paul refers to these house churches in his letters (Rom 16:5, 10; 1Cor 16:15, 19; etc.).

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Vithayathil, Varkey, "Mission and Life of St. Thomas in India", in: Menchery, George (ed.), *The Thomapedia*, Trivandrum 2003, 3.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

refers to the Alexandrine Pantaeus finding Christians in India reading Mathew's gospel at the end of the second century C.E.⁴⁵²

Pastoral Care to the family

To begin with, pastoral care to the family must be based on the sound principle that marriage and family life are not inferior to celibate life. Rather, marriage is to be presented as the way of life in God's plan (Gen 1:27-28) and celibacy has room only in the context of the church's service to the Kingdom (Mt 19:2). The recent canonization of the couple Louis and Marie Zélie Guérin goes a long way in this direction.

A similar foundational principle of the church's pastoral service is that it has to be the expression and means of church's mission of incarnating the divine love, divine mercy. Vatican II described God as "the fountain of love" (AG 2) whose very nature is reaching out in love, mercy. The entire bible is a narrative of the story of God's reaching out. Thus, God, by God's very nature is mission, a mission of reaching out in love, particularly to those suffering and those on the periphery like the Hebrews in Egypt (Ex 2:24; 3:7).

The church, constituted as the continuation of that divine self-reaching out in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, is mission (AG 1-5). All that the church does has to be an expression of that divine self-reaching out. The church is a community of "missionary disciples",⁴⁵³ "whose pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed" (EG 35), but a constant reaching out to others seeking their good (EG 9) "to give life to others" (EG 10).

As part of the enfleshment of this mission, Asian pastoral care to the family has to help the family to become a nursery of values that will sustain the family against the vicissitudes that we have outlined earlier. It has to become a community of love that is ever ready to reach out to others in help with a spirit of hospitality and care. Family as the domestic church has to be helped to become a sacrament of the divine reign.

⁴⁵² Cf. Tisserant, Cardinal Eugene, *Eastern Christianity in India*, Calcutta 1957, 6-7.

⁴⁵³ Pope Francis, Apostolic letter *Evangelii gaudium* about the promulgation of the gospel in the today's world, 24.November 2013, No. 120. In the following cited as EG.

The Asian family has to become a school that trains disciples of equals where boys and girls receive not only equal love and care but also equal opportunities and encouragement. This implies also the equality of the parents themselves without any gender discrimination or patriarchal domination.

A leading aspect of the pastoral care for the family in Asia will be the attention paid to inter-faith marriages. The couples in inter-faith marriages are to be supported by a pastoral care that accompanies them with proper understanding of the symbols, rituals and festivals of the other religion that will enable them to take part in the sacred events of the partner with respect and devotion. The Catholic marriage partner has to be aware how that person remains fully part of the sacramental life of the church.⁴⁵⁴

An urgent aspect for the pastoral care of the family in Asia is the mercy extended to the families that are at the margin of the church's sacramental life due to divorce and remarriage and different sexual behaviour. This does not mean the church has to abandon the doctrines based on divine revelation. However, the teaching of the doctrine has to be inspired by the context. Even the gospels themselves offer the clue to do so. While evangelist Luke directly states the indissolubility of marriage in 16:18, Matthew qualifies the same with the exception of unchastity (5:31-31), probably due to the prevalence of the vice in the Matthean community. Evangelist Mark while presenting the same storey adds the possibility of a woman divorcing her husband (10:11-12) that was unheard of in the Lucan community. All this can help us to realize that while there is no question of watering down the indissolubility of marriage as taught by Jesus, there can be pastoral exceptions due to the context to which the church has to attend to be compassionate in its approach. Even as Matthew added the exception to the absolute indissolubility of the marriage, or as Mark added the possibility of a woman divorcing for the same reason, our pastoral contexts enhanced by the progress of knowledge can help us to reach out to persons of genetically different sexual behaviour or who have divorced and remarried for compelling reasons.

Such a spirit permeates Pope Francis' concluding address to the Synod on the Family, October 2015. The Pope emphasized how

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Indian Theological Association Statement 2015, No. 47.

the aim of the Synod was “bringing the joy of hope without falling into a facile repetition of what is obvious or has already been said.” He continued to bring home the purpose of the Synod as “trying to view and interpret realities, today’s realities, through God’s eyes, so as to kindle the flame of faith and enlighten people’s hearts in times marked by discouragement, social, economic and moral crisis, and growing pessimism. It was about bearing witness to everyone that, for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would “indoctrinate” it in dead stones to be hurled at others.”⁴⁵⁵

Conclusion

As anywhere else, the post-modern culture has not left Asian families unaffected. This in turn demands of them to face situations that are not always easy. The church in Asia has to accompany these families with pastoral involvement always motivated by the mission of compassion, always remaining a sacrament of the kingdom and enabling the Asian families too to reflect that kingdom in their lives. Church’s pastoral concern for marriage and family has to be centred on life and dignity and based on love, communion and solidarity. In its pastoral involvement church in Asia has to be guided by Pope Francis’ words “its first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God’s mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord (cf. Jn 12-44-50).”⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ Pope Francis, “Concluding Address to the Synod”, in: Catholic Herald, Saturday 24 October 2015, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151024_sinodo-conclusionione-lavori.html (27.04.2016).

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

The Latin American Church and the Family

Silvia Regina de Lima Silva⁴⁵⁷

The silence of Latin American liberation theologies with respect to the subject of the family constitutes a deficit with serious consequences. One result of this silence is the presence in theological pastoral reflection of a single, fundamentalist, conservative discourse. The “family”, to start with the understanding that we have of this term, turns out to be occupied territory, seen in very narrow ways that define and try to limit its broad and diverse reality.

This article sets out to reflect on the family from different viewpoints and perspectives. To change perspective is to question what seems obvious by changing the standpoint from which we state our argument. We cannot consider the family in Latin America without a new take on its historical, ancestral dimension. In order to do this, we propose first to look briefly at certain elements in our history and our cultures, to take heed of current realities and, in dialogue with some paradigms from the Christian tradition, to look for insights that might inspire and nurture liberating ways of experiencing family. This means seeking inspiration for the Church as well, inviting her to be sensitive, to listen, to be humble in keeping with the attitudes so fundamental to her work in caring for and supporting the great human family.

Some glimpses from other perspectives

Changing perspective also entails a change in methodology⁴⁵⁸ in contemplating the reality of families. Looking in a new way from a different standpoint permits a shift in the family paradigm.

⁴⁵⁷ With thanks to my friend and husband, Jaime Prieto, and to my son, Thomaz Satuyé, for the reflections they shared with me on this subject and for their support in the writing of this article.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Gil Montero, Raquel. “¿Métodos, modelos y sistemas familiares o historia de la familia?”, in: Robichaux, David (ed.), *Familia y Diversidad en América Latina: Estudios de casos* (CLACSO, Latin American Council for Social Sciences), Buenos Aires 2007.

In methodological terms, of the many possible routes towards understanding the notion of family, there are two that are more common in this type of reflection. The first is an approach that considers the family on an evolutionary line which ends in the Western model. This approach stems from a normative ideal model of the family, historically identified with the monogamous, patriarchal, heterosexual, nuclear family – the nucleus understood as father, mother and children, with behavioural patterns and values that can be identified as those of the middle class, of Catholics (in some contexts Protestant Christians) and geographically in an urban context. This model is considered universal. It is used as a yardstick to validate what is or is not a family and is applied to families of different peoples and cultures.

The other approach would be to take as our point of departure the different expressions of family, cultural heritage, historical formations, and differing ways of experiencing romantic relationships, in an effort to enrich and give new meaning to this term “family”, based on different experiences. This is the challenge that we are called upon to meet. Given the limited space for this reflection, I can only indicate a number of elements that are part of the diversity that is ours and that infuses us, since diversity is one of the great riches of Latin America and can show us a way to liberate the action of churches.

Our diverse roots

Latin America is a region characterised by a plurality of faces, of histories, of memories and stories, where we find a huge variety of inter-connected socio-cultural contexts. Diversity, which is a feature of its historical past, defines and challenges its present. Men and women who conduct research on this subject recognise that an account, however brief, of the cultural roots, histories and realities of families in Latin America in recent decades would be a complex task. This is especially true in as much as we cannot talk about the region as a whole, but our awareness of the arbitrary territorial divisions also makes it difficult to analyse it from the point of view of separate countries.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Cienfuegos, Javiera, “América Latina. Diferencias y entrelazamientos”, in: *Notas de Población*, No. 99 (December 2014), 11–37. We use the author’s contribution for this part of the article.

In Latin America, family dynamics have been characterised by various combinations of customs and world views. These include the indigenous, pre-Columbian roots, the mixed-race identity that accompanied the formation of nation states in the nineteenth century, as well as the African component brought by the black slaves and their descendants. An important part of this formation are the European forefathers, Western Christians with whom Latin America has interacted with varying degrees of violence for over five centuries.⁴⁶⁰ During the colonial past, it was European Christian patriarchy that controlled plantations, mines and farms, using a workforce of African slaves and indigenous servants. In this socio-economic context, the Creole family came into being. In terms of normative frameworks, Creole society provided the conditions for this traditional European patriarchy to become stronger and more rigid, emphasising male domination and the obedience of women. The legitimacy of this patriarchy was to survive here at a time when it was receding in Europe (...) At the other extreme, we see a model that is the product of the syncretism with Catholicism, where we find the creation of informal partnerships, entailing births outside marriage, and the normative, widely accepted practice of male sexual depredation. The Creole interpretation of the family, in summary, was the product of an unequal encounter between a controlling European class and a controlled non-European class. It gave rise to an informal, chauvinist model of the family, with a matrilineal ingredient that was black, white, mixed race and indigenous. This model of the Christian family was characterised by monogamy, by an emphasis on the free choice of marital partner, and by a negative moral evaluation of sexuality, especially in its premarital form.⁴⁶¹

In an introduction to the family in Latin America, it is also important to consider the role of the State. The State is a significant protagonist in processes that shape the family, as countless legal acts, laws, selection criteria and public policies have actively contributed to embedding certain family models, in the sense that they are recognised in law, eligible for projects or programmes, and subject to various rights, social prerogatives or fiscal privileges.⁴⁶² In the period

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁶² Cf. Nieves Rico, María/Maldonado, Carlos, *Diversidad familiar y derecho en Chile: ¿una relación posible?*, Santiago de Chile 2011.

that saw the formation of the Latin American nation states, legislation for the family inherited a patriarchal Christian concept where the father (*pater familiae*) figured as the absolute head of the family group and where the wife's obedience to the husband had been established as an imperative. Catholic norms, derived from the religion of the conquistadores, governed the marital order and sexuality before the law.⁴⁶³ The diversity of roots and forms was submerged by a dominant model of the family which, by applying universal templates, sacrificed vibrant versatility.

Diverse contexts, diverse families

Against the socio-cultural background mentioned above, the situation for Latin American⁴⁶⁴ families today continues to be diverse, albeit marked by a common element: inequality and poverty. Latin America is the second most unequal region on the planet, overtaken only by sub-Saharan Africa. Inequality is manifested in different scenarios that directly affect real family life. Among those we could mention: conditions of poverty, an increase in the number of female heads of household, violence that especially affects young people and women, with a high incidence of female murder victims. Migration is another factor that affects families and results in their physical displacement, sometimes provoking breakdown and yet at the same time permitting the emergence of other forms of family organisation.

Women are the most affected by the phenomenon of migration. They are furthermore disadvantaged in the world of paid work outside the home. This implies a double working day for women. Moreover, it represents a workload for two other age groups. Girls are assigned tasks inappropriate for their age, such as keeping house and caring for their younger siblings, which often prevents them from enjoying their childhood or continuing their studies. At the other end of the age spectrum, we find grandmothers who take over the role of bringing up grandchildren while their daughters are away seeking work and better living conditions.⁴⁶⁵ Gender inequality persists in the labour market

⁴⁶³ Cf. Jelin, Elizabeth, *Las Familias latinoamericanas en el marco de las transformaciones globales*, Santiago de Chile 2007, quoted by Cienfuego, Javiera, op. cit., 16.

⁴⁶⁴ More information at: <http://www.cepal.org/es> (16.02.2017).

⁴⁶⁵ Migration is most extreme in regions such as Central America but is also considerable in other parts of the continent, not to mention internal displacements within the same country.

and in social relations.⁴⁶⁶ Despite the many changes that family life has undergone, the above-mentioned duality continues between, on the one side, conservative codes and norms for family life held up as ideals, and on the other, widespread informal, popular practices. This is the first difficulty in speaking about Latin America as a single unit.⁴⁶⁷ Other trends for the Latin American family are: the increase in the divorce rate, in the number of single people, in the number of family members migrating, and in the number of widows due to the rise in life expectancy for women.⁴⁶⁸

Our aim here is not to establish an exhaustive list of the challenges that confront families in Latin America in their daily lives. However, we cannot conclude this reality check without mentioning some important ones. I am referring to same-sex couples, which in some countries have an equal right to marriage, sexual abuse, especially of girls but also of boys, the abandonment and mistreatment of children, the situation of street children; in countries like Costa Rica, families fighting for the right to “in vitro” fertilisation and women’s campaign to decriminalise abortion. The latter objective has now been adopted as a human right for women.

We can conclude that these different situations not only express diverse contexts for family life, but also change the concept of family itself. Today (in Latin America but also elsewhere) we are witnessing accelerated change in everything connected with the subject. These changes challenge us to deconstruct the dominant, totalitarian understanding of family.

In Latin America, we could also call this deconstruction process a process of liberation. It is about liberating the word “family”, and liberating real families from its ideological burden, its “weight”. Years go by and it has remained a patriarchal, adult-centric, heteronormative term. Liberation allows us to look with affection and respect at the communities and experiences of diverse families, such as the grandmothers who, because of the employment or sometimes migration of their children, form families with their grandchildren; aunts and

⁴⁶⁶ On this topic, cf.: <http://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/6973-las-familias-latinoamericanas-interrogadas-hacia-la-articulacion-del-diagnostico> (16.03.2017).

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Cienfuego, Javiera, op. cit., 17.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Rico Nieves, María/Maldonado, Carlos, *Diversidad familiar y derecho en Chile: ¿una relación posible?*, Santiago de Chile 2011, quoted by Cienfuego, Javiera, op. cit., 20.

godparents who through their guardianship role broaden the reach of blood ties; the experience of women who come together to bring up children between them, of communities that care for children as a collective. Shelters that take in HIV-infected homosexuals and transvestites from the street, create a caring, protective family with the intention of improving lives. It is an invitation to revisit our ancestral traditions, both indigenous and African, to discover the forms of family life that are in our blood: broad, extended family units that cannot be understood outside their territories, where they live with nature, with trees, rivers and bush. An invitation to understand and learn from the black family, which sees itself as living in communion with the forefathers, since our ancestors are part of and the basis for our families.

Challenges for the Latin American Church in relation to the family

We turn our gaze now to the role and mission of the Church with regard to the family. Let us share some of the first questions that concern us: What has been the attitude of the Church in the face of the reality described above? To what extent do these situations constitute a challenge for theological reflection, for the ecclesiology and pastoral action of the Church, or churches, of the continent? How can the different understandings and manifestations of diverse families question the churches? Is that possible, or will the Church continue to insist on its ineffective pastoral models in dealings with families?

How can people who live different ways of being a family feel welcomed and supported by the Church? Biblical texts have been used to substantiate the hegemonic understanding of family. Can we rekindle a reading, a hermeneutic approach that will be liberating and will revitalise the real lives of Latin American families?

The family has been an evident theme in reflections by the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. At every Latin American General Episcopal Conference (CELAM)⁴⁶⁹, the theme is repeatedly debated. The content of this reflection can be found in the final documents of each conference. It is not the objective of our reflection to analyse

⁴⁶⁹ In Latin America there have been five General Episcopal Conferences: the first Conference took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1955; the second in Medellín, Colombia (1968), the third in Puebla, Mexico (1979), the fourth in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (1992) and the fifth conference was in Aparecida, Sao Paulo – Brazil (2007).

them, and so we will limit ourselves to a brief commentary on the final document of the most recent conference, the Aparecida Conference (2007).

In his inaugural speech to the conference, Pope Benedict XVI identified the family as a priority area in a new stage of evangelisation in Latin America. The family appears again in every section of the final document, which follows a pattern of “seeing, judging and taking action”.

With metaphors such as “the family is the patrimony of humanity”⁴⁷⁰, “the most important treasure of the Latin American people”⁴⁷¹, the “school of faith”, the Aparecida conference sets out the major problem areas for Latin American families from the point of view of the bishops present at the conference. The difficulty lies in the perspective, in the standpoint of this document, based as it is on an idealised model of the family as described at the beginning of this reflection. The vision of the family continues to be patriarchal, rooted in heteronormativity, emphasising the traditional roles of women and men; an adult-centric model that obscures the major role played by children.

“Mothers who wish to dedicate themselves fully to bringing up their children and to the service of their family must enjoy conditions that make this possible, and for this they have the right to count on the support of the state. In effect, the role of the mother is fundamental for the future of society. The father, for his part, has the duty to be a true father, fulfilling his indispensable responsibility and cooperating in bringing up the children.”⁴⁷²

The document mentions chauvinist mentality as a shameful thing, once again presenting Christianity as something new that proclaims the equal dignity and responsibility of women and men, but without recognising the complicity of that same Christianity with the history of women’s oppression.

⁴⁷⁰ Office of the German Episcopal Conference (eds.), *Aparecida: Outcome document of the 5th General assembly of the episcopals of Latin America and the Caribbean*, Bonn 2007, No. 432.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, No. 302.

⁴⁷² Inaugural Address of Pope Benedict XVI. according to the general assembly of Aparecida, *op. cit.*, 326.

In some families in Latin America there still unfortunately persists a chauvinist mentality that ignores the “newness” of Christianity, in which the equal dignity and responsibility of women relative to men is acknowledged and affirmed.⁴⁷³

Moreover, the analytical perspective adopted by the document identifies as negative the theoretical efforts and struggles of women’s movements and sexual diversity groups in Latin America over the past thirty years. We cite a short paragraph to illustrate this. Among the premises that weaken and undermine family life, we find the ideology of gender, according to which everyone can choose his or her sexual orientation, without taking into account the differences set to them by human nature. This has led to legislative changes that gravely injure the dignity of marriage, respect for the right to life, and the identity of the family.⁴⁷⁴

In the third part of the document, entitled “The Life of Jesus Christ For Our Peoples”, in section nine on “Family, Persons and Life”, the theme of the family is taken up again with one item devoted to women, “The Dignity and Participation of Women” (451 to 458), and another to men, “The Responsibility of the Male and the Father of the Family” (459 to 463). Children, teenagers, young people and the elderly are all covered in this latter section. The observations above about perspective are valid for the whole document, which, like a jigsaw puzzle, pieces together items with different intent. Generally speaking, however, it reinforces the idea that a woman is an assistant and complement to a man. It emphasises maternity as the “excellent mission of women, being called in this way to receive life”⁴⁷⁵, to welcome it, give birth to it, nourish and support it. An understanding that seems to us to be quite limited as far as the mission of women is concerned, even within the family.

Recognising the inadequacy of the Church’s current message about family issues in Latin America, let us continue our search for sources of inspiration that might revive and give new meaning to relationships within the family. Intuitively, the first thing that occurs to us is that one way to restore meaning can be found in life itself. Once

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., No. 40.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., No. 456–457.

more, this will require a new approach and a new way of looking at the topic. This path obliges us to revisit the same biblical texts with other questions and readings.

The Good News among our peoples

The diversity of culture and lore alive in the peoples' traditions indicates that the "good news" for Latin America preceded evangelisation. For families, this means that any pastoral action by churches should take into account this pre-existence of the Divine presence that has manifested itself in such diverse ways as family configurations and relationships between the members of different groups. This implies a change in theological perspective in a process of conversion and learning for the Church. The concepts of family found among our peoples are much wider, as we have mentioned, going much further than blood ties to include nature, rivers, bush, mountains, and our ancestors and forefathers who continue to be part of our family. The first thing to invite the Church to do is to listen to the life that beats in the great heart of our continent and which escapes the narrow concepts and limited models of the modern Western family. We should recognise that these past experiences are not without contradictions, conflicts, oppression and examples of exclusion. The challenge is to revisit our histories, that of Christianity as much as of other cultural and religious traditions, and to gather elements of liberation which can bring empowerment to families in their different forms of expression.

