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**Przygotowanie do małżeństwa oraz towarzyszenie młodym małżonkom
poprzez budzenie wiary potrzebą chwili**

Na kanwie przemówienia Franciszka do Roty Rzymskiej z 21 stycznia 2017 roku

**Preparation for marriage and accompanying young spouses by awakening faith – the need
of the hour**

On the basis on the speech of Pope Francis to Roman Rota of 21 January 2017

It seems to be a truism to say that concluding a canonical marriage requires appropriate preparation. This is, after all, a perfectly understandable matter, given that the community of the whole life of a man and a woman, which by its very nature is directed towards the good of the spouses and the birth and upbringing of offspring, raised by Christ among the baptised to the dignity of the sacrament, is exclusive and indissoluble¹. In particular, this second essential attribute of marriage requires nupturients to reflect more deeply, not to mention the need for them to become aware of the very essence of their relationship.

No wonder that the ecclesiastical legislature obliges pastors to ensure that their own ecclesial community provides assistance to the faithful, so that the marital status is preserved in the Christian spirit and proceed in perfection (can. 1063 *in principio* of the CIC). This help should be reflected in preaching, a catechesis adapted to adolescents, young people and adults, using social media, so that the faithful are instructed about the importance of Christian marriage and the tasks of Christian spouses and parents (can. 1063, n. 1 of the CIC), as well as in personal preparation for marriage, through which the bride and groom should be given access to the holiness of their new condition and duties (can. 1063, n. 2 of the CIC). The assistance of the Church community should also include the spouses themselves, so that,

¹ Cf. can.1055 § 1 and 1056 of the CIC.

faithfully preserving and defending the marriage covenant, they strive to lead an increasingly holy and full life in the family (can. 1063, n. 4 of the CIC).

In the era of secularization, in which faith is increasingly being rejected, the institution of marriage is being depreciated and a pro-divorce mentality is being cultivated, preparation for marriage seems to be the need of the moment. This was expressed, among others, by Pope Francis in his speech to the Roman Rota of 21 January 2017². He delivered it in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace during the ceremonial inauguration of the new judicial year, receiving the judges and other staff of the aforementioned Apostolic Court and its collaborators in the audience. This was the fourth such meeting between Francis and those who carry out a major task in the area of ecclesiastical justice at such a high level on a daily basis.

1. Arousing and reviving faith is a significant factor in preparing for marriage

After greeting all those present, above all the rotal auditors with the Dean and the recently appointed Vice Dean of Rota at the head, and after expressing his wish that the Tribunal should continue its work in peace and with fervent love for the Church, Pope Francis, as he himself pointed out, returned to the subject of the relationship between faith and marriage, which had already been raised earlier³, concerning, in particular, the perspectives of faith in the human and cultural context in which the intention to marry is formed.

Pope John Paul II, as his successor noted, well highlighted - based on the teaching of Sacred Scripture - „how deep is the bond between the knowledge of faith and rational knowledge [...]. The distinguishing feature of the Bible text is the conviction that there is a deep and inextricable unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith”⁴. Therefore, when one moves further away from the perspective of faith, one is all the more likely to „fail and eventually find himself in the situation of a „fool”. According to the Bible, this kind of foolishness carries with it a threat to life. The fool is under the illusion that he has extensive knowledge, but in reality he is unable to focus attention on the essential things. It does not allow him to bring order to his own mind” (cf. Prov. 1:7), nor does it allow him to

² Cf. FRANCESCO, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (21.01.2017), <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/oi/speeches/2017/januarii/21> (access: 05.02.2017).

³ Cf. FRANCESCO, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (22.01.2016), „L'Osservatore Romano” of 23.01.2016, p. 8.

⁴ JAN PAWEŁ II, *Encyklika „Fides et ratio” Ojca świętego Jana Pawła II do biskupów Kościoła katolickiego o relacjach między wiarą a rozumem*, Watykan 2016, p. 28-29, n. 16.

take the right attitude towards himself and his immediate surroundings. When he finally goes on to say that „there is no God” (cf. Ps 14 [13]:1), he reveals with total clarity how little his knowledge is and how far he is from the full truth about things, about their origin and destiny”⁵.