The exercise of listening and *recovering our memory*, with different histories and experiences of family, provokes a change in the concept itself. We will open up the concept on the basis of our experiences, and fill it with real, everyday life, which is very different from the models some seek to impose. In doing this, we will see that family is a plural term, pronounced in different ways and able to be appropriated variously by different groups of people. There are others who prefer, because of the heavy semantic burden that this word has carried, to leave it to one side, to abandon it and look for other ways of expressing their emotional and/or romantic groupings and relationships.

But what if, in a few words, it were possible to share the meaning of family, as something that reaches out and manifests in various forms, in different cultures... What would we call it? What elements

would comprise this experience that we are used to calling family? *Mutual care, living together, respect, affection* could be some of these words. More than words, these are experiences that could be present in, but not limited to, an initial nuclear family. In the different circumstances of life, this is what we are looking for and what we want to build together. A way of living together that seeks the wellbeing of the other, man or woman, that seeks happiness. All of this exists in the midst of contradictions and conflicts. In this sense, the mission of the Church would be in the first place to bear witness, to seek to be this kind, protective, caring place that members of the community of faith could experience and which would attract others. This is really what people are looking for. We are not looking for doctrines that tame us, that clip our wings, our desire to fly. We need emotional communities that bear witness and which afford us the assurance that we can love. A second challenge for the churches is to *support these places of emotional experience*, of living together, of care, called by the name they want for themselves, in their different forms of expression and formation. To walk beside people in solidarity and, when asked, to be ready with a word, a presence that strengthens and supports in moments of weakness and confusion.

Another dimension of the Latin American family that we should not forget is celebration and *festival*. Family meetings are always a moment of celebration, not always ending well, certainly, but celebration. These occasions are marked by music, dance, food and sharing with everyone. There is always a friend, male or female, someone new, who by means of the celebration is introduced to the group and in a way ends up becoming part of the family. Celebrations are often linked to important life events, including even death. This could be a way of giving new meaning to the role and the presence of the Church in its *celebratory* events or liturgies.

Analysing the elements presented in this last part of the reflection, we discover that more than teaching, the Church in Latin America is called upon to *learn from families*. Families are diverse, always including this or that person with problems who does not, for that, stop being part of the family. The Church is called upon to widen its vision, open its doors, knock down its walls and barriers, embrace those men and women who seek diversity, to love them and allow love – and not doctrine or laws – to act as a liberating, inspiring force for individuals

and communities. Let us become real communities that seek to love, apprentices of love.

Conclusion: A brief encounter with Jesus in the gospels

The Church claims to look to the image of the Holy Family for an example for families of today. An image that is reinforced over the Christmas period, with the Nativity scene conveying such a romantic vision of that family of mother, father and child. A mother who listened to everything and kept it in her heart, an obedient son and a hard-working father. This is the perfect family. This is what I learned about in my childhood as part of a Catholic family.

We only have to read the gospels for this image to dissipate and in its stead for some light to begin to shine on the alternative experiences and visions mentioned above. The Jesus of the gospels, especially that of Mark, is depicted at the beginning of his ministry. He organises a movement where those who are part of his group leave their families. We are not told whether or not he married, we know little about his emotional life. We do know something, however, about his affection and care for people who take on the values of the kingdom of God. He proposes in this way a different family, dysfunctional and diverse a family of sisters and brothers.

Perhaps we could find here yet another source of inspiration.

Challenges for a Family Apostolate

Living Family Life Differently.

Biblical Challenges and a new Openness towards Long-term Models of Partnership – On the Way to a Life of Fulfilment Together

Klaus Vellguth

Discussions and arguments about the family always take place in a specific context or against a contextual background. This was apparent at both the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2014 and the XIVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015, which was attended by 270 bishops from all parts of the universal Church. Ute Eberl, an auditor from Germany at the Extraordinary Family Synod in 2014, wrote the following about her experience of the Synod: 'Present, as I was, at the heart of the universal Church it became clear to me that I listen with very special ears. These are the ears of a woman from an open society with a liberal constitutional order, the ears of a person from a Reformation country, one with a highly professional Catholic welfare organisation, with a social security system in which full-time lay people perform their duties.'⁴⁷⁶ Looking back at the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2015, in which he participated as an auditor, Michael Sievernich wrote that 'questions take on a different character in an inter-cultural context'. This was illustrated, for instance, by 'marriage and family traditions in Africa'⁴⁷⁷ and inter-

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Eberl, Ute, "Schaut in die Wohnzimmer der Familien, nicht in ihre Schlafzimmer", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 333–340, here: 333f.

⁴⁷⁷ While some of the comments made about the African view of marriage and the family before and during the Synods might appear awkward from a Western European perspective, they may approximate more closely to the biblical understanding of marriage, since the purpose of marriage – as stated in the Bible and elsewhere – was the birth of children, especially of sons, who had the right to a major social function in biblical times. Cf. Eltrop, Bettina, "Zahlreich wie die Sterne: Gedanken zu Ehe/Familie/Beziehungen in der Bibel", in: *Das Magazin*, No. 14 (2015) 3, 5–7, here: 6.

religious marriage traditions in Asia'.⁴⁷⁸ In these contexts the Catholic Church was attempting to conceptualise unity in diversity and put it into practice.

Views on (marriage and) the family vary considerably. They can be greatly influenced by a cultural background in which monogamy or polygamy are the rule, for instance, or where the system of descent is matrilineal or patrilineal. The circumstances of one's personal life can also have an impact. Single or married Christians may well have different opinions and this is equally true of men and women with their varying perspectives on life. Just how diverse these views are was made very clear by the numerous comments made in the run-up to the two synods; these highlighted the challenges facing the universal Church in the age of globalisation.⁴⁷⁹ A good illustration was the meeting held by SECAM (the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) in preparation for the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Views on marriage and the family in Africa

In June 2014 over 80 participants from 18 African countries came together in Cotonou (Benin) at the invitation of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) to discuss questions relating to the family in Africa.⁴⁸⁰ Its purpose was to take stock openly and honestly of the social challenges confronting families in Africa and of the impact that social developments are having on their everyday lives at the start of the third millennium. It was specifically intended that highly controversial issues in Africa, such as promiscuity, pre-marital sex, polygamy and homosexuality, should not be swept under the carpet. Statements made by African bishops, particularly as regards homosexuality, had previously caused considerable irritation in Europe and elsewhere. This was because they

⁴⁷⁸ Sievernich, Michael, "Die Bischofssynode zur Familie", in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 234 (2016) 2, 87–98, here: 88.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Vellguth, Klaus, "Durch Veränderungen herausgefordert: Ein afrikanisches Vorbereitungstreffen zur Familiensynode", in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 68 (2014) 8, 427–431; Varayilan, Preetha, "Das Konzept der 'Joint Family'", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 371–376; Idem: "Das Konzept der 'Joint Family': Das Familienverständnis im indisch-hinduistischen Kulturkreis", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), *Familie: Auslaufmodell oder Garant unserer Zukunft?*, Freiburg 2014, 364–380.

⁴⁸⁰ On the following cf. Vellguth, Klaus, "Durch Veränderungen herausgefordert: Ein afrikanisches Vorbereitungstreffen zur Familiensynode", op. cit.

expressed positive views about a tightening of the legislation relating to homosexual acts and classified homosexuality as 'unnatural' and 'un-African'. The choice of Cotonou as the venue for the meeting was of symbolic significance. It was in Benin that Benedict XVI put his signature to the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, in which (following on from *Ecclesia in Africa*) the model of the family is presented as the ecclesiological model of the Church in Africa. The high regard in which this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation is held in Africa was illustrated not least by the fact that the Apostolic Nuncio in Benin, Brian Udaigwe, emphasised the significance of the family as the nucleus of society. In doing so he referred to *Africae Munus*, which describes the family as the 'sanctuary of life' and 'a vital cell of society and of the Church': 'It is here that the features of a people take shape; it is here that its members acquire basic teachings. They learn to love inasmuch as they are unconditionally loved, they learn respect for others inasmuch as they are respected, and they learn to know the face of God inasmuch as they receive a first revelation of it from a father and a mother full of attention in their regard.'⁴⁸¹

SECAM described its meeting to discuss 'Africa at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family: Organic Pastoral Solidarity and Contribution' as a 'workshop' to make it clear that it wished to have an open and candid exchange of views on the challenges confronting families in Africa from an anthropological, cultural-scientific and pastoral perspective. Its purpose was not to any produce hastily formulated responses. Gabriel Mbilingi, Archbishop of Lubango (Angola) and President of SECAM, referred to Pope Francis who, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, had driven a helpful wedge between too close an association between the Church's Magisterium and the formulation of definitive truths.⁴⁸²

In his welcoming address Antoine Ganyé, the Archbishop of Cotonou and Chairman of the Bishops' Conference of Benin, spotlighted the challenges to the traditional concept of the family in Africa as a result of divorce, promiscuity, polygamy, same-sex partnerships,

⁴⁸¹ Pope Benedict XVI., Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, 19 November 2011, No. 42, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html (16.03.2017).

⁴⁸² Cf. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (16.03.2017).

etc. In view of the transformation processes affecting the family in Africa he drew attention to two needs: a) to inculturate the Gospel into specific social surroundings, which requires flexibility from the Gospel, and b) to harness the power of the Gospel in order to change society. This is not only a hermeneutical challenge; it also implies accepting a paradox which always exists whenever theological thinking does not revolve around a single central point in concentric circles, but is arranged elliptically around two focal points which are not identical but are crucial for the elliptical shape.

Diversity of families in Africa

During the African bishops' workshop repeated reference was made to *the* situation of families in Africa, as if it were in some way uniform. In fact, the social conditions facing families in Africa are extremely varied. The reality of family life in Africa at the start of the third millennium has little to do with the concept of the family which many Church circles still regard as their personal monopoly. This concept has its roots in 19th century Europe, when it came to be seen as a normative ideal in the wake of urban growth and the emergence of a middle class in Europe. A statistical survey has revealed, for example, that in South Africa today only one child in three grows up in a family with both its biological parents. It is a fact that families in Africa can assume very varied forms. Just this year in Kenya, for instance, new family legislation has come into force which gives equal status to a marriage between a man and a woman and the traditional African polygamous form of marriage in which a man has several wives (but not to the polyandrous form of marriage in which a woman has several husbands). This legislation also includes rules governing Muslim and Hindu marriages. While many countries (including Benin) prosecute homosexuality as a criminal offence, South Africa has now legally sanctioned rainbow marriages between same-sex partners. The definition of the family agreed by the bishops in the USA has even been incorporated in the work aids used by the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC). It reads: 'A family is an intimate community of life and love, bounded together for life by blood, marriage or adoption.'

The notion of what constitutes marriage in Africa can hardly be described as uniform. Bony Guiblehon, an ethnologist from the Ivory

Coast, came across a total of 40 different forms of family in the course of his research work in Africa, as a result of which he was able to identify various economic, social and personal relations. Guiblehon suggested that it was better to talk of families in the plural than of family in the singular. The very varied nature of family life in Africa raises the question of which family structure the image of the Church as the Family of God applies to and whether, over the past quarter of a century, that image has been interpreted in very different ways because of the varying notions of the family that exist and/or the experience that has been gathered in a range of different contexts.

The Nigerian cardinal John Onaiyekan pointed out that the divorce rate is climbing in Africa and that the duration of marriages is shortening. He did not agree with Walter Kasper who, using the argument of *epikeia* or *oikonomia*, recently (again) advocated a pastoral solution for Catholics in Europe and the USA in the light of the Church's re-assessment of its previous attitudes to re-married divorcees. Onaiyekan expressed the view at the SECAM meeting in Cotonou that the Church's well-known positions – particularly as regards the (non-)admission of re-married divorcees to Holy Communion – should be observed and upheld for marriage and the family in Africa. He considered the hasty adoption of theological positions formulated in the local churches in Europe to be the result of globalisation. He regarded this as problematical for Africa in that a dominant culture was attempting to foist its own values on others.

The African concept of marriage and the family is deeply rooted in indigenous culture, without knowledge of which it is hard to understand some of the stances taken on marriage and the family at the Cotonou gathering. The middle-class European concept of marriage is that of a legal contract between two individuals, while the Church's sacramental understanding of marriage is that it is metaphorical or sacred in character. By contrast, the African notion of marriage is embedded in an ontological and cosmological understanding which extends well beyond the bridal couple. In fact, it is backward-looking in that it incorporates the ancestors of the bridal couple and forward-looking in that it integrates any offspring they may have. This incorporation in an inter-generational cosmology has to do with the fact that the primary purpose of marriage and the family in Africa is the transmission of life. Mathieu Ndomba (Congo-Brazzaville) pointed out that in this respect

there was an inter-cultural point of departure shared by the traditional African and the Christian understanding of marriage. On the other hand – and this was made very clear in Benin – polygamous lifestyles are fully in keeping with the traditional African concept, which explains why polygamy is still the customary lifestyle of a man (or, in the case of matrilineal cultures, a woman) in many regions of Africa today. Apart from its social and economic dimensions, the purpose of polygamy is that a man (in patrilineal cultures) and a woman (in matrilineal cultures) should transmit life to the next generation.

In the Western concept of the family the emphasis is very much on the individual and it does not encompass any sense of responsibility for inter-generational relations (for example, the effect ecological developments may have). The cosmological concept of the family in Africa has a different focus and is a helpful auxiliary to the Western notion. Given the African approach to marriage, the challenge for the Church consists in integrating the sacred character, the community-related cosmological concept and the dynamic character of the traditional African understanding of marriage into its own sacramental idea of marriage. The metaphorical references which resonate in the traditional Catholic understanding of marriage offer a wide range of starting points here. The significance which attaches to the (still pending) inculturation of the Christian concept of marriage was made very plain in Cotonou when a representative from Nigeria listed a whole host of marriage ceremonies that take place in his country. First of all, the traditional wedding ceremony is held in the village community. Great store is still set by such a traditional wedding ceremony in rural regions of Nigeria. It is followed by a civil law ceremony and finally a church wedding ceremony. If a church wedding is not embedded in some kind of inter-cultural understanding, it can quickly degenerate into an appendix of a festive culture which is firmly anchored in African tradition.

Matriarchal or bilinear structures instead of a gender approach

In a series of presentations female participants from Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Burkina Faso addressed the situation of women in the African family and African society – it is they, after all, who form the backbone of the family. Reflecting on the commitment and dedication shown by women in Africa, *Africae Munus* says: 'Women

in Africa make a great contribution to the family, to society and to the Church by their many talents and unique gifts.⁴⁸³ Nevertheless, as Veneranda Mbabazi from Uganda pointed out, women in Africa are still treated as second-class citizens. They do most of the family chores and yet they receive scant recognition for raising children, running the household and working outside the home to earn money. It is mostly husbands who make the key decisions affecting the family, and wives must accept them. The distribution of roles is still largely inflexible. In many parts of Africa, men involved in the rearing of children are regarded with suspicion. The situation in a number of rural areas in Uganda can serve as an example. If men get involved in the upbringing of their children, it is said, word will quickly get around that they are 'bewitched in some way'. Traditional male and female domains continue to exist in Africa, which means that women are excluded from any position of power. Very few women are involved in politics. Only two African countries (Liberia and the Central African Republic) have a government headed by a woman. It was therefore all the more important, delegates thought, that there should be a reappraisal of the role of women in African families and in African society.

Gender approaches of the kind discussed in Europe, for instance, tended to be viewed critically by the bishops and theologians gathered in Cotonou, although it was striking how often reference was made to the works of Marguerite Peeters. Some of the female speakers thought gender approaches betrayed African values, showed disrespect for the femininity of women and posed a threat to their traditional role as procreators and mothers. Others, pointing to the origins of the gender approach, criticised it as a Western concept forced on Africa as a part of 'Western cultural imperialism'. Responding to this criticism Béatrice Faye, a nun and philosopher from Senegal, suggested that, rather than Africa taking over the Western gender approach, the focus should be laid instead on the matriarchal structure of society as an intrinsically African concept. Illustrating her remarks by reference to ethnic groups in Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Congo, the Central African Republic and Sudan, she demonstrated that matriarchal or matrilineal social structures are to be found in all parts of Africa and that their positive impact could represent a specifically

⁴⁸³ *Africae Munus*, No. 55.

African contribution to the discussion at the bishops' Synod on the Family. These structures rested on a concept of the family, she said, in which women are the head of the family, the relationship between the mother and her child is seen as the foundation of society, and women as mothers are entitled to a key role in advancing society and transmitting social values. Responding to Béatrice Faye's remarks, a female representative from the Democratic Republic of Congo recalled a pastoral letter written in 1998 by SECAM entitled 'The Church in Africa: Church as the Family of God', in which reference was made to the existence of bilinear traditions in Africa in addition to matrilineal and patrilineal traditions. The experience of bilinearity could constitute a specifically African contribution to the renewal of the family, she said. Indeed, it might even be better than matrilinearity.

Homosexuality in Africa

It is to the credit of the Church in Africa that it endeavoured not simply to embrace non-African ideas and present them later on at the synodal discussions in Rome as intrinsically African contributions, but rather to consider the situation of families in Africa from its own perspective. Moreover, it attempted to pinpoint contributions that were distinctly African, e.g. inner-family relations between women and men. But how should these endeavours be assessed if, in a discourse deliberately construed as 'specifically African', concepts were raised which – from a European perspective – were very hard to digest and painful into the bargain? Richard Rwiza, Senior Lecturer in Moral Theology at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi, who attended the SECAM meeting in Benin, addressed the question of how a rainbow marriage should be seen from an African perspective. In doing so, he deliberately took up one of the questions Pope Francis had asked local churches to consider in the run-up to the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. In his remarks on homosexuality Rwiza 'played it safe' by keeping within the boundaries clearly defined by the Magisterium. He cited theories whereby homosexual inclinations are deemed congenital or acquired, distinguished between sexual orientation and sexual practices, and referred to the Church's teachings that are inspired by a divine will which is discernible in nature. According to Rwiza, it was the pastoral task of the Church to draw the attention of people in Africa to the perversity of homosexuality. Astonishingly, the remarks the Kenyan

moral theologian made at the SECAM meeting were accepted (almost) without objection.

What initially seems surprising from a European perspective can be understood if consideration is given to the traditional African approach to marriage. The traditional African concept of marriage, which is essentially about the transmission of life, is undeniably at odds with the idea of a same-sex marriage, which is not entered into for the purposes of procreation. The SECAM meeting in Cotonou showed that, as regards the controversial issue of same-sex partnerships, adopting or confirming certain positions just to do justice to the matter in inter-cultural terms is not an option. Rwiza prefaced his presentation by stating that everything had already been said on how homosexuality should be assessed – after all, the Magisterium had made its opinion on the issue abundantly clear. Such an attitude might initially indicate a lack of problem awareness when seen from a European perspective. In the interests of inter-cultural dialogue, however, Europeans need to be willing to think again about homosexual issues (not with a view to Europe but to Africa) and to try and grasp the cultural ideas that underlie seemingly unpalatable statements. For only an extension of traditional cultural concepts might possibly induce a re-assessment of certain forms of partnership and marriage from an African perspective. Admittedly, that is asking a great deal, particularly of all the participants in the debate who have suffered from the discrimination inflicted on homosexuals in Europe and the USA and whose wounds are only gradually healing.

Tolerating unfamiliar views and standpoints in the Universal Church Discussion

In response to the position on homosexuality set out in Cotonou let me make what is admittedly an aporetic remark on the relationship between statements of substance and the culture of formal dialogue in the universal Church discourse. Should it not be accepted, or at least tolerated, that a position on homosexuality long since thought to have been overcome in Europe is now being advocated by representatives of local African churches and meets with general approval? Can Cardinal John Onaiyekan's assertion that homosexuality (like feminism) has no roots in African culture but is rather a Western concept be considered out of place from a European point of view

(and almost embarrassingly so)? That would prompt the question of whether context-based approaches are only acceptable as long as they fit into one's own theological reference system or reinforce it with the relevant arguments. How far must you go as a representative of contextual theology (in an endeavour to overcome Eurocentrism in theology) if the issue is that of granting local churches the right to their own theological positions no matter how odd they might appear? Does contextual theology stretch only as far as one's own Western theological thinking and margin of tolerance? What does esteem for local churches with their specific contextual perspectives and theologies mean when it comes to a dialogue on an equal footing at the Synod of Bishops and in a universal Church, the majority of whose members live in the southern hemisphere and have done so for quite some time now? These are questions triggered indirectly by Rwiza as a result of his approach, which in Europe would be considered 'barely acceptable'. Finding answers to them will certainly take time.

Strengthening Africa's voice

It is to the credit of the new SECAM leadership under Archbishop Gabriel Mbiligi that the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar should have held a pan-African theological workshop in the run-up to Synod of Bishops in Rome in order to explore the prospects for an African theology of the family. In this respect the Church in Africa would appear to have learned its lesson from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and, above all, from the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), whose representatives have attracted attention in the past for the clear stand they have taken at bishops' synods and for their ability in doing so to draw on positions set out in documents compiled at the continental level. In Cotonou, Paul Béré, a Jesuit from the Ivory Coast, recounted the experience of African theologians attending the 2013 Synod on 'The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith', at which bishops from Latin America were able to refer to the Aparecida Document and thus lend added weight to the vote they cast. With this in mind and in view of the need for the African Church to speak with one voice, it would have been good if more bishops from Africa had attended the SECAM workshop. Quite clearly, SECAM does not (yet) have the status or backing that CELAM and FABC enjoy among bishops. In addition,

the linguistic division of Africa into Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone zones has been instrumental in the fragmentation of the Church on the continent – even though the SECAM presidium has taken great pains to ensure that all three language groups are equally represented in the Secretariat. Cotonou was an important step, nonetheless. A final document based on the presentations and discussions in Benin was compiled at the end of the meeting and the African bishops had it with them when they set out for the Synod of Bishops in Rome to address the issue of family life in Africa, the challenges facing families there and the momentum Africa can provide for future family concepts and structures. Cardinal Onaiyekan has attended several synods and is well aware of the importance of pan-African networking in discussions at such gatherings. In his view, the Cotonou Document was crucial in enabling the African Church to give a significant stimulus, inspired by African culture, to the debate on family issues.

Global dialogue on the agenda

The African bishops attending the synod highlighted the situation facing families on their continent and broadened the discussions conducted in Rome by including such everyday topics as polygamy, androgamy, traditional marriage ceremonies, etc. They thus spotlighted specifically African aspects of family life which, from the point of view of European theologians and bishops, had previously been considered an 'exotic marginal phenomenon' (and one that had been overcome, it was thought). They also voiced criticism, expressing their incomprehension or rejection of attempts made by bishops and theologians from Europe and the USA to bring about a more open-minded approach in the Church's attitude towards homosexuals and pastoral ministry to them. The meeting in Cotonou, carefully arranged by Louis Portella Mbuyu, Bishop of Kinkala (Congo-Brazzaville), foreshadowed the encounter between very different worlds that would take place when bishops from all over the world came together in Rome in October 2015 to attend the Extraordinary General Assembly of Bishops and discuss family issues. The art in such an encounter between different cultural worlds is not to try and formulate the better arguments and present them to others who find them incomprehensible or to approach fellow believers with the maximum assertiveness (behind which there might lurk a 'hidden cultural arrogance').

On the contrary, it consists rather in communicating hermeneutically with the requisite intercultural empathy and, in so doing, to risk one's own position being called into question by what might initially even be shocking alternative views (especially on such sensitive issues as marriage and the family).

The Church has embarked on a long journey to overcome its own (essentially European) provinciality and develop into a universal Church. After the Second Vatican Council, Karl Rahner cautiously stated that the Council was 'engaged in an initial approach, groping its way forward to find itself, the first official realisation of the Church as a universal Church'. The Church took a big step forward down the road to a universal Church when, in 2013, it chose a non-European Pope for the first time ever in its over 2,000-year history. But now the Church must learn to find its way around on the often winding and not always smoothly asphalted paths of the universal Church. The Church regards itself as the family of God – and in Cotonou the African bishops and theologians made repeated reference to African ecclesiology. For a family to 'function' in practice it must be able to tolerate dissent, develop a culture of debate and repeatedly renegotiate roles in order to satisfy the needs and development of its members. When the Church came together as the family of God in Rome in October 2015, it was precisely these qualities that its African members called for, since they are indispensable if the Church as a family is not to founder on the diversity of its members but to flourish instead.

The above description of the preparations made by the African bishops for the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2014 illustrates just how important it is to take account of the cultural background and specific circumstances which influence individual thoughts and comments. The remarks that now follow document the perspective of a married Catholic from Western Europe.

The family is a highly valued institution in Germany. Three-quarters of the population see a family as their main purpose in life.⁴⁸⁴ The percentage of adults for whom a family is crucial to their happiness

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Köcher, Renate, "Veränderte Einstellungen zur Familie", in: idem (ed.), *Allensbacher Jahrbuch der Demoskopie 2003–2009* (Vol. 12), Berlin/New York 2009, 659–663, here: 659.

has increased steadily over the past twenty-five years from under 50 per cent to almost 80 per cent.⁴⁸⁵ According to Allensbach, an opinion polling institute, over fifty million Germans think it is 'extremely important to lead an active family life'.⁴⁸⁶ Contradicting the views of those who think that the onset of post-modernism marks the end of the era of the family, sociologists such as Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, Robert Hettlage, Rosemarie Nave-Herz and Laszlo A. Vascovics point to the ongoing relevance of the family and the high regard in which it is held in German and Western European societies.⁴⁸⁷

At first sight, the value Western European society attaches to the family at the beginning of the third millennium would appear to be greater than the esteem accorded to the family in both the Old and the New Testament. In actual fact, the concept of the family which is upheld as a family idyll in middle-class circles in Western European society does not exist in the Bible.⁴⁸⁸

The family in the Bible: Between challenge and imposition

The remarks made about the family in the Holy Scriptures are extremely varied. Accounts of the family in the Old Testament are predominantly etiological in character and encompass traditions that include polygynous relations, hierarchically structured partnerships, endogamous practices (in which marriages only take place within one's own social group), etc.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, the Old Testament gives expression to fundamental values in family life, such as respect for one's mother and father, care for aged parents⁴⁹⁰, the inviolability of marriage, care for the offspring resulting from a marriage as well

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (ed.), *Familienreport 2012, Leistungen, Wirkungen, Trends*, Berlin 2012, 12.

⁴⁸⁶ Quoted from Püttmann, Andreas, "Wertschätzung und Wandel von Familie – Empirische Kenntnisse in christlicher Perspektive", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 99–113, here: 99.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Schockenhoff, Eberhard, "Die Zukunft der Familie: Anthropologische Grundlagen und ethische Herausforderungen", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 69–92, here: 71.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Eltrop, Bettina, op. cit., 5.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Fischer, Irmtraud, "Menschheitsfamilie – Elzelternfamilie – Königsfamilie: Familien als Protagonisten von Welt erzeugenden Erzählungen", in: *Bibel und Kirche*, No. 70 (2015) 4, 190–197.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. Elßner, Thomas R., "Das dekalogische Elterngebot: Eine Hinführung", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 237–252.

as open-mindedness and honesty between conjugal partners.⁴⁹¹ An examination of the statements made in the New Testament produces a wide range of findings.⁴⁹² First of all, historical research has shown that, in ancient times, many people did not live in extended families but in a group of nuclear families and that the personal circumstances in these nuclear families often changed following the death of the marriage partners (due to their low life expectancy), divorce and remarriage.⁴⁹³

What is striking first of all is the almost negligible interest of the Evangelists in Jesus' family.⁴⁹⁴ Moreover, wherever the family is presented in the New Testament as being of patrilineal descent (Luke 2:4) or as a household (Luke 10:5; 19:9, Acts 10:2 et al.), there is distinct criticism of the institution of the family, which has prompted some to advance the thesis that Jesus advocated an 'anti-family ethos'.⁴⁹⁵ Asked about his own family (his mother and brothers and sisters) who have come to see him, Jesus replies almost brusquely to the Synoptists: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" (Mark 3:33; cf. Matthew 12:46; Luke 8:19-21), by which he means to say that, in his eyes, it is not one's personal family that counts but the spiritual family. Jesus feels at home not in his biological family but in this *familia dei*, in which *koinonia* can take place. A similar logic applies when the Synoptists talk about the seriousness of Christ's disciples. Here again, the biological family relationship is subordinated to spiritual succession when Jesus proclaims: 'Anyone who comes to me without hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple.' (Luke 14:26; cf. Matthew 10:37-39).

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Kasper, Walter, "Die Zukunft der Familie aus christlicher Sicht", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 181–198, here: 184.

⁴⁹² For what follows cf. Vellguth, Klaus, "(Jede) Familie ist einmalig: Familie in der multioptionalen Gesellschaft", in: Augustin, George/Proft, Ingo (eds.), *Ehe und Familie: Wege zum Gelingen aus christlicher Perspektive*, Freiburg 2014, 71–88; Idem, "Gelingende Ehe stärken oder gescheiterte Ehe anprangern? Anmerkungen im Vorfeld der außerordentlichen Bischofssynode", in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 123 (2014) 10, 5–8.

⁴⁹³ Cf. Gerber, Christine, "Nicht nur Vater-Mutter-Kind: Familien in der Welt des Neuen Testaments", in: *Bibel und Kirche*, No. 70 (2015) 4, 198–203.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Häfner, Gerd, "Zwischen Vorbehalt und Wertschätzung: Ehe und Familie im Neuen Testament", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 321–325, here: 321.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. Söding, Thomas, "Gottes Kinder in Gottes Familie: Neutestamentliche Modelle und Impulse", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 264–279, here: 265; Bohlen, Reinhold, Stichwort 'Familie', in: *Lexicon of Theology and the Church* (LTHK, Vol. 3), Freiburg/Basel/Rome/Vienna 1995, 1169.

Similarly, the vocation stories emphasise that following Jesus in discipleship is more important than personal family ties. Zebedee, for instance, leaves his father (Matthew 4:22, cf. Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51). Elsewhere it is reported that someone wished to fulfil his duty to the family and bury his dead father before following Jesus. Apparently demonstrating very little sympathy for the nurturing of family structures, Jesus replies: 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead'. (Matthew 8:22, cf. Luke 9:57-60). Other passages can be interpreted as a call by Jesus to break with one's own family. The Gospel according to Matthew contains the following words of Jesus: 'And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times as much, and also inherit eternal life.' (Matthew 19:29; cf. Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30). The evangelist also supplies the logion which is far from confirming any suspicion that he might overestimate the value of the family for Jesus: 'For I have come to set son against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.' (Matthew 10:35; cf. Luke 12:53).⁴⁹⁶ In view of these quotations from the New Testament and the almost trivial statement that the status of a *norma normans non normata* is reserved not for the value of the family but for the biblical tradition or the followers of Jesus – and bearing in mind, too, that Pope Francis has recently pointed time and again to the importance of the hierarchy of truths – the upholding of the family in whatever cultural form cannot be all too hastily construed as a primary biblical principle.⁴⁹⁷ In the event of a conflict it is not family ties which are sacrosanct but the call of faith.⁴⁹⁸ The middle-class nuclear family is far from constituting a biblical ideal. The bible itself mentions numerous different ways in which people can live together. It refers to patchwork situations, siblings living together, illegitimate children and sustainable relationships between surviving family members as well as quarrels, jealousy and

⁴⁹⁶ It should be pointed out that the New Testament does also provide examples of successful marriage and a happy family life: Elisabeth and Zacharias, Mary and Joseph, the Apostles and their wives, Timothy and his family, etc. Cf. Söding, Thomas, "Gottes Kinder in Gottes Familie: Neutestamentliche Modelle und Impulse", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 264–279.

⁴⁹⁷ See also the statement that marriage belongs 'not to the order of salvation but to God's merciful order of creation and preservation' (quoted from Lehmann, Karl/Pennenberg, Wolfhart, *Lehrveranstaltungen – kirchentrennend?*, Vol. 1, Freiburg/Göttingen 1986, 145).

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Söding, Thomas, op. cit., 266.

the possibility of families failing.⁴⁹⁹ In light of the biblical fact that the gospels do not paint an idyllic picture of the family, creating rather a post-modern impression with their descriptions of conflicts, ruptures and dissociation,⁵⁰⁰ Andreas Püttmann's response to the family fetish cultivated in the Church today has a touch of sarcasm about it: 'It should be perfectly obvious, but it needs to be said again and again: Christianity is not a family religion nor is it a fertility cult. It was founded by a childless single and, in the Catholic denomination, is led by childless singles.'⁵⁰¹

Meeting requirements and making adjustments: The family in Church documents

Although the Bible shows that the family as an institution is dealt a few hefty blows in the New Testament, it is accorded much higher status in later Church documents.⁵⁰² This is readily apparent in the documents issued in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* has a separate chapter on Marriage and the Family⁵⁰³ which was the subject of a highly controversial debate in the Council Hall.⁵⁰⁴ The document first looks at marriage and family in the modern world,⁵⁰⁵ emphasises the holiness of marriage and the family,⁵⁰⁶ points to the sacramental significance of conjugal

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Breit-Keßler, Susanne, "Familie heute", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 65 (2014) 2, 74–8, here: 75; Sattler, Dorothea, "Ein 'Geschenk des Himmels' aber keine 'Göttliche Stiftung'? Die Replik von Dorothea Sattler auf Susanne Breit-Keßler", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 65 (2014) 2, 88 – 89.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Kügler, Joachim, "Wie heilig war die Heilige Familie? Von einem Asylantenkind, das seinen Stiefvater früh verliert und von seiner Mutter nicht verstanden wird ...", in: *Bibel und Kirche*, No. 70 (2015) 4, 211–214, here: 214.

⁵⁰¹ Püttmann, Andreas, "Wider das Familienhurra in der Kirche", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 311–316, here: 314.

⁵⁰² For more on the historical development of the Church's understanding of marriage and on the statements made by the Second Lateran Council, the Council of Florence, the Council of Trent and Pope Pius' Encyclical on Christian Marriage *Casti Connubii* (1930) see Sattler, Dorothea, "Die Ehe: Theologische Anliegen in römisch-katholischer Perspektive", in: *Theologische-Praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 347–351, here: 349.

⁵⁰³ GS 47–52.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Sander, Hans-Joachim, "Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute *Gaudium et spes*", in: Hünermann, Peter/Hilberath, Bernd Jochen, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* (Vol. 4), Freiburg/Basel/Vienna 2005, 581–886, here: 770.

⁵⁰⁵ GS 47.

⁵⁰⁶ GS 48.

love,⁵⁰⁷ highlights the importance of the fertility of marriage⁵⁰⁸ and of responsibility for safeguarding life⁵⁰⁹, and closes with thoughts on the concerns of all for the fostering of marriage and the family.⁵¹⁰ However, it is not just in this prominent publication but elsewhere, too, that the documents of the Second Vatican Council turn to the subject of marriage and the family.⁵¹¹ It is not possible here to discuss in detail the individual statements made by the Council, which need to be seen in the context of their time.⁵¹² Instead of a detailed analysis I will focus on two key aspects of the statements made in the Pastoral Constitution and the Council documents. It is interesting to note, firstly, that the Council documents consistently mention marriage and the family in the same breath (which is a problematical issue) and, secondly, that conjugal affection is placed at the very heart of its understanding of marriage (which is an important step towards an appropriate contemporary interpretation of conjugal partnership).

This makes it perfectly clear that, at the time of the Council in the mid-1960s, it was more or less taken for granted that marriage and the family were synonymous with the middle-class nuclear family,⁵¹³ which had come to be established as the normative ideal of the family from the mid-19th century onwards in the wake of urban

⁵⁰⁷ GS 49.

⁵⁰⁸ GS 50.

⁵⁰⁹ GS 51.

⁵¹⁰ GS 52.

⁵¹¹ LG 1, LG 11, LG 35 and LG 41; GS 12, GS 61, GS 67 and GS 87; AA 10, AA 29; GE 3, GE 6, GE 8. Cf. Vorgrimler, Herbert, "Die pastorale Konstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute 'Gaudium et spes'", in: Rahner, Karl/Vorgrimler, Herbert (eds.), *Kleines Konzilskompendium: Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, Freiburg/Basel/Vienna 2008, 423–448, here: 434.

⁵¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 436. Somewhat later Hans-Joachim Sander, looking back at the terminology used, expresses a critical view, saying that 'this was not appropriate to the language needed to find one's pastoral bearings in the problematical field of marriage' (Sander, Hans-Joachim, *op. cit.*, 771).

⁵¹³ It was of no consequence that this model of marriage and the family had evolved in specific circumstances. In the 19th century, the length of time married couples spent together without children mostly amounted to no more than a few years, whereas nowadays couples can often enjoy a period of 20 to 30 years together in which they do not have to tend to the upbringing of children. Moreover, since not all women survived the birth of their children, many men married a second time. 'When we talk [...] nowadays about lifelong marriage, we are referring to an institution which, in this form, is so far unparalleled in the history of mankind.' (Jost, Ingrid, "Ehe als Lebensentscheidung im Kontext gesellschaftlicher Veränderungen und persönlicher Entwicklung", in: Schneider, Theodor (ed.), *Geschieden – wiederverheiratet – abgewiesen? Antwortende Theologie*, Freiburg 1995, 143–153, here: 144.

growth and the advent of a middle class in Europe.⁵¹⁴ At that time society witnessed the emergence of a specific family model that went hand in glove with an official Church concept of the family. This found expression inter alia in the inclusion of the Feast of the Holy Family (which in some regions had been celebrated since the 17th century) in the Church's liturgical calendar in 1921.⁵¹⁵

This ideal of the family which arose in the 19th century was prominent in the discussions that took place in the Council Hall. However, the Council document makes it clear that, even at the time the Council was held, the legitimacy and plausibility of this ideal were encountering certain problems, if the disparaging mention of 'polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love and other disfigurements'⁵¹⁶ is anything to go by. However, these phenomena were not seen as seriously calling into question the traditional model of marriage and the family which the Church considered to be the norm. On the contrary, they were belittled. The ideal posited in contrast to such developments was that of a 'Christian marriage and family' which centred around the affection and love of the conjugal partners. However, it is possible to detect a key *aggiornamento* here in the Church's understanding of marriage which is initially not geared explicitly to the creation of offspring.

A diagnosis similar to the analysis made of the Church's understanding of the family at the time of the Second Vatican Council emerges from the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* published by Pope John Paul II sixteen years after the Council. In this document from the year 1981 it is again stated in one and the same breath that 'marriage and the family constitute one of the most precious of human values'. In fact, a whole chapter is devoted to 'The Plan of God for Marriage and the Family'. Before that, however, the exhortation says with regard to the 'bright spots and shadows' for the family today: 'On the one hand, in fact, there is

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Weber, Ines, "'Geht Vaters Karriere immer vor?': Eheliche Beziehungsweisen in den 60er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts", in: *Theologische-Praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 379–389.

⁵¹⁵ Cf. Koch, Kurt, "Heilige Familie: Urbild und Kraftquelle der christlichen Familie als Hauskirche", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 215–236, here: 215. The Second Vatican Council laid down that the Feast of the Holy Family should henceforth be held on the 'liturgically prominent' Sunday between Christmas and the New Year.