Francis continues that Pope Benedict XVI, for his part, in his last speech to the Roman Rota (26 January 2013), recalled that „it is only by opening up to God [...] possible to understand and realize -in the concrete conditions of married and family life- the truth about man as His son, reborn in baptism [...]. The rejection of God's proposal leads, as a result, to a profound imbalance in all human relationships [...], including marriage”⁶. It is essential to deepen the relationship between *love* and *truth* [underlined in the text - W. G.]. „Love, the speaker stresses, referring to his *Lumen fidei* encyclical, needs the truth. Only when it is based on truth can love last in time, overcome a short episode and remain constant on the common path. If love has no reference to truth, it is subject to a change of feelings and does not stand the test of time. But true love connects all elements of our person and becomes a new light towards a great and full life. Without truth, love cannot offer an enduring knot, cannot move its „I” above its own isolation, nor can it free that „I” from the fleeting moment to build life and bear fruit”⁷.

We cannot hide the fact that a widespread mentality, as the Holy Father states, aims to obscure access to eternal truths. It is a mentality that engages, often in a broad and subtle way, the positions and attitudes of Christians themselves⁸, whose faith is weakened and loses its own originality as a criterion of interpretation and effectiveness for personal, family and social existence. Such a context, devoid of religious values and faith, cannot fail to condition consent to marriage either. The experience of faith of those who want a Christian marriage is very different. Some are actively participating in the life of the parish, others are approaching it for the first time, others are again leading a life of even intense prayer; and there are those who are guided by a more general religious sentiment, there are also people who are far from faith or those who lack faith.

In view of such a situation, the Pope states, effective measures must be found. As the first measure, he indicates the formation of young people through preparation for the discovery of marriage and family according to God's plan. It is a matter of supporting future spouses to accept grace and „taste” it, and also to accept the beauty and joy of true love,

⁵ Cf. IBID., p. 32, n. 17.

⁶ BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (26.01.2013), AAS 105 (2013), p. 168, n. 2.

⁷ FRANCISCUS, *Litterae encyclicae „Lumen fidei”* (29.06.2013), AAS 105 (2013), p. 565, n. 27.

⁸ Cf. FRANCISCUS, *Adhortatio apostolica „Evangelii gaudium”* (24.11.2013), AAS 105 (2013), p. 1050, n. 64.

preserved and redeemed by Jesus. The Christian community to which they turn for marriage is called upon to proclaim the Gospel warmly to these people so that their experience of love may become a sacrament, an effective sign of salvation. Under these circumstances, Jesus' redemptive mission reaches out to man and woman in the concrete situation of their lives and love. This moment becomes an extraordinary opportunity for the whole community to carry out the mission. Today, more than ever, this preparation appears to be a real and personal opportunity to evangelise adults, often the so-called remote ones. For there are many young people for whom the proximity of the wedding is an opportunity to „meet” anew the faith that has long been „sent to the margins of their lives”. They are, moreover, at a special moment, often characterised by their disposition to revise and change the direction of their lives. It may, therefore, be a time conducive to the renewal of one's own encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, with the message of the Gospel and with the teachings of the Church.

It is necessary, Francis continues, however, that the organisers and organisms called to the family ministry should be animated by a strong concern to always make more effective ways of preparing for the sacrament of marriage, for the growth not only of people, but above all of the faith of the fiancés. The basic aim of these meetings is to support the latter in making a gradual incorporation into the mystery of Christ, as well as into the Church and with the Church. This brings with it a progressive maturation in faith, through the proclamation of God's word, as well as accession to and noble following of Christ. The aim of this preparation, therefore, is to help brides and grooms to know and experience the reality of the marriage they intend to enter into, so that they can make it not only important and decent, but also fruitful, and so that they have the means to make this celebration a step along their path of faith. To achieve this, we need people with special competence and who are properly prepared for this ministry, in appropriate cooperation between priests and bridal couples.

Then Pope Francis confesses that it is in this spirit that he feels the need to consider the necessity of a „new catechumenate” in preparation for marriage. Bearing in mind the suggestions made by the fathers of the last Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops⁹, he