⁵¹⁶ GS 47.

a more lively awareness of personal freedom and greater attention to the quality of interpersonal relationships in marriage, to promoting the dignity of women, to responsible procreation, to the education of children. There is also an awareness of the need for the development of interfamily relationships, for reciprocal spiritual and material assistance, the rediscovery of the ecclesial mission proper to the family and its responsibility for the building of a more just society.⁵¹⁷ Tribute is paid here to social developments in respect of marriage and the family, the reason for which – and here we can see John Paul II's hand at work – is formulated as follows: 'At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being.'⁵¹⁸ According to this formulation, it is only natural that there should be a confrontation between God's plan, on the one hand, and individual human beings concerned with their own welfare, on the other, who are denigrated as being self-centred. The question is whether such a confrontation is acceptable or whether it might not be more helpful in theological terms to assume there is a harmony rather than a dichotomy between a divine plan and individual human welfare involving a life lived to the full (John 10:10).

Benedict XVI pursues the connection between marriage and the family – a consistent feature of Church documents in the 20th and 21st centuries – in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, in which he talks of the good that can be expected 'from marriage and from the family founded upon marriage' and insists that marriage and the family are institutions which must be fostered and defended.⁵¹⁹ Pope Francis likewise refers first of all to the connection between marriage and the family.⁵²⁰ Walter

⁵¹⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, No. 6, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (16.03.2017).

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Consortio* on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission, Nos. 27–29, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html (16.03.2017).

⁵²⁰ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter on Faith, 29.June 2013, No. 52f., <http://w2.vatican.va>.

Kasper abided by this tradition when saying the following to the Extraordinary Consistory of the Cardinals in Rome on the family: 'The Good News of the family goes back to the very beginnings of mankind. It is God's gift to the human race. The institution of marriage and the family is held in esteem in all human cultures. It is understood as a long-term relationship between a man and a woman and their children.'⁵²¹

The challenge posed by social change

Family life in Germany today manifests itself in many different ways and it is no longer possible to talk of a natural link between marriage and the family. Almost 59 per cent of adult Germans give 'married, living together' as their family status, 23 per cent 'single', eight per cent 'widowed' or 'divorced' and two per cent 'married, separated'.⁵²² Although this model of marriage as a long-term relationship and the basis for a family still predominates, it has long ceased to be the only possible form of family life. It has forfeited its monopoly position in the post-modern era. There are many reasons for this. They range from flight and migration via industrialisation (with its separation of the places where people live and work), the decline of the house community, processes of freedom, personalisation and individualisation, and the emergence of gender issues to a range of other economic, sociological and cultural factors.⁵²³ It is plain to see that the Church concept of marriage and the family (as a package in which first a wedding takes place so that the marriage can then produce children) is now endorsed by only a minority of Catholics in Germany. Very revealing in this respect is a survey conducted by the German Bishops' Conference on questions of family pastoral care and sexual morality prior to the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2014. It showed that great importance is attached to a successful life in a stable relationship which is monogamous,

va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_encyclicallumen-fidei.html (16.03.2017).

⁵²¹ Kasper, Walter, *Das Evangelium von der Familie: Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium*, Freiburg/Basel/Vienna 2014, 17.

⁵²² Cf. TNS Infratest Sozialforschung 2011, quoted from Püttmann, Andreas, "Wertschätzung und Wandel von Familie – Empirische Erkenntnisse in christlicher Perspektive", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., Freiburg 2014, 99–113, here: 101.

⁵²³ Cf. Kasper, Walter, *Die Zukunft der Familie aus christlicher Sicht*, in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 181–198, here: 182f.

long-term and binding.⁵²⁴ However, a majority of the faithful do not go along with the Church's statements on sexual morality: 'As regards a whole series of convictions about sexual morality, which for a long time were regarded as distinctly Catholic, the majority of believers now think along different lines to the official Church teaching.'⁵²⁵ When it comes to marriage, Catholics have much more pluralistic ideas than would appear at first sight in Church documents. The German Bishops' Conference, for example, noted that 'The Church's statements on pre-marital sexual relations, homosexuality, re-married divorcees and birth control either meet with very little acceptance or are explicitly rejected.'⁵²⁶ Overall, the survey shows that many Christians, 'including practising Christians, find the teachings of the Church remote from the world and everyday life.'⁵²⁷

The social transformation of the concept of the family (as well as the separation of possible forms of family from the prior necessity of marriage) goes hand in hand with a development in the understanding of marriage in which Paul Michael Zulehner sees three fundamentally different trends. Whereas people with a secular image of marriage see in it an institution geared primarily to the well-being of the conjugal partners and linked to personal love,⁵²⁸ others favour an institutional image of marriage which is rooted in religion and associated with the indissolubility of marriage. Yet others are influenced – as a mixture of the two aforementioned concepts of marriage – by a personal, religious image of marriage which focuses on the love of the conjugal partners and, in principle, accepts the failure of marriage as a possi-

⁵²⁴ Cf. Breit-Kefßler, Susanne, *op. cit.*, 78.

⁵²⁵ Orth, Stefan, "Bischofssynode: Ergebnisse der Umfrage veröffentlicht", in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 68 (2014) 3, 115–117, here: 115.

⁵²⁶ Die Deutschen Bischöfe, *Die pastoralen Herausforderungen der Familie im Kontext der Evangelisierung: Zusammenfassung der Antworten aus den deutschen (Erz-)Diözesen auf die Fragen im Vorbereitungsdokument für die III. Außerordentliche Vollversammlung der Bischofssynode 2014*, Bonn 2014, 2.

⁵²⁷ Kasper, Walter, *op. cit.*, 183.

⁵²⁸ Helmut Schelsky regards it as a naïve misunderstanding on the part of late middle-class European society 'that its idea of marriage, which has largely forfeited its social function and is reduced to the intimacy of a purely personal relationship in which priority in choosing a partner or marriage is given to sexual and erotic needs, should be taken as the original model of marriage.' In this context he points out that marriage and the family were originally intended to provide care and security for any offspring and comes to the conclusion that 'stability in relations between the sexes therefore appears to derive essentially from non-sexual matters' (Schelsky, Helmut, quoted from Splett, Jörg, "Ehe als Sakrament", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer, *op. cit.*, 280–287, here: 281).

bility but does not see marriage as having anything to do with religion. Symptomatic of advocates of this approach to marriage is the view that God does not bind people to the marriage promise they once made if their love fails.⁵²⁹ This puts a very fundamental question mark against the Church's understanding. The broadening of the concept of marriage gives rise not least to questions such as how the failure or the end of a marriage should be assessed and how the individuals affected should be treated.

The challenge of a Jesuanic approach to remarried divorcees

The Würzburg Synod (1971-75) questioned the Church's position on remarried divorcees and issued the following reminder: 'Those affected suffer, but ministers often find no satisfactory means of providing pastoral succour in the Church regulations. [...] The German Bishops' Conference therefore requests that the urgently required clarification be pursued and a vote on this matter be forwarded to the Pope as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Synod requests the Pope to arrive at a solution which is satisfactory in pastoral terms. This should respond to the purpose of the requests in which pastoral aid is needed in the question of conscience facing divorced Catholics who have remarried and the priests advising them.'⁵³⁰

The request made by the Würzburg Synod initially went unheard in Rome. In derogation of the assessment of most Catholics in Germany, the Canon Law which came into force in 1983 stipulates that divorcees cannot marry a second time by virtue of the *iure divino* governing the bond of marriage (Can. 1085). Remarried divorcees are not entitled to receive holy communion (Can. 916) and may not be admitted to holy communion (Can. 915).⁵³¹ The Catechism of the

⁵²⁹ Cf. Zulehner, Paul Michael, "Differenzierung ist nötig: Was Katholiken über die Ehe denken", in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 68 (2014) 3, 129-134, here: 131.

⁵³⁰ Cf. Gemeinsame Synode der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Beschlüsse der Vollversammlung, Offizielle Gesamtausgabe I, Freiburg im Breisgau 1976, Beschluss Ehe und Familie 3.5.3.1., 452f. http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Synoden/gemeinsame_Synode/band1/synode.pdf (01.07.2016).

⁵³¹ The Second Vatican Council saw marriage less as a contractual relationship and more as a communion of life and love (incorporating the bond of marriage, cf. GS 49). In 1983 CIC, elements of a contractual relationship reappear: marriage is a covenant which a man and a woman enter into for the rest of their days, is indissoluble for the duration of their lifetime, intended for the welfare of the spouses and their personal communion, valid even in the event of childlessness, and a sacrament in the Christian understanding of the term.

Catholic Church is also formulated in this spirit: 'Divorce is a grave offence against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery.' (2384)

In view of the Church's understanding of marriage⁵³² and given the treatment of Catholics who have undergone a divorce and then remarried under civil law, praise is due to the many German bishops, first and foremost Walter Kasper, who for years now have been working with great dedication to bring about a theological and ecclesiastical reorientation in this matter.⁵³³ As far back as 1993, Karl Lehmann, Walter Kasper and Oskar Seier, the three bishops from the Upper Rhine province, published a sensational joint pastoral letter. Proceeding from the position formulated in *Familiaris Consortio* whereby the situation of remarried divorcees objectively contradicts the teachings of the Church and they are, therefore, not (officially) admitted to communion as a general principle, they described it as the duty of the Church to establish whether a) blame has been incurred for the failure of the marriage; b) reconciliation with the first partner is ruled out; c) compensation must be made for any injustices suffered; d) obligations must be fulfilled in respect of the first marriage partner and any children from the first marriage; e) the failure of the first marriage has caused a public nuisance; f) the second marriage has become a new moral reality and is lived out in the Christian faith; and g) celebration of the sacraments is desired. The bishops from the

⁵³² This understanding of marriage is greatly influenced by Jesus' prohibition of divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:19; Mark 10:11f.; Luke 16:18), which – as Paul confirms – can be traced back to Jesus himself (1 Corinthians 7:10f.). Any assessment of Jesus' prohibition of divorce must bear in mind that it should be interpreted in the context of the proclamation of God's eschatological rule. Cf. Knapp, Markus, Glaube – Liebe – Ehe: Ein theologischer Versuch in schwieriger Zeit, Würzburg 1999, 45f.

⁵³³ Cf. Foitzik, Alexander, "Wiederverheiratete: Vorstoß von Kardinal Kasper", in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 68 (2014) 4, 169–171. This endeavour is all the more necessary in that the Magisterium pointed out in earlier writings, one-sidedly but quite unequivocally, that remarried divorcees are objectively in conflict with the Church and cannot be admitted to communion. See, for example, the statements made by John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* on the Christian Family in the Modern World, No. 84, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (16.03.2017).

Upper Rhine raised the bar very high, in other words, and they came to the following conclusion in respect of pastoral practice: If, following such an examination, remarried divorcees are convinced that they are entitled to join in communion, this must be accepted by the priest. The outcome, therefore, was not official acceptance by the Church but rather ‘toleration’.⁵³⁴ While this practice may not be identical with the rules of Canon Law, it can be justified nonetheless by reference to the principle of *epikeia*. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, headed by Joseph Ratzinger, responded to the pastoral letter of the three German bishops and in its reply referred, on the one hand, to the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* and, on the other, to Jesus’ logion (Matthew, 19:6). The conclusion it reached was that remarried divorcees – pursuing their own subjective convictions – must not be admitted to communion. In the letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the bishops of the Catholic Church on communion for remarried divorcees (15 October 1994) reference is made to ‘objective Church teachings’ as the decisive criterion, this being preferred to a demonstration of greater official Church recognition of, and trust in, a sincere conscientious decision on the part of believers.⁵³⁵ The Congregation said that the only way to be admitted to the sacraments was by a possible nullity of the marriage, which was in keeping with the Church policy pursued by Cardinal Ratzinger and John Paul II, who emphasised the principle of the indissolubility of marriage.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ Responding to this logic, Bertram Stubenrauch has elaborated a line of argument with respect to the treatment of remarried divorcees which is based on penance (poenitentia), healing (remedium) and faith (fides): ‘The objective blame for the injury done to the marriage must be admitted by an act of confession and repentance. The consequence of this is an adequate period of repentance followed by sacramental absolution. There is thus a documented record that divorced and remarried Christians who are aware of their guilt and ask for forgiveness are not separated from God nor in any way in mortal sin.’ (Stubenrauch, Bertram, “Wiederverheiratete Geschiedene und die Sakramente: Ein Denkspruch zur dogmatischen Diskussion”, in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 232 (2014) 5, 346f.)

⁵³⁵ Cf. Böhnke, Michael, “Signale der Barmherzigkeit”, in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 382–383.

⁵³⁶ Cf. Lüdicke, Klaus, “Evolution oder Revolution? Der neue kirchliche Eheprozess”, in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 69 (2015) 10, 509–512, here: 511f.; Schick, Ludwig, “Die wiederverheirateten Geschiedenen und das Unbehagen ...”, in: *Fides et ius* (Festschrift G. May), Regensburg 1991, 178f. As regards nullity of marriage proceedings, the popes had repeatedly stressed in their addresses to the Roman Rota that the failure of an attempt to achieve a declaration of nullity represented the ‘truth of marriage’. This is a burden for canons: ‘Seen from this perspective, the main task of the ecclesiastical courts was to ascertain the objective facts pertaining to the canonical grounds for nullity – a task that was almost

In his speech entitled 'The Good News of the Family', which Walter Kasper gave to the Consistory in Rome in February 2014, he returned to the pastoral letter he had co-written 21 years previously and pleaded for a pastoral balance between laxity and rigorism in the Church which would enable Christians who have divorced and re-married under civil law to (co-)celebrate the sacrament of penance and communion after a period of reorientation.⁵³⁷ Following the example of Joseph Ratzinger, Kasper returned to the early Christian tradition of dealing with the 'fallen' in such a way that – having already been 'shipwrecked' once in their lives – neither the community of the Church nor the 'rescue plank' of communion should be denied them.⁵³⁸ After his speech to the Consistory and discussion of it, Kasper issued the following plea: 'Many steps need to be taken if we are to arrive at a – hopefully unanimous – decision. The first step consists in finding our voice again in matters of sexuality, marriage and the family and in overcoming the unbending, resigned speechlessness that afflicts us in the current situation. The question of what is permitted and what is forbidden is not going to help us move forward. The issues of marriage and the family, among which that of remarried divorcees is just one – albeit very pressing – question, form part and parcel of the wider issue of how people can find happiness and fulfilment in their lives.'⁵³⁹ Kasper thus integrates the question of how to treat remarried divorcees into a 'hierarchy of values', which is closely aligned to the hierarchy of values the Canon Law describes when it talks of the *suprema lex salus animarum*.⁵⁴⁰

impossible to resolve in view of the fact that, in the Church's understanding, marriage is the result of an act of volition by both partners and can be invalid on the grounds of internal reservations.' (Lüdicke, Klaus, op. cit., 510). In terms of Canon Law, at least, Pope Francis has taken an important step towards a more appropriate canonical and pastoral approach to nullity of marriage proceedings by simplifying the latter with the help of the motu proprio *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* for the Latin Church and the motu proprio *Mitis et misericors Iesus* for the Oriental Churches. The duplex sentential conformis (dual Canon Law ruling) was annulled in the run-up to the 2015 Family Synod; this will help to expedite nullity of marriage proceedings.

⁵³⁷ Cf. Kasper, Walter, *Das Evangelium von der Familie: Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium*, Freiburg/Basel/Vienna 2014, 54– 67.

⁵³⁸ Cf. Ratzinger, Joseph, "Zur Frage der Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe: Bemerkungen zum dogmengeschichtlichen Befund und seiner gegenwärtigen Bedeutung", in: Fries, Heinrich/ Eid, Volker, *Ehe und Ehescheidung*, Munich 1972, 35–56; Dünzl, Franz, "Ein Impuls aus der Kirchengeschichte des Altertums zur Umfrage zur Bischofssynode 2014", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 65 (2014) 2, 126–127.

⁵³⁹ Kasper, Walter, *Das Evangelium von der Familie: Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium*, Freiburg/Basel/Vienna 2014, 86f.

⁵⁴⁰ Can. 1752.

Walter Kasper is guided in his approach by the principle of *oikonomia*, a fundamental spiritual and pastoral attitude which sees the challenge for the Church community as being to accompany people through life who have revealed their weakness, even though the ecclesial community itself is aware of its own weakness. In this context *oikonomia*⁵⁴¹ represents the opposite of *akribeia* (strict adherence to the Gospel) and hints at what might be an appropriate Church approach to Christians who have experienced the painful failure of their marriage but maintain a basic trust in the value of marriage. After all, the fact that Christians marry a second time under civil law, despite the suffering they have gone through as a result of the failure of their first marriage, shows that they still hope to find in marriage the happiness that they long for.⁵⁴²

This theological issue has been discussed in a resolute, combative and controversial manner. As regards the admission of remarried divorcees to the sacraments of the Church, the representatives of a rigid Church practice have responded to the appeal to open up the debate by pointing to biblical tradition. However, the biblical position is less unequivocal than might appear at first sight. The rule that marriage is indissoluble is traced back to the New Testament transmission of the word of Jesus who – as the Synoptists have unanimously handed down – expressed his disapproval of the practice of divorce referred to in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 24:1-4). This provided for divorce in cases in which ‘a man has taken a wife and consummated the marriage; but she has not pleased him and he has found some impropriety of which to accuse her’ (Deut 24:1). The Old Testament rule on divorce is based on a private law understanding of marriage (Tobit 7:14)⁵⁴³ and could be interpreted in such a way

⁵⁴¹ The *oikonomia* principle of the Orthodox Churches entails strict observance of Canon Law rules, but it also countenances the possibility of deviation from these rules, allowing God's mercy to prevail. In the Orthodox Churches a second or even a third marriage is concluded in accordance with the principle of *oikonomia*. Cf. Schuppe, Florian, *Die pastorale Herausforderung: Orthodoxes Leben zwischen Akribeia und Oikonomia: Theologische Grundlagen, Praxis und ökumenische Perspektiven*, Würzburg 2006, 391–406.

⁵⁴² On the question of whether a second civil law marriage might also be sacramental character in character see: Ruster, Thomas, “Ehe und Öffentlichkeit: Was bedeutet die Entscheidung zum Sakrament?“, in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 65 (2014) 2, 110–115, here: 115.

⁵⁴³ There was no religious element to marriage. It was a private-law covenant concluded in oral or written form, as a result of which control over a woman passed from her father to her husband. She consequently moved from her parents' home to that of her husband, although she did not become his property (and so could not be sold, pawned, bequeathed or forced

that a woman's marriage depended on the will and arbitrariness of her husband, who could dissolve it any time. At the time of Jesus there were two interpretations of the Jewish law on divorce. The more restrictive Shammai position was that, in accordance with Old Testament rules, a man could only release his wife from their marriage if she had an infectious disease or a mental illness, had committed adultery or remained without child. The more liberal Hillel position, in which reference was made to the Book of Deuteronomy, permitted the release of the wife from her marriage in other than these cases.⁵⁴⁴ Marriage was thus a relationship which could be terminated at any time and therefore meant fundamental existential uncertainty for the wife. In many instances it will have meant her 'meekly submitting' to the will of her husband in order not to be 'disowned' by him. This interpretation of the law, which essentially rendered women defenceless, was based on an asymmetrical understanding of marriage that was widespread in ancient times. Jesus opposed it (Matthew 5:13f.; Matthew 19:3-11; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18), offering women with no defence against the arbitrariness of their husbands a position characterised instead by social solidarity. He was concerned that relations between men and women should be just and fair.⁵⁴⁵ Jesus' disciples were reportedly startled by what he had to say, which in their ears sounded very radical.

Nonetheless, like John the Baptist, of whom it is said in the Holy Scriptures that his criticism of Herod's marriage practice cost him his head, Jesus will have called for a stricter marriage practice than was customary at his time.⁵⁴⁶ Mark adds an important passage to what Jesus said by explicitly mentioning the possibility of a woman being the cause of a divorce: 'A wife also commits adultery if she releases her husband from the marriage and marries someone else.' Paul takes up the prohibition on divorce transmitted in the Synoptic gospels, although he does take account of the real possibility of

into prostitution). Cf. Bons, Eberhard, Stichwort "Ehe" (im Alten Testament), in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Vol. 3), Freiburg 1995, 469–470.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Reckinger, François, "Die Gnade der unauflöselichen Ehe", in: *Forum Katholische Theologie*, No. 31 (2015) 3, 161–177, here: 162.

⁵⁴⁵ Sattler, Dorothea, "Die Ehe: Theologische Anliegen in römisch-katholischer Perspektive", in: *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 347–351, here: 348.

⁵⁴⁶ Klieber, Rupert, "Zweitausend Jahre 'christliche Ehe': (Kirchen-)Historische Befunde und theologische Folgerungen", in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 233 (2015) 10, 670–682, here: 670.

separation, noting that, after their separation, a husband and his wife should not remarry: ‘To the married I give this ruling, and this is not mine but the Lord’s: a wife must not be separated from her husband – or if she has already left him, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband – and a husband must not divorce his wife.’ (1 Corinthians 7:10-11) By not entering into a new relationship the partners keep open the option of reconciliation and a resumption of their marriage.

In addition to marriage at the level of a personal relationship there is another aspect in Christian sacramental theology which must be considered in assessing whether it is possible or sensible to terminate a marriage by divorce.⁵⁴⁷ At the time of the prophet Hosea the notion arose that God’s relationship with his people is, figuratively speaking, a marriage (Hosea 11:1-11).⁵⁴⁸ This analogous concept was taken up and developed in particular by Jeremiah and Ezekiel – which is likely to have contributed to a drop in the number of divorces among strictly religious Jews.⁵⁴⁹ In the New Testament this analogous, metaphorical view of marriage is transferred to Christ’s relationship with the Church. The Letter to the Ephesians describes Christian marriage as a communion of love and as an allusion to the connection between Christ and the Church, in which it also shares.⁵⁵⁰ Following up on this, *Familiaris Consortio* says that the situation of divorced persons who have remarried ‘objectively contradicts that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist’,⁵⁵¹ which means that they cannot be admitted to Eucharistic Communion.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. Schockenhoff, Eberhard, “Die Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe und die zivilen Zweitehen von Getauften”, in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 234 (2016) 2, 99–114, here: 101. As regards the dissolubility of marriage, theologians distinguish between a personal reason as to why marriage entails total devotion (Can. 1057 § 2 CIC), a creation and alliance theology reason (cf. Matthew 19:6), a Christological and ecclesiological reason (cf. Ephesians 5:21) and a social or pastoral theology reason as to why marriage is of such fundamental value for society and why people who are married bear responsibility for their partner and children.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Sattler, Dorothea, “Die Ehe: Theologische Anliegen in römisch-katholischer Perspektive”, in: *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 347–351, here: 348.

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. Reckinger, François, op. cit., 163.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Broer, Ingo, Stichwort “Ehe” (im Neuen Testament), in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Vol. 3), Freiburg 1995, 470–471; Koch, Kurt, *Heilige Familie: Urbild und Kraftquelle der christlichen Familie als Hauskirche*, in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 215–236, here: 221.

⁵⁵¹ *Familiaris Consortio* 83.

Two problems arise with respect to this rooting of the Christian understanding of marriage in the Letter to the Ephesians. On the one hand, the metaphorical connection in the Letter to the Ephesians is mentioned in the same breath as the demand that women should subordinate themselves to men. The introductory passage reads: 'Wives should be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, since, as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church is subject to Christ, so should wives be to their husbands, in everything.' (Ephesians 5:22-24) Today, nobody would regard this demand made in the Letter to the Ephesians as an adequate description of the contemporary reading of the relationship between men and women at the beginning of the 21st century. Only recently the Pontifical Bible Commission noted that its document entitled 'Inspiration and Truth in Interpretation of Sacred Texts' incorporates contemporary ideas, in particular with regard to the fifth chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians. 'A number of biblical passages are an invitation to think about [...] what is eternally valid and what needs to be put into perspective because it is bound to a culture, a civilisation or the categories of a certain period in time.'⁵⁵² The Pontifical Biblical Commission is referring here specifically to the social status of women and that there is no biblical justification for the subordination of women to men, especially in the manner formulated in the Letter to the Ephesians.⁵⁵³ It is obvious that contemporary, context-dependent and culture-related ideas were incorporated in the text of the New Testament which cannot be considered intrinsically Christian. Such principled open-mindedness concerning the possibility that period-related ideas were incorporated into the text should also apply to the following nine verses of the Letter to the Ephesians, in which an analogy is drawn between a Christian marriage as a relationship of love between two people and the relationship between Christ and the Church, to which the sacramental nature of marriage⁵⁵⁴ articulated at the Council of Trent refers: 'Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to

⁵⁵² Päpstliche Bibelkommission, *Inspiration und Wahrheit der Heiligen Schrift: Das Wort, das von Gott kommt und von Gott spricht, um die Welt zu retten*, published by Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bonn 2014, 132.

⁵⁵³ Cf. Brockmüller, Katrin, "Die Schrift wächst mit den Lesenden": Einblicke in den großen Garten der Bibelpastoral", in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 125 (2016) 3, 6–9, here: 7.

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. Kasper, Walter, *Die Zukunft der Familie aus christlicher Sicht*, in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 181–198, here: 191.

make her holy by washing her in cleansing water with a form of words, so that when he took the Church to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because we are parts of his Body. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh. This mystery has great significance, but I am applying it to Christ and the Church. To sum up: you also, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.'

The love between a man and a woman – according to this passage from the Letter to the Ephesians – can also provide a 'foretaste' or 'pre-sentiment' of the loving relationship between God, who is love himself,⁵⁵⁵ and human beings as well as between God and his Church.⁵⁵⁶ Since this is analogous language, a distinction must be made, if we are to proceed exegetically and not eisegetically and thus obviate any difficulties, between the *analogatum primum*, the *analogatum secundum* and the *tertium comparationis*. For the analogous language refers exclusively to the *tertium comparationis*. In the Letter to the Ephesians the relationship between men and women would be the *analogatum primum* and the relationship between Christ and the Church the *analogatum secundum*. These are linked linguistically by the *tertium comparationis*, which is described in verse 25 as the emotional nature of love: 'Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church [...].'⁵⁵⁷ If the sacramental nature of marriage is traced back to this analogy, the sacramental dimension would then have to refer to the *tertium comparationis*. However, if no love exists (any more) between the marriage partners, the analogous statement (which consistently refers to the *tertium comparationis*) would be deprived of its meaning or rendered meaningless in the truest sense of the word.

Thomas Aquinas says that (by analogy) the visualisation of the love of God is also a characteristic feature of marriage, together

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. 1 John 4:12.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Gerl-Falkovitz, Hanna-Barbara, *Liebe und Ehe im Horizont des Göttlichen: Ein Blick auf Weltreligionen*, in: Schelsky, Helmut, quoted from Splett, Jörg, "Ehe als Sakrament", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 329–346, here: 344.

with the transmission of life to children and conjugal friendship.⁵⁵⁷ However, how can God's love (as the *analogatum secundum*) be made visible if love or conjugal friendship (as the *analogatum primum*) no longer exist? If the marriage has perhaps long since degenerated into accumulated incomprehension, allocations of guilt, injuries, hardened attitudes and hostilities? In terms of sacramental theology, the starting point here ought not to be marriage as it exists but the ideal notion of it – which is not identical with the real experience people have of marriage, of one that is perhaps failing or has foundered on the ideal.

If we are talking about marriage as a sacrament, it is more appropriate not to see it as a monolithic, indestructible ideal, but to recognise the reality of marriage as a process which both husband and wife can experience as a source of strength and as a gift. One factor that speaks in favour of marriage being experienced as a source of strength and as a gift is that it becomes more resilient with each day of successful togetherness that passes. The sign function can thus gain in strength in the course of a marriage. In this sigmatic, process-oriented context Rupert Klieber uses the term 'sacrament in progress'.⁵⁵⁸ He shows that, in the first century, an individual marriage practice evolved in response to the Church ideal of marriage. Augustine, for example, regards re-marriage as *venialiter* (forgiveable), while the example of the Emperor Charlemagne (747-814), who was married a total of five times, shows that in the first century the Church did not necessarily object to multiple marriage. The Eastern Churches devised pragmatic and practical ways of dealing with remarried divorcees by distinguishing between the Christian ideal and real life and countering the *akribeia* with a *sympatheia*. Klieber deduces two things from the practice of the Eastern Churches, which worked for a period of just under 1,900 years in full Church fellowship with Rome: 'Firstly, that the exclusively Latin theologumenon of the bond of marriage which only death can dissolve is not the sole legitimate conclusion that can be drawn from what is written in the Bible. Secondly, that concessions in the teachings on the indissolubility of marriage made as a result of human weakness do no harm.'⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ Römelt, Josef, "Danke für Freundschaft, für Freundschaft in der Familie und für die (christliche!) Familie", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 317–318, 317.

⁵⁵⁸ Klieber, Rupert, op. cit., 670.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 675.

There are certainly instances in the Bible of the distinction made between knowledge of an ideal aspiration and ways of dealing with a specific reality or practice. While the Synoptics have handed down Jesus' logion on the dissolubility of marriage, the Gospel according to John talks of a non-judgmental and humane practice pursued by Jesus himself. When an adulteress was to be stoned in accordance with the law, Jesus intervened and put the Pharisees and scribes in their place, reminding them that failure to live up to ideal was part and parcel of the human condition. Thus the different nuances in the biblical transmission make it clear 'how the tension between the law and fragile, guilt-laden human beings can be withstood.'⁵⁶⁰

If the Church is really interested in questions of sacramentality, its non-Jesuanic practice, which is not guided by the reality of fragile, guilt-laden human existence, is casting a shadow on its own sacramental nature. Its actions prevent Jesus Christ, who is above any inhumane casuistry and judgmental adherence to the law, from appearing as the true light of the world. On the contrary, the Church is failing to live up to its own aspiration to be 'in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race',⁵⁶¹ because it clings to ideal concepts and elevates them to the status of an 'all or nothing' principle rather than taking people as they are and the reality of their lives as its starting point, as Pope Francis recently advised in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.⁵⁶²

But there are alternatives to such an approach. The social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church can be cited as an example of an awareness of Church ideals, on the one hand, and of the reality of human failure, on the other. Its response to the tension between the two reveals a keen sense of responsibility. In its understanding of marriage the Orthodox Church is guided by the statements of the Old Church, but at the same time it regards pastoral care as essential.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶⁰ Schmäzle, Udo, "Es geht um Heilung: Für eine alternative Pastoral zum Umgang mit wiederverheirateten Geschiedenen", in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 68 (2014) 7, 348–353, here: 352.

⁵⁶¹ LG 1.

⁵⁶² EG 233.

⁵⁶³ Cf. Moga, Joan, "'Verbinde sie in Eintracht, kröne sie zu einem Fleische ...': Aspekte orthodoxen Eheverständnisses", in: *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 356–360, here: 357; Schuppe, Florian, op. cit., 391–406.

The Russian Orthodox Church, therefore, advocates the ideal of a lifelong marriage and says with respect to the pastoral priorities of the Church: 'In the event of various conflicts between marriage partners the Church regards its pastoral duty as being to use every means it has to preserve the unity of the marriage and prevent a divorce (instruction, prayer, participation in the sacraments).⁵⁶⁴ Only after the ideal has been stated and the task of a pastoral ministry aimed at strengthening and preserving the marriage has been underlined is mention made of the actual possibility of a divorce and a second marriage.'⁵⁶⁵

Sabine Demel outlines a pastorally oriented Canon Law perspective for dealing with people whose marriage has failed and who would like to marry a second time.⁵⁶⁶ She begins by observing that, although the principle of the indissolubility of marriage is adhered to in Canon Law (Can. 1056), certain marriages can be dissolved in practice (Can. 1141 and 1142-1150). She goes on to point out that, in future, marriage itself ought not to be annulled (since it is indissoluble) but only its legal effects. Hence the first marriage (which continues to exist as an important part of the life history of at least two people) would remain in place, while the path to a second marriage would be opened. This would depend, firstly, on the admission of both partners that their marriage has irretrievably failed and, secondly, on a credible assurance by the partner who re-marries that he or she has come to terms with the failure of the marriage. A procedure of this kind would appear to make sense as regards the ability of the persons concerned to have relationships, for 'if there is acceptance of individual responsibility and possible blame, the chances are increased of a new perspective being discovered and of a new partnership not failing again for the old reasons. Many couples, men and women, are very willing to address these issues, because there is nothing more they want than for their possible second relationship and the rest of their lives to be a success.'⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁴ Quoted from: Klieber, Rupert, op. cit., 675.

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. Thesing, Josef/Uertz, Rudolf (eds.), *Die Grundlagen der Sozialdoktrin der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche*, St. Augustin 2001.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Demel, Sabine, "Gott und die Liebe – die Kirche regelt's", in: *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 361–367.

⁵⁶⁷ *Handreichung für die Seelsorge zur Begleitung von Menschen in Trennung, Scheidung und nach ziviler Wiederverheiratung in der rzdiozese Freiburg*, <http://www.familienseelsorge-freiburg.de/html/wiederheirat452.html> (30.04.2016).

A theological opening of this kind is not intended to call the sacramental nature of marriage into question. On the contrary, both the sacramental marriage and family life should be strengthened by the fact that they rest on the notion of human salvation and not the ideals of bygone ages.

The challenge of family pluralism

It was pointed out at the beginning of this article that in pluralistic societies the family can take on many different forms (since it is no longer the sole means of establishing a primarily economic partnership aimed at providing the 'biologically requisite long-term care for any offspring'⁵⁶⁸). This does not really come as a surprise. What is astonishing, however, is the reduction of the term 'family' in Church documents to mean a husband and wife and their children. At first glance it would appear that such a narrow interpretation excludes all those who have a different form of family life: as a patchwork family,⁵⁶⁹ a single-parent family, an (intentionally or unintentionally) childless family, a rainbow family, a non-marital partnership, etc. Ultimately, however, who is really excluded by such a narrow interpretation of what constitutes a family depends on your perspective. In an age in which Church-related religiousness is the social norm such a narrow interpretation of the family would exclude all those whose type of family does not correspond with this concept of marriage and the family. In a secular age in which large parts of society no longer accept a narrow interpretation of the family, however, the Church excludes itself from society. To avoid such a self-excommunication on the part of the Church, the theological understanding of the family needs to develop in way which enables it to see the pluralism of the present day as a source of richness: 'There must be moral recognition of any circumstances in which values such as friendship, reliability, loyalty, mutual support and responsibility can be put into practice.'⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Schelsky, Helmut, op. cit., 281.

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Schmalzl, Klaus, "Paare in Patchworkfamilien – Herausforderungen und Chancen", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 350–354.

⁵⁷⁰ Schockenhoff, Eberhard, "Liebe auf Abwegen? Zum Verhältnis von Sexualität und Liebe in intimen Beziehungen", in: *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 339–346, here: 346; Cf. idem, "Der Auftrag der Versöhnung", in: *SKZ*, No. 13 (2012), 230–237, here: 237.

It may be argued that the Church's clear-cut stance, which lacks majority support in society, is not an act of direct self-exclusion but one of disassociation. While it is true that the Gospel may be compatible with a culture, it is by no means correct to claim that it conforms to that culture. The New Testament, in particular, offers no evidence that any crucial significance attaches to safeguarding the institution of the family (as it was constituted at that time). So there is no need for the Church to cling anxiously to its model of the family, which has developed since the second half of the 19th century in Europe and enjoys almost normative status in the eyes of the Church. Since 1945, social relations (in Western Europe) have changed so radically that, perhaps for the first time in human history, everyone can choose their own marriage partner irrespective of any social restrictions. Marriage has lost its significance as a social or economic partnership of convenience. At the same time, the duration of a marital partnership has lengthened considerably thanks to medical progress and the resulting greater life expectancy.⁵⁷¹

The first thing that needs to be clarified in any consideration of the status and condition of the family in a multi-optional society is what is actually meant by the term 'family'. A useful aid when contemplating the diverse nature of the family today is an approximate sociological explanation which states that 'family' describes a long-term relationship based on partnership, marriage, civil union, descent or adoption. This makes it clear that, in this post-modern age, the semantic designation 'family' is very fuzzy. When confronted with the term, some people will think first of the traditional extended family, in other words a network of relationships involving persons who are related to each other but do not share their everyday life. Others will think of the middle-class nuclear family with a father, mother and children (living in the household), although the mere use of the terms 'father' and 'mother' indicates that the focus is on children in this concept of the family. Yet others will interpret starting a family to mean that they and their partner wish to have a binding relationship. The fact that half of all marriages now end in divorce leads to the formation of other kinds of family, such as patchwork families and single parents with their children. Rainbow families, too, offer security in a family setting. Pluralism, perhaps the outstanding feature of this secular or

⁵⁷¹ Cf. Klieber, Rupert, *op. cit.*, 672; Gerber, Christine, *loc. cit.*

multi-optional age,⁵⁷² is now an established feature of family life at the beginning of the 21st century. The picture is no less varied if we look at the different functions of the family in modern society. These range from the socialisation function to the economic function⁵⁷³ and the political function. In addition, sociologists point to a legal, a religious and a 'leisure and recreation' function of the family.

This pluralist family jumble is the result of a trend – particularly since the 1960s – towards greater individualism in society, of a shift in values, economic emancipation (primarily of women), a reappraisal of sexuality and marriage and the functional reorientation of the family along the lines of a hedonistic project (or as a major element in a project of individual hedonism, of which Paul Michael Zulehner writes: 'There is every likelihood of it failing – not as the result of any moral nastiness, but because of the remorseless search for the supreme joys of love in a short period of time.'⁵⁷⁴). Even though those who favour a more 'traditional' kind of family might find it hard to adjust to some of the family types which have emerged over the past fifty years, it would be wise not to dismiss them too hastily (or to glorify the traditional family form either). In both its earlier traditional form and its current pluralistic manifestations the family offers an environment in which people can enjoy immense happiness but also experience tremendous suffering, from which they find it hard to detach themselves. The aphorism coined by Karl Kraus whereby 'family bonds have a ring of truth about them' has a dramatic note in this context.

Given that the family is said to be in crisis, the question arises as to whether this might not present an opportunity – or in theological terms a *kairos* – since it is in a crisis, as opposed to a latent period, that a culturally productive force resides. However, if the family is allegedly in crisis, the first thing to clarify is whether the family as such, or perhaps merely a particular social form of marriage, is affected – a form which may be connected with a specific culture.⁵⁷⁵ The Church

⁵⁷² Cf. Taylor, Charles, *Ein säkulares Zeitalter*, Frankfurt a. M. 2012; Tiefensee, Eberhardt, "Auf dem Weg in eine universale Diaspora", in: *Lebendiges Zeugnis*, No. 57 (2002) 1, 44–58, here: 56.

⁵⁷³ Cf. Rosenberger, Michael, "Ehe als Freundschaft", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 65 (2014) 2, 116–120.

⁵⁷⁴ Zulehner, Paul Michael, op. cit., 132.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Augustin, George, "Religion im säkularen Zeitalter: Das Phänomen der Säkularisierung und der Dialog mit den Kulturen", in: Idem/Sailer-Pfister, Sonja/Vellguth, Klaus (eds.),

can face up to the diversity of family forms that now exist, acknowledge them and then (help to) influence them. An important first step down that road is to overcome taboos and begin an open dialogue on issues which have not so far been the subject of a transparent discussion. The imposition of taboos has led to mental congestion marked by uncertainties, cover-ups, emotional controversies, and immature and offensive attitudes.⁵⁷⁶

Relieving this mental congestion and rejecting outdated concepts of the family will alleviate the situation for the Church because, if it broadens its concept of the family, it can renounce a position which will become ever less tenable in a pluralistic society. If, on the other hand, the Church abides by its conviction that social institutions such as the family (in a specific social form) are, in terms of their formal expression, manifestations not determined by a particular age or culture but ordained and influenced by God, it will run the risk at some stage of being treated by the public 'with tolerance, equanimity and friendliness like an old person whose senile ramblings do not frighten anyone but rarely amuse them either.'⁵⁷⁷ To use a comparison from the world of sport, the Church would put itself offside by desperately holding on to a concept of the family which originates from a certain period in the past but is now coming apart at the seams. Or, to put it theologically, the Church would excommunicate itself from society if it were to adhere to outdated family concepts.