⁹ The „Final Report” of the 14th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops pointed out the need for „formation courses that support both the person and the couple in such a way that the transmission of the content of the faith is combined with the experience of life given by the entire ecclesial community. The effectiveness of this assistance also requires that pre-marital catechesis - sometimes poor in content - which is an integral part of ordinary pastoral care be improved [...]. The three stages indicated by the *Familiaris consortio* (cf. n. 66) must be carefully considered: further preparation, carried out by transmitting the faith and Christian values within one's own family; closer preparation, which coincides with the catechesis programmes and the formative experiences experienced in the ecclesial community; direct preparation for marriage, as part of a wider process which is guided by the vocation [to marriage]”. It was also stressed that it is necessary to counteract - in premarital formation - the promotion of patterns contrary to the Christian and even human vision of the family, among other things by creating authentic and appropriate „pastoral support programmes”, aimed at both

considers as urgent the concrete implementation of that what has already been put forward in n. 66 of the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* of Pope John Paul II¹⁰, who notes that just as preparation of adults for baptism is part of the sacramental process, preparation for marriage should become an integral part of the whole sacramental procedure of marriage, as an *antidote* that prevents the proliferation of invalid or impermanent marriages¹¹.

2. Supporting young spouses through faith

Arousing and deepening faith is fundamental, not only in the process of preparing for marriage, but also in relation to those who have already married. According to Francis, supporting young spouses through faith is the second remedy to prevent invalid or impermanent marriages¹². He considers it necessary to undertake, with courage and creativity, a project for the formation of young spouses, with an initiative aimed at raising awareness of the sacrament. It is about giving them the courage to reflect on various aspects of their daily life, which is a sign and instrument of the love of God incarnated in human history.

The Holy Father here uses two eloquent examples. First of all, he notes, the love that the new family lives, has its roots and its ultimate source in the Mystery of the Holy Trinity, so that the family carries this sign despite the hardships and shortcomings that it has to face in

individuals and couples, with particular attention to adolescence and growth, in which it is necessary to help discover the beauty of sexuality in love. It has also been pointed out that there is a need to „broaden the themes of formation in pre-marriage courses so that they become a way of education to faith and love, integrated into the process of Christian initiation”. Finally, it was proposed that „the courses of preparation for marriage should also be conducted by married couples, so that they can accompany their fiancé before marriage and during the first years of their married life”. SYNOD BISKUPÓW. XIV ZWYCZAJNE ZGROMADZENIE OGÓLNE, *Relacja końcowa Synodu Biskupów dla Ojca świętego Franciszka (24 października 2015)*, in: *Powołanie i misja rodziny w Kościele i świecie współczesnym. Dokumenty i komentarz. XIV Zgromadzenie Zwyczajne Synodu Biskupów*, Kraków 2016, p. 83-85, n. 57-58.

¹⁰ On this basis [of further preparation - W.G.] a *closer preparation* [underlined in the text - W.G.] with a much broader extend, which - starting from the appropriate age and with the appropriate catechesis, as if a *catechumenate* [underlined - W. G.] - is a more specific preparation for the sacraments, as if to rediscover them. As far as direct preparation is concerned, John Paul II states that „the scope of the content of what is on this, *analogous to the catechumenate* [cf. - W.G.], path of faith to be conveyed, should be also a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church, of the meaning of grace and the responsibility of Christian marriage, as well as preparation for active and conscious participation in the liturgical rite of marriage”. JAN PAWEŁ II, *Adhortacja apostołska „Familiaris consortio” Ojca świętego Jana Pawła II do biskupów, kapłanów i wiernych całego Kościoła katolickiego o zadaniach rodziny chrześcijańskiej w świecie współczesnym*, Częstochowa 1982, p. 118-120, n. 66.

¹¹ „In questo spirito, mi sento di ribadire la necessità di un «nuovo catechumenato» in preparazione al matrimonio. Accogliendo gli auspici dei Padri dell’ultimo Sinodo Ordinario, è urgente attuare concretamente quanto già proposto in *Familiaris consortio* (n. 66), che cioè, come per il battesimo degli adulti il catechumenato è parte del processo sacramentale, così anche la preparazione al matrimonio diventi parte integrante di tutta la procedura sacramentale del matrimonio, come antidoto che impedisca il moltiplicarsi di celebrazioni matrimoniali nulle o inconsistenti”. FRANCESCO, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (21. 01. 2017) ..., op. cit., p. 2-3.

¹² „Un secondo rimedio di aiutare i nevelli sposi a prosequire il cammino nella fede e nella Chiesa anche dopo la celebrazione del matrimonio”. IBID, p. 3.

its own everyday life. As a second example, it points out that the love story of a Christian married couple forms part of the holy history because they are inhabited by God and because God never waives the commitment he made with the spouses on the day of marriage; for he is „a faithful God and cannot deny himself”. (2 Tim 2:13).