The challenge of pastoral care for marriage and the family

No matter how open-minded it might be with regard to different models of the family, the Church can still present a human partnership based on a long-term relationship of affection as an ideal. The public will listen to the Church if it puts greater emphasis on the positive concepts and realities of family life. This will enable it to integrate rather than to dissociate itself and make critical remarks which only

Christentum im Dialog: Perspektiven christlicher Identität in einer pluralen Gesellschaft (FS Risse), Freiburg 2014, 145–168, here: 166.

⁵⁷⁶ Faber, Eva-Maria, "Ein ernsthafter Prozess", in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 66 (2015) 5, 341–343, here: 343.

⁵⁷⁷ Große-Kracht, Hermann-Josef, "Selbstbewusste öffentliche Koexistenz: Überlegungen um Verhältnis von Religionen und Republik im Kontext moderner Gesellschaften", in: *Jahrbuch für christliche Sozialwissenschaften: Religionen im öffentlichen Raum: Perspektiven in Europa*, Münster 2003, 225–272, here: 228.

serve to polarise. In truth, there is much that is positive about the disintegration of outdated family concepts. Family models nowadays are varied and colourful – they pave the way to new freedoms. The bond between marriage and the family is in a process of irreversible dissolution. This has to do, amongst other things, with the fact that in the early 21st century sexuality need no longer be restricted to the protective institutional confines of marriage in order to provide social and economic security for a woman and her children.⁵⁷⁸ Hence it is all the more important for the Church to adopt a positive attitude to the numerous different family situations today, to accept them as a fact of life and to encourage people to opt in favour of a love-based, long-term family unit. This involves overcoming tendencies towards a one-sided fixation on Church statements relating to marriage and the family.⁵⁷⁹ At least as important as the development of theological guidelines on the family are recognition and support for men and women who have started a family in the belief that it will prove a success. Another challenge facing the Church is to develop a ‘spirituality of marriage’ (and not a ‘spirituality of marriage and the family’).⁵⁸⁰ This spirituality should not be ‘remotely devout’ but encompass the entire human existence, the whole human being with all his yearnings, needs, desire for acceptance, security and community, ideals, weaknesses and failures.

The *oikonomia* to which Walter Kasper referred implies that the Church should not concern itself primarily and exclusively (in a deficit-oriented way) with the approach that should be adopted to Christians whose marriage has failed. Rather it should focus its energies first and foremost on providing support for people in a framework of pastoral care so that marriage and the family prove resilient in both good times and bad and can be experienced as a source of happiness.⁵⁸¹ This

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. Hieke, Thomas, “Vom Gesetz zurück zum Kern des Ideals: Für einen menschlichen Umgang mit Ehe, Familie und Sexualität”, in: *Bibel und Kirche*, No. 70 (2015) 4, 225–228.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Bode, Franz-Josef, “‘Die Fixierung auf das Sexuelle überwinden’: Interview mit Franz-Josef Bode über die Familiensynode”, in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 69 (2015) 8, 402–405.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Knapp, Markus, “Die Ehe als christliche Lebensform: Überlegungen zur Ehespiritualität”, in: *Geist und Leben*, No. 83 (2010), 433–444.

⁵⁸¹ Cf. Brantzen, Hubertus, “Schlüssel an der tiefsten Stelle im Rhein: Zwölf Schwerpunkte gegenwärtiger Ehe- und Familienpastoral”, in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 123 (2014) 2, 27–31; Benkert, Robert, “Einen heiligen Raum betreten: Paarkommunikationstraining als Beitrag zur Ehepastoral”, in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 123 (2014) 2, 11–14;

would do justice to the fact that a marriage – within the meaning of a condensed consensus theory⁵⁸² – cannot be reduced to the moment of the wedding ceremony and treated as something static.⁵⁸³ Marriage preparation and marriage guidance courses must be devised to help Christians conduct a successful partnership. Communication environments must be set up within the Church where Christians can talk candidly about their very different experiences of marriage. Where in the Church are the publicly accepted courses for couples in which partners can learn how to talk to each other about what has (so far) been left unsaid and so kept secret? Only when the Church attracts attention to itself, not by condemning life forms, experiences and narratives but by offering up-to-date and helpful courses for married couples, will it do justice to its sacramental dimension – as a sign and an instrument which emphasises God’s unconditional benevolence.

The practical commitment of the Church to the (diverse forms of) family is the acid test for its affirmative declaration of belief in the family. It is not enough if family pastoral accompaniment only begins when a marriage or family is in crisis and threatens to contradict the Church ideal – a tendency discernible in the final report of the 2015 Synod of Bishops on ‘The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world’.⁵⁸⁴ The emphasis in Part III, Chapter III entitled ‘The Family and Pastoral Accompaniment’ is on families in difficult situations. While this is undoubtedly important, such considerations must be supplemented by highlighting ways in which the Church can make families resilient at an early stage, irrespective of any normative requirements, so that they are prepared

Schockenhoff, Eberhard, “Die Zukunft der Familie: Anthropologische Grundlagen und ethische Herausforderungen”, in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer, op. cit., 71–81; Bartsch, Martin, “Auf dem Weg zur kirchlichen Trauung: Die Chancen einer Ehevorbereitung in der Pastoral”, in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 123 (2014) 2, 15–18; Hilberath, Bernd Jochen, “Konfessionsverschieden oder konfessionsverbindend? Ökumenische Ehepastoral zwischen Zuspruch und Vorbehalt”, in: *Anzeiger für die Seelsorge*, No. 123 (2014) 10, 19–23; Wilbertz, Norbert, “Traumpaar, Märchenhochzeit und was dann? Bedingungen gelingender Paarbeziehung aus Sicht eines Eheberaters”, in: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, No. 65 (2014) 2, 96–101.

⁵⁸² Cf. Sattler, Dorothea, “Die Ehe: Theologische Anliegen in römisch-katholischer Perspektive”, in: *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift*, No. 163 (2015) 4, 347–351, here: 350.

⁵⁸³ Cf. Marx, Reinhard, “Entziehe dich nicht deinen Verwandten!”, in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 199–214, here: 203.

⁵⁸⁴ Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, *Die Berufung und Sendung der Familie in Kirche und Welt von heute*. Texte zur Bischofssynode 2015 und Dokumente der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bonn 2015, 69–86.

for, or spared, potentially difficult situations. While pastoral ministry to individual families needs strengthening, the Church must also publicly endorse various forms of family in which important social services are performed. This has to do with a fair distribution of the burdens society is obliged to shoulder. Families in their diverse forms carrying out inter-generational services, such as child-rearing and care for the elderly, must not be exposed as a result to the risk of poverty or left alone with the opportunity costs. On the contrary, they must experience the solidarity of society or receive compensation for the social duties they perform.⁵⁸⁵

Since the very beginning of the Church, the family has been a preferred environment for the transmission of the faith and is called upon to 'be a school of the faith and thus a house church in the true sense of the word'.⁵⁸⁶ With that in mind, the Church must decide first and foremost whether its main interest is to stick to a model of the family which arose at a certain period in time or whether its primary concern is to pass on the faith and to evangelise. If the family is the setting in which children develop a sense of basic trust, receive their initial exposure to religion, ask their first questions about the meaning of life and experience, and are unreservedly accepted as individuals, the issue at hand – given the changed facts of family life – cannot be to desperately try and exert monopoly control over a certain model of the family (and to excommunicate itself from other family constellations in the process).⁵⁸⁷

The challenge of a Universal Church Discourse on family issues

This article has looked at the challenges posed by social change, a Jesuanic approach to remarried divorcees, family pluralism, pastoral ministry for married couples and pastoral care for the family, all of which have been examined from a specific Western European perspective. When it comes to a universal Church discourse on such a crucial issue as that of successful models for long-term partnership – on the way to a life of fulfilment together – it is important to bear in mind that

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Nothelle-Wildfeuer, Ursula, "Familien gerecht werden im 21. Jahrhundert: Christlich-sozialethische Perspektiven", in: Augustin, George/Kirchdörfer, Rainer (eds.), op. cit., 114–129; Schockenhoff, Eberhard, op. cit., 79f.

⁵⁸⁶ Koch, Kurt, op. cit., here: 234.

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. Marx, Reinhard, op. cit., 211.

the mental responses to it depend in part on the individual concerned. If thought is given to the state of Christian families and the prospects and challenges they face, one's own biographical experience and, in particular, the development of one's own personality in the process of inculturation will inevitably exert a determining influence. In other words, statements on the issue of the family are always governed by a personal perspective, they are shaped by one's own cultural context and by the personal experience gathered in the course of life in a family. 'Family is never abstract, it is always practical. Every individual has his or her own specific personal experience in mind when conversation turns to the family',⁵⁸⁸ Reinhard Marx says. If, for example, you have grown up in a nuclear family whose members have treated each other with love and respect and it has proved possible over the years to maintain good personal relations, your approach to the issue of the family will be very different from that of someone who has experienced little security or perhaps strife, envy and hate, etc. in the family they grew up in.

On the other hand, statements about the family depend on the object, i.e. on what is really meant by the family in a specific cultural context. Each individual's understanding of the family is influenced by cultural, anthropological, religious and sociological factors. Statements about the family in a matrilineal context will differ from those in a patrilineal culture; remarks in a community-oriented setting will be different from those in a highly individualised society. This is because the semantic concept of the family describes a different fact in different contexts; it conjures up different associations as regards the object described, its identity-forming character and its community-building function.

All this demonstrates how difficult it is to structure a universal Church discourse on issues relating to the family as a model of long-term partnership.⁵⁸⁹ But that does not dispense with the need to face up to this polyphonic discourse, to formulate personal positions, accept otherness and benefit from what is unfamiliar. A special challenge consists in leaving scope for what is different, to open up

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Buch, Alois/Buch, Petra, "Weltkirche im synodalen Prozess. Beobachtungen und Notizen zur Familiensynode", in: *Forum Weltkirche*, No. 135 (2016) 2, 13–17.

spaces for it without denying one's own position and attitudes. There is also a need to develop processes within the universal Church debate which can provide clarification, amongst other things, of the extent to which the variety of family models of long-term coexistence can subsist alongside each other and how the Church can operate and foster different models in different contexts. The Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2014 and the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2015, both of which were devoted to family issues, made it clear that, at the outset of the third millennium, the focus should not be on sustaining Church uniformity but rather on accepting ecclesial polyphony in key questions of the Christian faith and human coexistence within the Church. In all likelihood regional approaches and responses will need to be developed which can coexist in a certain heterogeneity. In the age of globalisation it is probably advisable not to be too hasty in formulating canonical regulations on marriage and the family within the universal Church but rather to give regional bishops' conferences the scope to develop suitable solutions relating to canonical dispositions. In this respect it is encouraging that Pope Francis should have emphasised in the introduction to his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* that he is 'conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralisation'.^{590 591}

It is a challenge to let the polyphony of family realities ring out in a concert in which different instruments contribute to the overall sound. Moreover, numerous rehearsals are needed (in which there must be room for the wrong notes to be played) before any such polyphony can succeed. Above all, a considerable sense of rhythm is needed to orchestrate the different players involved in such a concert. The two family synods have made a promising start. The Church has discovered itself to be a sometimes heterogeneous family journeying together in the age of globalisation and learning how to be a new kind of Church – one which sees itself as the family of God and lives differently.

⁵⁹⁰ EG 16.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. Hilberath, Bernd Jochen, "Das Konzil verwirklichen! Papst Franziskus' ekklesiologische Agenda", in: *Diakonia*, No. 47 (2016) 2, 87–93.

The Siamese Triplets of Modern Times and the Challenge for Family Apostolate in Africa

Eunice Kamaara

As the most basic social unit, the family in Africa continues to have the most profound influence on individual persons. In the context of this paper, the family is the basic unit of evangelization, the basic church. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “The Christian family constitutes specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church” (n. 2204).

For the Catholic Church, the family is understood to be a vocation and a mission as well as a mystery ordained by God and modeled in the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Among the various apostolates within the church is the family apostolate, a ministry that works towards promotion and sanctification of family life with a vision of joyful, peaceful and holy married and family life (*Synod for the Family*, 2014). There are various groups within this ministry. In Kenya, for example, there is the Catholic Women Association, the Catholic Men Association, Young Christian Association, Marriage Encounter, and, Charismatic Renewal programmes, among others.

The family in Africa has been dynamic – adjusting to various social and cultural changes. Still, Christian family life finds significant meaning in this family. However, various threats are emerging making family apostolate challenging. In this paper, without being specific to any single family apostolate, we explicate some of these challenges by contrasting the values of the family in the indigenous African society with those of the modern family. Following this elucidation, we put a case for an urgent invigoration of family apostolate towards a joyous family in the future, and suggest the African indigenous values of communitarianism and interrelationships would be resourceful.

The family in Traditional Africa⁵⁹²

Clearly, Africa is not homogenous. In Kenya, for example, there are over forty-two ethnic groups, each with a distinct language, beliefs and practices. Some of these ethnicities have some subtribes with distinct dialects and practices. However, Africans share a common worldview and the values governing the diverse customs are the same. In this context, I make reference to the Kikuyu people of central Africa but, in actual fact, any other ethnic group may be used effectively.

Every ethnic group across Africa has well-developed, complex, and elaborate myths of origin including of the origin of the community and their social practices, where a myth is: "... a vehicle for conveying a certain fact or a certain basic truth about man's experiences in his encounter with the created order and with regard to man's relation to the supersensible world. It endeavors to probe and answer questions about origins and meanings and purposes. These answers are naturally clothed in stories which serve as means of keeping them in the memory as well as handing them down from generation to generation"⁵⁹³.

According to the Kikuyu myth of origin, God established the first Kikuyu family of Gikuyu and Mumbi and their nine⁵⁹⁴ daughters. The entire Kikuyu nation is believed to have descended from this family, with the nine daughters forming the nine clans of the nation. The indigenous Kikuyu family is an extended family where up to three or more generations live in many households within one homestead. Each household is made up of a nuclear family. So, within one homestead, there may be one or more households of grandparents, a household for each of the sons and their families of procreation, and a household for each of the grandsons and their families of procreation. Within each homestead therefore there will be people who are related to each other in different ways and at different levels: grandparents and grandchildren, parents and children; brothers and sisters; stepbrothers and stepsisters, co-wives and co-husbands;

⁵⁹² Throughout this section, I deliberately use the present tenses to show that indigenous families and the family values associated with these exist to date even as others have been eroded by modernity.

⁵⁹³ Idowu, Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, New York 1973, 84.

⁵⁹⁴ They were actually ten daughters but the Kikuyu consider it a bad omen to count children so they call them kenda muiyuru (full nine).

mothers and step-mothers; aunties and uncles; nephews and nieces; cousins, among others. Food is normally cooked and shared within households but there are no strict arrangements on this. Members of the homestead, especially children, eat in whichever household they find food ready or whichever household mealtime finds them in or nearby.

There are no single parents because there is no divorce and in case of death, the spouse of the deceased remarries soon after. There are no orphans as children belong to the community. If both parents die suddenly, the children are absorbed into another nuclear family within their homestead. There are no families without children – a barren woman would have another woman marry to sire children on her behalf and an impotent man does not exist because there are social systems in place to address this. If a man dies without having sired children, another man, usually his brother, would sire children on his behalf – more or less like the Old Testament levirate marriages.

Central to the African indigenous worldview, clearly demonstrated by the extended family, is communitarianism and therefore relationships. Hence, according to African spirituality, the ultimate purpose of life is relationships: relationships between the Creator and the created, between the individual and the self, between the individual person and other persons, and, between humans and the rest of creation. As designer, author, purpose, and destiny of the created, the Creator determines relationships between the Creator and the created, as well as relationships among the created. For traditional Africans, the will of God⁵⁹⁵ is expressed in nature and is easily understood by human persons who seek to understand this will in humility and truth. Unhealthy relationships lead to anti-life situations, while healthy relationships promote life. This worldview served the communities well and ensured that unity, justice, and peace prevailed within each of the autonomous nations, and rights of individual were respected in the context of community.

The ultimate destiny of life is God who ensures perpetuation of life through healthy relationships from one generation to another. God maintains the cycle of life as human persons and all other creation

⁵⁹⁵ Indigenous Africans believe in one God but they have different names and different attributes of the Deity depending on their natural environments.

transit from one stage in life to another. All creation is designed to work together in unity and rhythm: when healthy relationships flourish among all creation, life is promoted for all creation, and all creation rejoices together. When there are unhealthy relationships, life is threatened and all creation suffers together. Life is therefore understood as a unitary whole in which individual elements of creation are understood as interdependent, hence, the concept of ethical community: the community of God, humans, animals, plants and inanimate things. This is the *Utu* ethos, which recognizes human life as the highest value, and healthy relationships between God and creation and among creation, as the ultimate goal of life.

With this belief on origin, purpose and destiny of creation, it is not possible to live without religion, without faith. Religion is integrated into all aspects of life into a way of life. Consistent with this worldview the material cosmology has no place among African peoples and contrasts the materialistic cosmology with the religious cosmology which holds to the view that the universe has great meaning and purpose: African peoples interpret events in the world in the light of what meaning or purpose is carried by them.⁵⁹⁶

Against this background, communitarianism and relationships are marked by cooperation, division of labour along age and sex; distribution of resources according to need, institutionalized charity in order to care for the basic needs of all, and hospitality to strangers. This creates interconnections and interdependence that keep all joyful and peaceful. Therefore, in these interrelationships, as my mother would say: *weka wega, niwe weika* (when you do a good act, you do it to yourself).

The Family in Africa Today

In the foregoing, we write in the present tense to suggest that there are some Africans who still operate within the indigenous worldview. But many families in Africa have experienced immense social and cultural change to the extent that it is difficult to define the family in Africa today. More often than not, a nuclear family in Africa today is made up of a father, mother and children but it may also be a

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. for example: Ekeke, Emeka C., "African Traditional Religion: A Conceptual and Philosophical Analysis", in: *Lumina* (Vol. 22, No. 2).

child-headed household, street family, single parent family or homosexual families, or it may be characterized by “serial polygamy” or the phenomenon of mistresses otherwise known in Kenya as ‘*mpango wa kando*’⁵⁹⁷. Single parents, especially, are increasingly resulting from separation, divorce or merely choice of individuals. These emerging families are manifestations of a false sense of individual value and freedom. Generally, these changes are presented as manifestations of development in terms of growing democracy and respect for human rights but as Pope John Paul II observes:

At times it appears that concerted efforts are being made to present as ‘normal’ and attractive, and even to glamorize situations which are in fact ‘irregular.’ Indeed, they contradict the ‘truth and love’ which should inspire and guide relationships between men and women, thus causing tensions and divisions in families, with grave consequences, particularly for children. The moral conscience becomes darkened; what is true, good and beautiful is deformed; and freedom is replaced by what is actually enslavement.⁵⁹⁸

It may be argued that the modern family in Africa does not have standard value system due to moral relativism. But the family in Africa has certain values that almost everyone aspires to, works towards and commit themselves to. These values are the subject of this section.

As opposed to communitarianism and value for relationships, the family in Africa today is characterized by individualism where self-ishness reigns. In the context of the modern African family, good for the self is often interpreted as being opposed to good for the other so that cooperation is replaced with competition, the catch word in the current global village. The individual has an elevated sense of value of the self, value which is necessarily in competition and is opposed to value of the other irrespective of whether the other is a spouse, a parent, or a child. For example, many parents have no time for their children as they seek more and more material wealth for individual consumption.

⁵⁹⁷ This is Kiswahili which literally translates into ‘side arrangement’ in this case, a ‘side relationship’. A mistress is jokingly referred to as a side plate.

⁵⁹⁸ Office of the Germans episcopal conference (eds.), Letter to the families from John Paul II. from 2. February 1994, Bonn 1994, No. 5.

The departure from the extended family to single families, street families, children-headed families, and homosexual families is a clear manifestation of increasing individualism that Pope Francis decries:

The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: it is the culture of solidarity that does so, seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters.⁵⁹⁹

Coupled with individualism is materialism manifested in primitive accumulation and greed for material wealth to the point that parents fight their children and children fight their parents while brother fights brother and sister fights sister. Hardly does a day pass in Kenya without reports of murder of persons by their children, by spouses, and by siblings over competition for material wealth especially related to inheritance.