The Christian community, continues the Pope, is called upon to welcome, accompany and support young couples by offering them opportunities and appropriate tools, starting with participation in Sunday Mass, to care for the spiritual life both within the family life and in the pastoral programme in the parish or in associations. Often the young spouses are left to their own, if only because of the simple fact that they are not seen in the parish; this happens above all with the birth of children. But it is precisely in these first moments of family life that greater closeness and strong support must be guaranteed, including in the work of bringing up children, in relation to whom they are the first witnesses of the gift of faith.

On the path of human and spiritual growth of the young bride and groom, the speaker states, it is desirable that there should be suitable groups in which the path of ongoing formation could be taken: by listening to the Word of God, by addressing themes that concern family life, prayer and fraternal sharing¹³.

3. Conclusion of the papal speech

At the end of his allocution, Francis states that the two remedies he has indicated are intended to provide an appropriate context for believing in the celebration and experience of marriage. Such an important aspect for the permanence and truth of the sacrament of marriage requires that pastors are always more aware of the delicate task that is entrusted to them in the care of the matrimonial path of the future spouses, and that they make the link between *covenant* and *faith* clearer and more real [underlined in the text of W. G.]. It is a question of moving from a purely legal vision of the formal preparation of future spouses to a sacramental reality *from the beginning* [underlined in the text - W. G.], that is, from the path towards the fullness of their *covenant-content* elevated by Christ to the rank of sacrament. This will require, the Holy Father adds, the noble contribution of Christian adults, men and women, who gather together at the side of the priest in the family ministry to build up „a masterpiece

¹³ IBID.

of society”, that is, „a family: a man and a woman who love each other”¹⁴ according to the „illuminating plan of God”¹⁵.

Francis then expresses the wish that the Holy Spirit, who always directs the Holy People of God in everything, should assist and sustain all priests and lay believers who engage and will engage in this field, so that they never lose the zeal and courage to strive for the beauty of Christian families, despite the stormy ambush of the prevailing culture of what is momentary and temporary.

Finally, the Argentine Pope recalls that he has already said many times that it takes a great deal of courage to get married in the times we live in. And those who have the strength and the joy of taking this important step should feel the sensitivity and concrete closeness of the Church side by side.

Wishing the rotal judges and their collaborators good work in the new judicial year, as well as the assurance of prayer and request for it and the words of papal blessing, end the allocution¹⁶.

4. Actuality of the papal call

It is not difficult to see that, in relation to marriage, Pope Francis has already devoted his second allocution to the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota. In the first of these, on 21 January 2016, he touched upon a thread concerning the relationship between faith and marriage in terms of the importance of the latter. The Holy Father, stating that the faithful entering into marriage have different degrees of faith, pointed out at the same time that the quality of faith is not an essential condition for marital consent, which, according to constant doctrine, can only be threatened at the natural level (cf. can. 1055 § 1-2 of the CIC) *Habitus fidei* is poured in at the moment of baptism and continues his mysterious influence on the soul, even when faith has not been developed and psychologically seems to be absent. The

¹⁴ Cf. FRANCISZEK, *Katecheza z 29 kwietnia 2015*, <http://Dmoch.net/jupgrade/pliki/PDF/katechezy+srodowe+Franciszka+2025.pdf>.

¹⁵ „La nostra riflessione avrà sempre presente la bellezza della famiglia e del matrimonio, la grandezza di questa realtà umana così semplice e insieme così ricca, fatta di gioie e speranze, di fatiche e sofferenze, come tutta la vita. Cercheremo di approfondire la teologia della famiglia e la pastorale che dobbiamo attuare nelle condizioni attuali. Facciamolo con profondità e senza cadere nella «casistica», perché farebbe inevitabilmente abbassare il livello del nostro lavoro. La famiglia oggi è disprezzata, è maltrattata, e quello che ci è chiesto è di riconoscere quanto è bello, vero e buono formare una famiglia, essere famiglia oggi; quanto è indispensabile questo per la vita del mondo, per il futuro dell’umanità. Ci viene chiesto di mettere in evidenza il luminoso piano di Dio sulla famiglia e aiutare i coniugi a viverlo con gioia nella loro esistenza, accompagnandoli in tante difficoltà, con una pastorale intelligente, coraggiosa e piena d’amore”. *Concistoro straordinario. Parole del papa Francesco* (20.02.2014), <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2014/febbraio/20/htm> (access 12. 02. 2017).