Another manifestation of materialism and individualism in Kenya is that public life is riddled with corruption as public officers seek to enrich themselves rather than serve the public. According to the Transparency International Perception index 2015, Kenya scored 27/100 and ranked 139/168. Interestingly, it would appear that this abuse of public positions to enrich oneself is now acceptable in Kenya: the term 'public servant' which was used to describe people working in public service has been replaced with 'public officer', a term that connotes power and authority rather than service. With endemic corruption, the gap between the rich and the poor increases with serious implications for peaceful and joyful living.

Intricately related to individualism and materialism is individual consumerism where each person rejoices as he consumes his overflowing cup while the neighbor's cup is empty.⁶⁰⁰ Sadly, many a religious leader have been caught up in the quagmire. According to Crystal Corman on corruption in Kenya:

As Kenya grows into a middle-income country, "prosperity gospel" is flourishing and brings hope to those seeking to climb out of

⁵⁹⁹ Speech from Pope Francis according to his visit at the poor district Varginha during the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro at the 25.7.2013, w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/speeches/2013/july/documents/pope-francesco_20130725_gmgcomunita-varginha.html (09.03.2017).

⁶⁰⁰ Scriptural distortion to 'normalize' materialism and individualism.

poverty. Someone I met joked that on Sundays, you can find the most expensive cars in Nairobi in church parking lots. They described church leaders proudly flaunting their material wealth as proof of God's blessing.⁶⁰¹

Suffice to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between individualism, materialism and consumerism where each feeds the other into a cyclic culture. The sum total of this culture is not mere lack of, but contempt for, faith. For example the catholic doctrine on preferential option for the poor is abused as charity becomes an opportunity to show off one's wealth and worse still, an avenue through which to access more material wealth for the individual. In Kenya, as in many countries in Africa, the period before national elections is characterized by public display of charity and generosity as individual persons and political parties seek to gather mileage towards election or re-election in order to access more and more material wealth for the individual. The increasing conjoined 'values' of individualism, materialism and consumerism do not merely imply that "the reference to God is greatly diminished and the faith is no longer shared socially" but that God is mocked as Christians increasingly create small gods within and for themselves. This is the challenge of the family apostolate in Africa.

Let's get social: Deepening faith against the Siamese Triplets of Underdevelopment

The global Catholic Church as well as local churches are clear about the three triplets of negative family development and a lot of weight seems to have been put on promoting family apostolate: There are many and varied public documents on the challenge of family apostolate including speeches, letters, homilies, commentaries and encyclicals. Any quick outline of some of the church documents from Pope John Paul's *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) to *Letter to Families* by Pope Francis (2014) illustrates this. For example, Pope John Paul identified the positive developments in family relations: i) more lively awareness of personal freedom and greater attention to the quality

⁶⁰¹ Corman, Crystal, *The Sin of Corruption in Kenyan Churches*, 01.12.2014, <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/the-sin-of-corruption-challenges-in-kenyan-churches> Cf. also <http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/kenyan-pastor-exposed-prayer-predator-popular-investigative-show/> (27.01.2016).

of interpersonal relationships in marriage, ii) promoting the dignity of women, and, iii) responsible procreation and education of children;⁶⁰² While in *Veritatis Splendor*⁶⁰³ he cautions against the dangers of individual freedom and materialism, in *Deus Carita Est*⁶⁰⁴ Pope Benedict XVI refers to God as love and points to the family as the place where love and life should flourish. The *Letter to Families* by Pope Francis is in a class of its own in addressing the triple-value -challenge of family apostolate today.⁶⁰⁵

Other recent significant documents include but are not limited to the 2014 Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: "Pastoral challenge to the family in the context of evangelization"; the XIV Ordinary Assembly of the Order of Bishops: Synod on the family (October 2015); and the World Meeting of Families Congress, 22-25 November 2015 in Philadelphia.

National conferences of churches have also addressed the subject of the family in the context of dynamic social and cultural changes. In Kenya, matters of family life are coordinated by the Family Life National Office whose goal is to promote responsible parenthood and is mandated by the bishops to handle all family related groups and associations and engage in various activities as part of the family apostolate. On 15 April, 2015 the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) sent a 37-page document to Vatican identifying challenges to the family in Kenya, all of which find root in the triplets of materialism, individualism, and consumerism (KCCB, 2015). Disintegration of African family values including conflict over family resources is overtly mentioned as one of the challenges.

But with all this attention, why are the family values that every Christian so passionately believes in, not translating into action? In our view, there is a lot of talking, teaching, preaching, and commenting on what ought to be but few are doing anything to walk the talk.

⁶⁰² Cf. John Paul II., Apostolical letter *Familiaris consortio* about the purpose of a Christian family in the today's word, ed. by the German episcopal conference, Bonn 1981, No. 6.

⁶⁰³ Cf. John Paul II., Encyclical *Veritatis splendor* about some fundamental questions to the Christian ethics, ed. by the German episcopal conference, Bonn 1993.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI., Encyclical *Deus caritas est* about the Christian love, ed. by the German episcopal conference, Bonn 2006.

⁶⁰⁵ Pope Francis, Letter to the families, 2 February 2014, w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/letters/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140202_lettera-alle-famiglie.pdf (14.02.2016).

Here we single out Pope Francis who has preached in both word and deed, a liberation gospel in favour of interrelationships and human dignity. A slogan coined on social media before his arrival at the World Meeting of Families Congress, 22-25 November 2015 in Philadelphia says it all: "The Pope is coming....Let us go social".

Conclusion

In this paper, we risk being accused of romanticizing the past by comparing the values of indigenous African family, interrelationships and communitarianism, with the values of the modern family in Africa, materialism, individualism and consumerism. This is a risk worth taking for it indicates that "another world is possible", a world where faith and practice are congruent.

We appreciate that the global Catholic Church as well as local African churches have given considerable attention to the subject of challenges of family apostolate. However, there is more to evangelization than talking; more than teaching in seminars and training in workshops. More than commentating in public print and electronic media; and more than preaching from the pulpit. Actions that address the challenges of family apostolate are not commensurate with the effort that has been put into words. Yet, we are not lacking in models of a better world. The indigenous African family affords us the practicability of non-materialistic communal world view and so does Pope Francis. The time to go social is now.

The Changing Face of the Filipino Family.

Some Socio-Cultural and Religious Challenges

Judette Gallares

The overwhelmingly fast pace of today's world has placed family life in a situation of great complexity. It appears as if family life is under siege from the many challenges and problems confronting it today.

The Church is well aware of the fissures happening in families today. In announcing the Pope's call for an Extraordinary Synod on the Family for 2014-2015, the Vatican secretariat stated: "It is right that the Church should move as a community in reflection and prayer, and that she takes common pastoral directions in relation to the most important points – such as the pastoral of the family – under the guidance of the Pope and the bishops."⁶⁰⁶

In Pope Francis' apostolic visit to the Philippines in January 2015, he acknowledged in his address to the Filipino families that –

The pressures on family life today are many. Here in the Philippines, countless families are still suffering from the effects of natural disasters. The economic situation has caused families to be separated by migration and the search for employment, and financial problems strain many households. While all too many people live in dire poverty, others are caught up in materialism and lifestyles, which are destructive of family life and the most basic demands of Christian morality...⁶⁰⁷

In this essay, I would like to reflect on the changes facing family life in Asia, and in particular, the Philippines. There are several questions that come to mind in writing this article: What is the traditional Filipino family? What are the changes that happen in the

⁶⁰⁶ From news.va, <http://www.news.va/en/news/francis-convenes-extraordinary-synod-on-the-family> (15.05.2015).

⁶⁰⁷ Address of Pope Francis, meeting with Filipino Families, Mall of Asia, 16.January 2015.

traditional Filipino families as a consequence of external migration and other factors? What are some of the socio-religious challenges facing the family as well as the migrant workers themselves? This essay may not be able to answer all these questions in great detail, but it hopes to generate a meaningful discussion and reflection in church and society that would lead to a more responsive ministry to individuals and families, as well as draw pastoral insights for the church's mission of evangelization.

The Traditional Filipino Family

The structure of Filipino families is similar to that of many other Asian cultures – closely knit and somewhat hierarchical. Filipino families are extended, composed of several generations and/or several degrees of blood relationships living under one roof or close by.

The extended family is considered the most important societal unit. Mothers make decisions concerning the home without having to confer with male family members. One child, usually a married or unmarried daughter, remains in the family home to care for aging parents or grandparents.

Traditionally, fathers are expected to work as breadwinners. Mothers may also work, but often remain at home to raise the children. Although there is an increase of Filipino women who opt to find their careers outside the home, or decide to work in order to find self-fulfillment or to help in the family's financial needs, it is still customary to many Filipino families to have mothers stay at home or be in charge of the home. Older siblings are expected to help take care of younger siblings, even help finance their education once they have found gainful employment. Grandparents or other women relatives who live in the home become the primary care givers for the children if both parents work.

Filipino parents tend to be very authoritative and over-protective of their children. They also tend to believe that harsh punishment and non-affirmation will instill discipline for their kids and keep them humble. Psychologists have theorized that these are major reasons why many Filipinos lack self-confidence in spite of their talents and capabilities. Traditionally like other Asians, the sense of "public

shame” is strong as it is seen to bring shame on the whole family, similar to the concept of “losing face” in China and Japan.

Being a predominantly Christian nation in Asia, a large majority of Filipinos are Roman Catholics. Their religiosity brings a sense of unity, commitment and warmth to the household. Family loyalty is a tradition that is characteristic of Filipino society. It is important to Filipinos to treat elders with respect and honor they deserve. The Filipinos pride themselves of such a tradition.

Many changes are inevitable. Massive poverty and life-threatening social-economic imbalances, as well as the limitless demand for cheap labor and cheap products in the world market, are fueling the migration movement, changing the landscape of the traditional Filipino family.

Migration and Changes in the Filipino Family

Any movement will always bring about change – whether positive or negative. A culture is greatly affected by such changes although at times they come slowly and largely unnoticed. The movement of people across cultures will inevitably change not just the culture but people themselves. This is the lens through which I will look at the changes in the Filipino Family.

Impetus for Migration

The reality of human migration has existed since ancient times. We know of stories of migration in the Bible – of Abraham whom God called out of his homeland; of Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land,⁶⁰⁸ of Elimelech and Naomi who, together with their sons, left Judah to escape famine; and of Ruth, a foreigner, who migrated to Judah to accompany Naomi, her mother-in-law, when she returned to her native Bethlehem. These are but a few of the many biblical stories, which demonstrate patterns of and impetus for human migration across time, history, and cultures. People will always be motivated to choose life, not death (cf. Deut 30:19b), taking risks for survival, security, progress, and love.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Java, Marilyn, “The Changing Face of the Filipino Family vis-a-vis the OFW Challenge”, (unpublished paper presented to the Catechetical Congress, organized by the Archdiocese of Manila Catechetical Office), 13.May 2014.

In Asia, the phenomenon of migration has a long and multifaceted history: Beginning with the nomadic tribes that wandered the vast expanse of the Asian continent in search of water and grazing lands, the trade caravans that travelled on the famed Silk Routes across vast stretches of Asia, and the invading armies that displaced peoples and communities from their ancestral lands, migration has always defined the Asian continent in every age. While nomadic tribes and trade caravans have come and gone, large-scale migration continues unabated in Asia.⁶⁰⁹

In the Philippines, there has been a tremendous growth of overseas labor migration for the past 40 years. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) estimates the increasing number of Filipinos overseas at almost 10.5 million worldwide, which is about 11% of the country's population of 95 million. Everyday, an average of 4,000 laborers, known as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), skilled and now increasingly unskilled, leave the country to find work in over 193 countries all over the world. OFWs make up one of the largest migrant laborer groups in the new global economy.⁶¹⁰ This is so, because employment abroad allows Philippine citizens to earn incomes far greater than would be possible in the Philippines and therefore enables them to sustain their families' welfare, at least for the immediate future.

However, due to growing competition, "Philippine workers are a temporary workforce ostensibly less able or willing to demand wage increases or better benefits over time. In short, the promise of the Philippine worker is not merely the promise of a worker of good quality, but ultimately one who is cheap."⁶¹¹

By the 1980s, the global labor needs shifted to other sectors, opening employment options for women migrants in sales, the health sector, and services – of which household workers were a large

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Tan, Jonathan, "Migration in Asia and Its Missiological Implications: Insights from the Migration Theology of the Federation of Asians Bishops' Conferences (FABC)", in: *Mission Studies*, No. 29 (2012), 46.

⁶¹⁰ Cruz, Mia, "Handing on the Faith from Near and Far: The Challenge of Migration and the Role of Popular Catholicism in Teaching the Faith Among Filipino Transnational Families" (paper presented to CTS Marriage & Family Section, Harper 3023 Creighton University, Omaha, NE.) as quoted by Java.

⁶¹¹ Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*, Minneapolis/London 2010.

component. After 1992, female migration climbed – mostly driven by the demand for child or elderly care workers in the developed Asian economies, such as Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, where the need for care workers is especially strong. Women now outnumber men in the annual outflow at an average of 55-60%. This has been called the “feminization of migration,”⁶¹² brought about by changes in the global labor market, where there is an increasing inability of men to find full-time employment in their own homeland or in destination countries, pushing their wives or daughters into the role of main breadwinner.

In addition to domestic work a significant number of Southeast Asian (and other) women have also been entering East Asian countries, especially Japan and Korea, in response to a great demand for sexual labor.⁶¹³ These women are being exposed to abuse and human trafficking.

The “notion of feminization” is linked to the issue of gender and the differences between male and female migrants’ experiences.”⁶¹⁴ A gender lens allows a redirection of focus on the individual and family level to consider the effect of migration on personal growth as well as on relational changes, and thus on the social and spiritual dimensions of the migration – development link.

This brings us to the discussion on the impact of migration, especially the “feminization of migration” on the family and on the women who have to leave their families and children in order to provide a “better future for them.” Research on Asian women migrants has well demonstrated that migrants are socialized to treat out-migration as “for the sake of the family.”⁶¹⁵ This is part of the “motherly” sacrifice these women bear so that their families may survive and enjoy a “better life.”

Inevitable Changes Impacting the Individual and the Family

First, there is the breaking up of the family, often for longer periods of time, with children growing up without father, mother, or

⁶¹² Cf. Java, Marilyn, *op. cit.*, 2.

⁶¹³ Piper, Nicola, “Feminisation of Migration and the Social Dimensions of Development: the Asian Case”, in: *Third World Quarterly*, No. 29 (2008) 7, 1287.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1291.

both. Manila Archbishop Cardinal Tagle, recently voiced his concern for the plight of Filipinos who, because of poverty, must go abroad to find work and earn enough to support their families back home; many couples separate not because of marital discord but because of love – a love that is willing to endure the pain of separation for the sake of the family.⁶¹⁶ Such marriages, he added, can fail because of love, not hatred.

Second, there is the changing familial structure and the emergence of “transnational households” or “transnational motherhood.” Based on many OFW’s experiences, as well as studies done by various disciplines, the impact on the family of mothers leaving is far greater than of fathers leaving families behind. Studies show that more disruptive impact of parental out-migration on children has been on the “absentee” mothers and not on “absentee” fathers. Women who have children left behind experience a phenomenon referred to as “transnational motherhood.”⁶¹⁷ Although the families are separated by distance, family relationships are maintained through the aid of communication technologies.⁶¹⁸

When it is the mother who migrates, living arrangements are more likely to undergo more rearrangements to fill the void in the caregiving responsibilities that are typically assumed by mothers. In comparison, when fathers work abroad, mothers continue providing care plus they take on additional roles, which were previously performed by the fathers.⁶¹⁹

It should be noted that in a “transnational family” structure, computer-mediated communication or information and communication technology (CMC or ICT) is used by absent migrant parents to maintain family relationships over great distances.

⁶¹⁶ Cardinal Tagle, Luis Antonio, Interview by Catholic News Service on the Synod on the Family, posted on 6.October 2014: <https://synodfamily.wordpress.com/2014/10/06/cns-video-cardinal-tagle-poor-families-need-synods-help/> (15.05.2015).

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Piper, Nicola, op. cit., 1289, citing: Hochschild, Arlie Russell, “Love and gold”, in: Ehrenreich, Barbara/Hochschild, Arlie Russell (eds.), *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, New York 2002, 3–17; Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, *DomeALstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*, Berkeley 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette/Avila, Ermetine, “I’m here, but I’m not there: the meaning of Latina transnational motherhood”, in: *Gender and Society*, No. 11 (1997) 5, 548–571.

⁶¹⁸ ICT: Use of skype, Viber, FaceTime and other social networking apps.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Piper, Nicola, op. cit., 1291.

Third, “reversed gender” roles occur. A wife migrating for work becomes the family’s breadwinner while her husband is supposed to attend to the children and household. Many marriages fail or marital conflicts happen when the stay-behind husband is not able to perform such role in the family. In many cases, fathers were found to be unable to take on the mothering role effectively. Some of them lose their sense of “masculinity” with the reversal of roles, especially if they experience long-term unemployment. Some turn to alcohol and sex to escape their sense of failure. Children become more vulnerable in such situations.

Even if the left-behind family can afford to have domestic help living with them, they are not the primary care givers. Other family members are recruited as replacement or support carers thus assuring migrants that their left-behind families especially children, will be in the hands of family and kin.⁶²⁰ The degree of involvement of other women in the extended family – grandmothers, aunts, and elder sisters – is an important determinant of the guidance that children can get.

Fourth, personal change inevitably happens to the migrant worker. The United Nations has noted that “although all migrants can be agents of change,” there is greater likelihood that migrant women (more than men) are more likely to have their personal development thwarted.⁶²¹ However, some research contests this and shows that women tend to view out-migration more as part of their personal development (by breaking out of social conventions and gaining more personal space and freedoms, as well as higher economic/social status) than men.

Fifth, there are changes in the family’s value system. When OFWs earn income higher than what they used to earn in their home country, there is a tendency to blow their income on unnecessary consumption, buying material things for their families either to compensate for their absence in the home or to show off to others an “image of prosperity.” What consists a “better life” is equated to the acquisition of more material things. If migrants are not psychologically and spiri-

⁶²⁰ Cf. Java, Marilyn, *op. cit.*, 3.

⁶²¹ Cf. United Nations, International Migration and Development, 2015, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/genderstatmanual/Print.aspx?Page=International-migration> (24.02.2017).

tually strong, they tend to deal with loneliness, anxiety, alienation, and homesickness through consumption, materialism, sex, and gambling. Other issues such as infidelity, losses, oppressive working conditions, delinquency and drug dependency of children, and social stigma are factors that impact the value system of the individual and family.

Undoubtedly, the five foregoing changes are not the only ones impacting the individual and family. But these are pervasive enough to challenge the church to respond to the pressing pastoral needs of families today.

Implications for Church and Mission

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) as a body has long been aware of the impact of migration in Asia. The body "asserts that migration cannot be separated from the complex interplay of social, economic, class, religious, and political factors that interact to displace people from their homelands. Its emerging theology of migration is rooted in its threefold theological vision of (i) commitment and service to life, (ii) triple dialogue with Asian cultures, religions and the poor, and (iii) with the aim of advancing the Reign of God in Asia."⁶²²

The Asian Church's concern over the fast-growing phenomenon of Asian migration is manifested in its documents over the years.⁶²³ One document concluded that –

There is a very urgent need to take seriously the implications of migration on marriage and family life. The social, spiritual and moral implications need urgent assessment by all.⁶²⁴

Thus, the Asian Church is called –

...to accompany the Migrant as a Human Person, following the example of Christ himself. This journeying of the Church together with the Migrant Worker is the sign of solidarity within the universal Church and a sharing in the common evangelizing

⁶²² Cf. Tan, Jonathan, op. cit., 45.

⁶²³ Franz-Josef Eilers edited a compilation of FABC documents that appear in volumes 2, 3, and 4, *For All The Peoples of Asia*. Quezon City 1997, 2002, 2007.