¹⁶ FRANCESCO, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (21.01.2017) ..., op. cit., p. 3-4.

lack of a formed faith, as well as the error of unity, indissolubility or sacramental dignity of marriage nullifies the conjugal consensus only when it determines the will (can. 1099 of the CIC)¹⁷.

Meanwhile, Francis takes up the theme of faith in terms of preparing for marriage and accompanying young spouses in his speech of 21 January 2017. He strongly advocates the need to awaken and revitalise the faith of both.

As far as the complex process of preparing for marriage is concerned, the Speaker draws attention to the need to shape the faith of those who are to enter into this relationship as a reality that is in harmony with reason. Referring to John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et ratio*, he encourages brides to open up to God; rejection of him destroys all relationships, including in family life. It also calls for the relationship between truth and love to be deepened in those who aspire to marriage. What is significant here is that the lack of religious values and faith cannot fail to condition consent to marriage either. This simply means that a lack of faith can often lead to the simulation of marriage consent or the determination of a will contrary to one of the essential qualities of marriage or its sacramental character.

What Francis says is fully confirmed by pastoral experience: it is not difficult for nupturients to find a significant deficit of operative faith, deep religious ignorance, and treating marriage as a mere contract when they are contracting a marriage. This experience, however, allows us to accept that many people can come closer to faith and to Christ and „make up” for their past negligence in connection with marriage. The general demand is therefore that, in the process of direct preparing for marriage, parish priests should not confine themselves to routinely „writing” the protocol of the canonical pre-marriage examination, but that they should take the opportunity to skilfully induce nupturients who are religiously neglected or lost in the faith to undertake a deeper reflection on their own life in view of such

¹⁷ „E proprio perché è madre e maestra, la Chiesa sa che, tra i cristiani, alcuni hanno una fede forte, formata dalla carità, rafforzata dalla buona catechesi e nutrita dalla preghiera e dalla vita sacramentale, mentre altri hanno una fede debole, trascurata, non formata, poco educata, o dimenticata. È bene ribadire con chiarezza che la qualità della fede non è condizione essenziale del consenso matrimoniale, che, secondo la dottrina di sempre, può essere minato solo a livello naturale (cf. CIC, can. 1055, § 1 and 2). Infatti, l'*habitus fidei* è infuso nel momento del Battesimo e continua ad avere influsso misterioso nell'anima, anche quando la fede non è stata sviluppata e psicologicamente sembra essere assente. Non è raro che i nubendi, spinti al vero matrimonio dall'*instinctus naturae*, nel momento della celebrazione abbiano una coscienza limitata della pienezza del progetto di Dio, e solamente dopo, nella vita di famiglia, scoprono tutto ciò che Dio Creatore e Redentore ha stabilito per loro. Le mancanze della formazione nella fede e anche l'errore circa l'unità, l'indissolubilità e la dignità sacramentale del matrimonio viziano il consenso matrimoniale soltanto se determinano la volontà (cf. CIC, can. 1099). Proprio per questo gli errori che riguardano la sacramentalità del matrimonio devono essere valutati molto attentamente”. FRANCESCO, *Dicorso alla Rota Romana* (22.01.2016), *Communicationes* 48 (2016), no 1, p. 24.

a significant event as their family formation. Such an appeal was made to pastors by, among others, John Paul II in his speech to the Roman Rota of 21 January 1999¹⁸. This is pointed out by many representatives of the doctrine, who stress that above all since the Second Vatican Council, greater pastoral care should be shown in the process of preparation for marriage¹⁹. Francis goes one step further with his own dynamism: he wants this concern not only to ensure that marriages are valid, but also that they are fruitful²⁰; that well-formed, faith-based nupturients open up to God and His grace, and that they understand the value of the sacrament received, which is to bear fruit in their community. The successor of Pope Benedict XVI is therefore working hard to ensure that none of those who decide to enter into a marriage covenant is in the position of a biblical „fool”.

When, in existing cultural circumstances, marriages are increasingly being entered into by people who are unreligious or religiously indifferent, when their faith leaves much to be desired, and when ignorance of certain fundamental issues (e.g. with regard to the sacramental nature of the marriage or its inseparability) is even embarrassing, it is impossible not to take appropriate pastoral measures that would provide an antidote to these ills. Francis here sees

¹⁸ „Mi limito a sottolineare la grave responsabilità che incombe ai Pastori della Chiesa di Dio di curare una adeguata e seria preparazione dei nubendi al matrimonio: solo così, infatti, si possono suscitare nell’animo di coloro che si apprestano a celebrare le nozze le condizioni intellettuali, morali e spirituali, necessarie per realizzare la realtà naturale e sacramentale del matrimonio”. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (21.01.1999), AAS 91 (1999), p. 627, n. 7.