⁶²⁴ Cf. Tan, Jonathan, op. cit., 51. The author cites Eilers, Franz-Josef (1997) *For All The Peoples of Asia* (No. 2, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 2002–2006), Quezon City, 55.

mission entrusted to all the followers of Christ. Growing in faith as a local Church, made up of people of different nationalities is a new sign of unity.⁶²⁵

The Asian Bishops continue to express their grave concern over the pervading ruptures to healthy family bonds that are caused by extreme migratory patterns as families are broken up and children deprived of one or both their parents; and warned of the cultural dislocations and breakdown in family and communal ties between these migrants and their families and communities back home.⁶²⁶ The Bishops thus concluded – “migrant workers and their families urgently need great pastoral care from the churches of sending and receiving countries.”⁶²⁷

It is clear that: “For marriages that survived migration, regular communication and faith in God were cited factors that were helpful. Despite problems encountered, husbands and wives were able to recommit themselves to the marriage. In field research there were references to infidelity (even though rumored) as causing failure in marriage. According to those groups working with OFWs in the host countries, among the problems they attend to are relationships involving married OFWs. At times, these “for Taiwan only” or “for Korea only” relationships result in children and this complicates the situation especially if the parties involved are married.”⁶²⁸

Socio-Cultural and Religious Challenges

It is undeniable that the foregoing discussion has raised more confounding questions and concerns than clear answers. Nevertheless it has provided us with enough insights for pastoral considerations. How responsive to the noted changes are the pastoral care programs provided by churches of sending and receiving countries? How, as church, are we invited to move forward in our evangelizing mission?

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Eilers, Franz-Josef, *op. cit.*, 7, as cited by Tan, Jonathan, *op. cit.*, 51.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Data is taken from Country Migration Report – The Philippines 2013, http://www.smc.org.ph/index.php?comp=com_publication_details&id=50 (11.04.2014), as cited by Java, Marilyn, *op. cit.*, 8.

Evidently, there are many possibilities for ministry. Let me mention a few: in the service of accompaniment for the person of the migrant and for the left-behind family—offering psycho-spiritual accompaniment, values formation, marriage counseling, socio-cultural assistance to help deal with cross-cultural adjustments. Family life ministry in parishes can reach out to left-behind families, providing moral and spiritual support to them, and organizing family encounters especially when the migrant returns home after a long period of absence. Dioceses of migrant-receiving countries are invited to provide pastoral accompaniment especially to those who are facing loneliness, temptations, unjust work treatment and other difficulties. Churches, religious houses, and pastoral centers are challenged to offer comfort and hospitality to the migrant who feels lost or jobless. Governments and non-governmental organizations together with the Church in both sending and receiving countries are being challenged to collaborate and network with one another to prepare migrants and their families for the changes that will occur in their lives, offering them concrete skills, such as income management.

Filipino religiosity has served as a stabilizing factor in the changes facing Filipino migrants and their families. It has been observed that churches abroad are being filled up again by the OFWs or they religiously remind their children to pray and go to mass, even if these reminders are through letters, emails or text messages.⁶²⁹ Some even successfully catechize their employer's children in their care. Living the faith among themselves and handing on the faith to children, even from afar, is a very "Filipino" thing to do – an undeniable aspect of Filipino identity and culture.⁶³⁰ The church must therefore use this positive aspect of the Filipino culture by offering faith formation and catechetical training for migrant workers and missioning them as evangelizers in their new location.

Conclusion

We have seen that as the world is becoming more globalized, migration accelerates at a fast pace impacting individuals and families. The image of the family is bound to change from its traditional form

⁶²⁹ Cf. Java, Marilyn, *op. cit.*, 5.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, citing Cruz, Mia, *op. cit.*

to something still developing, such as the emerging transnational family structure. This article has focused primarily on the changes facing Filipino family and the socio-cultural and religious challenges confronting it. The church is called upon to provide not only pastoral directions for its family ministry but also to offer responsive and sustaining services to individuals and families to strengthen their faith, to help migrants adjust to new cultures, to stabilize their relationships within the family despite distances, and to call them to be evangelizers of the Good News wherever they are. Pope Francis continually reminds us “one cannot proclaim the gospel of Jesus without tangible witness of one’s life.”⁶³¹ The Good News is not only to be preached and taught but it is to be lived and given witness to in concrete day-to-day situations among people of many faiths and cultures.

⁶³¹ Pope Francis, Homily at St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, 14.April 2013: <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-st-pauls-homily-full-text> (9.06.2015).

Changes and Transformation for Mapuche Families and the New Challenges for the 21st Century

Ramón Francisco Curivil Paillavil

Summary⁶³²

The imposition of the “*reducción*” system on Mapuche families when the Chilean state occupied Mapuche lands unquestionably resulted in major changes to their political, economic and socio-cultural framework. In this contribution, I shall share a few reflections on the role these families played in preserving various elements of Mapuche culture within the “*reducción*”, bearing in mind that this was not a traditional family of the kind that had existed earlier or during the colonial period, but a new family model reflecting the dominant, allegedly “more civilised” society, and systematically enforced with the backing of the Chilean state by means of schooling and Christianisation. I shall conclude by outlining a number of challenges confronting these families in the 21st century.

How the occupation of Mapuche lands by the Chilean state transformed Mapuche families into peasants through the system of *reducciones*⁶³³

To understand the settlement process, we must bear in mind how traumatic this was for the families, because the occupation of

⁶³² The families in these new communities were chosen because between 2008 and 2010 I took part in a local history study in the northern area of the Commune of Saavedra, funded by Programa Orígenes and initiated by the leaders themselves. The nine communities are: Pehuenche Neculpan, Juan Huechuqueo, Chepe Tripainao, Juan Manuel Tripainao, Andrés Marileo, Huilcaman Carmona, Ignacio Millavil, Manuel Antivil and Juan Currin.

⁶³³ Now Chilean territory, for almost 70 years it was divided in two. Only from 1880 was this Mapuche land definitively incorporated into national territory in what was called the Pacification of Araucanía. In practice, it meant settling family groups in their own small reservation known as a “*reducción*”.

their lands by the Chilean state generated, among other things, a diaspora, in the sense of social mobility in search of a refuge. This certainly marked the beginning of that loss of social structure which these families recall as a time of poverty and misery.

In 1883 an Indigenous Settlement Commission was created, composed of a presiding lawyer and two engineers, whose basic objective was to settle Mapuche families within delimited reservations known as “*reducciones*”, thereby leaving the rest of the territory uninhabited for speedy colonisation.⁶³⁴

Under the Act of 4 December 1886, the Settlement Commission proceeded to stake out the terrain requested or claimed as already occupied by family groups, who were required to demonstrate that they had effectively held continuous possession for at least one year. Once these boundaries had been resolved and fixed, the commission recorded the proceedings in a ledger and issued the families with a Deed of Favour certifying their ownership.⁶³⁵ Innumerable problems arose with the granting of these deeds, most of them associated with abuses by the Settlement Commission.

The drama was that prior to the occupation of their territories, these people had owned huge expanses of land, and that the very people now obliged to request land for themselves and their families were actually the “owners” of that land. Besides, in general these people did not regard the *logko* as their head, and nor did the *logko* see himself in this role, but rather as a representative of the family group. Only later was he converted into a leader and expected to take charge of the family group and to hold the Deed Of Favour in its name.⁶³⁶ So now these families faced the challenge of reproducing aspects of their traditional model of social organisation within the framework of the *reducción*.

The list of family members attached to the Settlement Request provided information as to whether the person granted the Deed (*logko*) had more than one wife. In Mapuche culture, the option of

⁶³⁴ Cf. Bengoa, José, *Historia del Pueblo Mapuche*, Ediciones Sur 1995, 343.

⁶³⁵ José Aylwin in: Informe de la Comisión Verdad Histórica y Nuevo Trato Con los Pueblos Indígenas, [Report by the Commission for Historical Truth and New Treatment for the Indigenous Peoples], 362.

⁶³⁶ The *logko* who resisted the occupation of their lands were usually either deleted or not considered eligible.

having more than one wife had traditionally been the privilege of the *logko* and the *vimen*, but this custom had been on the decline under the influence of Western Christian society. The *vimen* were individuals with economic power who as a result found it easy to acquire political leadership and social influence in their communities.

As for the origin and recent provenance (*tuwvn*) of the family groups in the *reducción* community, almost all the families either have no memory of this at all or else their knowledge of where their ancestors originated are so vague that they usually simply say they come from the north bank of today's Imperial River. This tallies with the records, which clearly indicate how a wave of migration or a search for new land (*kintumapun*) coincided with what happened throughout the Mapuche territory after the occupation, i.e. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an era when chroniclers and missionaries note how the Mapuche population had been decimated, diminished and weakened.

The State, which deemed itself to be the owner of all lands not directly cultivated by the Mapuche, assigned terrain to the settlers. These, however, were dissatisfied with their relatively small, uncultivated properties, and so they set about enlarging them on their own behalf by occupying the cleared fields of the Araucanos. Unethical judges, shady lawyers and a police force that was utterly corrupt at that time assisted them in their dubious manoeuvres. Nobody stopped them from achieving their aims as they resorted to arson, murder and blackmail, not to mention the land they appropriated by pure deceit, exploiting the ignorance of the natives who could neither read nor write.⁶³⁷

In this way, by settling the families within a well-defined space, the Mapuche clans were transformed definitively into peasantry, meaning that they were obliged to work the land for a living and hence to operate within a subsistence economy.

Life in the *reducción* as an opportunity to foster the traditional community and strengthen its cultural features

The families confined to the *reducción* recall that era as a time of suffering, hunger and misery, but it was also a period which allowed

⁶³⁷ Noggler, Albert, *Cuatrocientos años de misión entre los Araucanos*, San Francisco 1983, 156.

them to reproduce various aspects of Mapuche culture and ensure a degree of continuity. In this sense, let us remember that any culture is fundamentally a value system, a belief system, a philosophy, a vision of the world – in short, a lifestyle designed to procure a good existence (*kvme mogen*) in company and solidarity with others, with those relatives who constitute the community. At the same time, every culture is learned and transmitted, and in every society there are individuals and institutions who play an important role in this process of learning about life. Among these institutions, the family unquestionably plays a fundamental part, drawing on its authority, space and hubs to teach or socialise a lifestyle with cultural values such as respect (*yamuwvn*), solidarity (*keyuwvn*), and the spirit of family, fraternity (*peñiluwvn*) and community.

The lifestyle of that period is remembered by all the families as *kuifi mogen*. These values were principally reinforced through various aspects of work for the community (*keyuwvn kvzau*), such as tilling the earth, sowing, harvesting and threshing, and cultural and religious activities such as *poyeu-un*, *los xaun*, *palin*, *we xipantu*, *gijatun* and others.

The *poyeu-un* is a social dynamic that encourages the formation and strengthening of affective bonds with family and friends, taking advantage of any community event, in particular during the period of *We Xipantu*, the Initiation of a New Cycle, and expressing this through specific actions, such as carrying a gift (*yewvn*) consisting of a valuable object, which may even be something associated with food.

When the families remember their community labours “*keyuwvn kvzau o mingako*”, they say: “... we used to be poorer but more united, we all helped each other”, and this means that work always had a festive air. In this context, they recall that even white settlers sometimes participated in this system of labour, indicating that Chilean peasants living as neighbours or within Mapuche communities in the area underwent a degree of Mapuchisation. The families recall a certain Jorge Aranedo, a master blacksmith, a man held in great esteem throughout the district who made and repaired all manner of tools, such as hoes, ploughs and harrows. Whenever he organised a *mingako* for the sowing of wheat, he would visit the homes of all his neighbours, tying a knot in a rope (*pvrón fvu*) every time somebody

promised to accept his invitation. This approach to the work in the fields is currently undergoing a deep crisis, for today's way of life is characterised by an individualism inherent in modern Western society, where everyone looks out for themselves and community labours have been displaced by technology, like tractors and combine harvesters. The present lifestyle does not treat work like an event or a festival, but as a way to earn a daily livelihood. Everyone works for a living and nobody helps with disinterest.

The acquisition of goods through barter (*xafkintun*) quickly gave way to the money culture as a way of participating in the market for goods and services. Heads of family came under pressure to try different ways of obtaining money, such as by pawning a valuable item – tools, linen, blankets, silverware – in order to purchase bare necessities (*fij wecakelu*) to survive. There was even a system for “guarding children”, who would be placed with a family and watched over outdoors like herds, and at the end of the year these guardians might be given a small animal, depending on the agreement with the family. These practices to obtain money finally saw the rise of “selling grasses”, mainly seeds of wheat and oats. This was a widespread practice among families in the district which enabled them to deal with the lean periods (*fija*) that tended to occur from June onwards.

The shortage of food ended when the harvesting began. The work of gathering in the fruits of the field was traditionally festive. There are recollections that the wheat was threshed barefoot, and that the community would cluster in groups who danced as they trod the sheaves until these had yielded all their grains. This threshing technique was simultaneously an opportunity for new couples to form. The families also remember threshing with horses as a distinctly festive event. In the same way, when the first threshing machine arrived, with a steam engine that had to be drawn by at least ten yokes of oxen, it was a family occasion that brought out the entire *reducción*. It was later replaced by a tractor-drawn threshing machine, and nowadays almost all the families harvest their wheat with a self-propelled machine.

In any culture, festivals are an important part of life. Mapuche culture is eminently festive, and apart from community labours there is another dimension to this festivity, which is expressed in rites. The rites that usually bring together family groups have an

educational significance, being spaces to learn the culture, and to build or reinforce social relationships on the basis of reciprocity. At community and intercommunity level, the most significant of these are still upheld, such as *palin* (a game similar to hockey), *gijatun* (a religious ceremony) and the celebration of *We xipantu*. Other rites have been replaced by the godparenting system common in popular Catholicism or by mainstream customs such as giving Christmas and birthday presents.

The social institutions that plunged a lifestyle into crisis and encouraged major elements of family culture to be abandoned in the *reducción*

The process of settling these family groups was accompanied by an Indigenous Policy on the part of the Chilean state. As I have mentioned, this was designed to make peasants and Chileans of the Mapuche people, and sociocultural agents like missionaries and schoolteachers played a decisive role in this state-led project.

The Catholic missionaries, for example, not only spread Christianity, but also pursued socialisation, applying a homogenous social model in terms of language and culture, putting pressure on members of families to accept Catholic Christianity, abandon a lifestyle regarded as “barbarian” and adopt instead the more “human, civilised” lifestyle founded on the model of Western Christianity. The pressure exercised by these missionaries resulted not only in the abandonment of religious traditions, but in a break with tradition which frequently led people to cast aside, if not despise, their own culture. Parallel to this, schoolteachers not only applied pressure and physical and psychological violence to Mapuche students, but also conveyed an image of the Mapuche as “inferior and savage”, suggesting that this way of life was doomed to disappear and make way for a superior civilisation and culture. In most cases it was also forbidden to speak *mapuzugun* (the Mapuche language) in educational establishments, and any disobedience was vehemently punished.

The activities of these missionaries and schoolteachers provoked an impact within the families whose consequences are obvious: we have become Chileans and Christians (*awigkados*). We have indeed become civilised, but “we are less Mapuche”.

These two social institutions have now displaced families, the elders (*fvcakece*) and the traditional authorities in raising new generations and in passing on our culture in general, and the most tragic thing about it is that the families no longer feel they have anything to offer. When we asked whether Mapuche culture was taught in school and church, practically everyone we interviewed said no. In one community, a representative even stated explicitly that "in the secondary schools the culture is an outcast".

The memories of family members aged 40 or over with regard to their school life are a mixture of nostalgia and resentment about the humiliations they experienced, whether at the hands of a teacher or at the hands of Chilean classmates discriminating against them.

More recently, apart from the missionaries and schoolteachers, growing influence has been wielded by the new generations of media which made their definitive entry into households from the sixties onwards, and as a result the family/community increasingly lost ground as a force for socialisation and as a vehicle for a lifestyle.

As far as the media are concerned, I personally remember that when the World Cup was held in Chile in 1962 the only radio in my community of origin belonged to my parents, so that during the matches almost the entire community was in our patio, which created a very special atmosphere. Likewise, from the seventies it was my parents who owned the first battery-run television, and it was quite a spectacle to see how the members of the community turned up to watch a football match or the Wine Festival, and how the women got together to watch a soap opera. The fact is that these moments sparked a family encounter, and it also meant that at least once a week someone had to travel to Nueva Imperial, a town about 20 kilometres from my house, to charge a battery, because there was no electricity in the peasant neighbourhoods.

Of course, over time, both radio and television were of growing importance in imparting a lifestyle that reflected the interests of the market and the globalisation we are now witnessing all over the world, and if to this we add the influence of the missionaries and schoolteachers, we see that conditions for families and communities pose serious challenges for continuing an alternative lifestyle to the individualistic, Christian, Western, neoliberal model.

Conclusions and challenges

I described above how, following the occupation of the Mapuche lands by the Chilean state, families were confined to a territorial unit known as a *reducción*, and that in these places all the families and groups of families clustered into a community were obliged to alter their lifestyle in a process which transformed them into peasants and Chileans.

Despite this situation, the families managed to reproduce and uphold a *kvme mogen*, i.e. their own way of living with a strong spirit of community and solidarity. This was possible despite the pressure put on them by missionaries and schoolteachers not only to abandon their own lifestyle but also to adopt a new family model. More recently, the media have exerted a growing influence among families and younger generations, establishing a firm hold in homes from the sixties, so that the family/community increasingly lost ground and came adrift from its distinctive lifestyle.

Given that today's new generations, while undergoing education, spend much of their time in schools and are at the same time permanently bombarded by the media with new ideas and values derived from an individualistic consumer society, one of the key challenges for families is about recovering and strengthening their authority in the home and thereby responsibly assuming their educational role by imparting values and a lifestyle in close harmony with nature.

In formal education, in the Region of Araucanía, practically all rural secondary schools now teach *mapuzugun*, and to mark certain occasions educational establishments organise activities of a cultural nature, although these quite easily descend into folklore spectacles. There have even been examples of establishments being permitted by the Ministry of Education to set up an educational project with its own curriculum.⁶³⁸ The serious problem in this context is that the families are not fully involved, and so the second challenge is to enable them to play a more active role in teaching the new generations *mapuzugun* and encouraging them to use it.

⁶³⁸ Although there are two sides to this, because while it is a government initiative that facilitates assimilation policies and colonialist integration, the positive feature is that it is restoring prestige to a language clearly in decline.

As regards the media, there are a few intercultural and bilingual radio programmes, both in the Metropolitan Region⁶³⁹ and in Araucanía or Mapuche territory. There is also some audiovisual experience: for instance, a half-hour weekly television programme⁶⁴⁰ on the local channel in Saavedra. In my view, all these initiatives give us hope that we will be able to maintain and reinforce a value-based lifestyle which Mapuche families made such an effort to sustain in the not so distant past.

Traditionally, women have a greater responsibility for raising new generations in Mapuche families, given that they devote much of their time to domestic chores, and in this spirit it is encouraging to note that most of these structures in the district are led by women.⁶⁴¹

Finally, I think it is important to mention that within Mapuche families and communities a new generation of young *machi* (shamans) is emerging, and here again the majority are women, a factor which not only ensures that cultural and religious traditions will be upheld, but also mobilises large sections of Mapuche families, regardless of the fact that many of them do not have strictly religious reasons for participating.

⁶³⁹ From 1993 until 2004, some of us Mapuche professionals ran an intercultural, bilingual radio programme in Santiago supported and funded by the Society of the Divine Word. The programme is called “Wixage anai”. It still exists and is now being run by other Mapuche professionals living in Santiago.

⁶⁴⁰ This television programme entitled “Lafken tañi zugu – la voz del mar” [The Voice of the Sea] is supported by Justice and Peace (JUPIC – Araucanía), an interfaith group which has the backing in Chile, in particular in the Region of Araucanía, of the Society of the Divine Word.

⁶⁴¹ While it is positive that most of the leaders are women, it should be noted that these organisations tend to be initiated by government institutions and to reinforce traditional authorities.

Appendix

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