¹⁹ Cf. incl. P. J. VILADRICH, *Matrimonio y sistema matrimonial de la Iglesia*, *Ius Canonicum* 54 (1987), p. 529; C. J. ERRÁZURIZ, *Il matrimonio e la famiglia quale bene giuridico ecclesiale. Introduzione al diritto matrimoniale canonico*, Roma 2016, p. 104-110; L. GHISONI, *La prevenzione della nullità del matrimonio nella preparazione immediata delle nozze*, in: J. KOWAL, M. KOVAC (ed.), *Matrimonio e famiglia in una società multireligiosa e multiculturale. Giornata Accademica e Solenne Atto Accademico della Pontificia Università Gregoriana 10 marzo 2011*, Roma 2012, p. 53-77; T. POCAŁUJKO, *La preparazione alle nozze e il diritto di contrarre un „matrimonio valido”*, in: J. KOWAL, M. KOVAC (ed.), *Matrimonio e famiglia...*, op. cit., p. 79-87; H. FRANCESCHI, *Preparazione al matrimonio e prevenzione della nullità*, in: H. FRANCESCHI, M.A. ORTÍZ (ed.), *Verità del consenso e capacità di donazione. Temi di diritto matrimoniale e processuale canonico*, Roma 2009, p. 63-102; W. GÓRALSKI, *Problem przewencyjnego zapobiegania nieważności małżeństw na drodze kanonicznego badania przedślubnego*, *Biuletyn [Stowarzyszenia Kanonistów Polskich]* 26 (2016), n. 29, p. 43-69; S. TYKARSKI, *Kryzys małżeński jako wyzwanie dla duszpasterstwa. Studium teologiczno-pastoralne*, Toruń 2015, p. 337-362.

²⁰ As regards the requirement of believe for a „fruitful” marriage, the following explanation seems appropriate B. NDUBUEZEZA EJEHA (*Ammissione Alle nozze. La „misericordia preventiva” della normativa e della pastorale prematrimoniali*, in: C. J. ERRÁZURIZ, M. A. ORTÍZ (ed.), *Misericordia e diritto nel matrimonio. Giornata di studio, Roma 22 maggio 2014*, Roma 2014, p. 56): The question of whether faith is necessary to allow [someone - W.G.] to marry should be answered positively, quickly specifying that this necessity should not be understood in the sense of an absolute legal obligation, but as a requirement for a fruitful outcome of the marriage, and taking into account the observation that an imperfect supernatural disposition is not the motive for prohibiting marriage to nupturients properly disposed of at the level of the proper marital intention, which, per se, is open to God's help” („Alla domanda, quindi, se la fede sia necessaria per l’ammissione al matrimonio bisogna rispondere affermativamente, precisando subito tuttavia che detta necessità non si intende in senso di un obbligo giuridico assoluto bensì come esigenza dell’esito fruttuoso del matrimonio e premettendo il *caveat* che l’imperfetta disposizione soprannaturale non vale come motivo per negare le nozze ai nubendi *ben disposti* [underlined in the text – W. G.] sul piano della retta intenzione matrimoniale che, di per sé, è già aperta all’aiuto divino”); Cf. also BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso alla Rota Romana* (26.01.2013), AAS 105 (2013), p. 169, n. 2.

the need for a new catechumenate, as part of the process of preparing for marriage, as already advocated in the *Familiaris consortio*. The purpose of this catechumenate would be to „deepen the knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church, the meaning of grace and the responsibility of Christian marriage” and to prepare „for active and conscious participation in the liturgical rite of marriage”²¹.

The pre-marriage catechumenate, which is an important element of both the closer and the direct preparation for marriage, should constitute a specific cycle of catechesis whose subject matter would include not only issues of the theology of marriage and the family, but also more general issues related to the fundamental truths of faith. In fact, according to the intention of Pope Francis, it would be to deepen the faith of future spouses. It seems that the so-called premarital courses should be transformed into the institution of a premarital catechumenate (with an extended subject of catechesis). This is already happening in many dioceses, including Poland²².

As C. J. Errázuriz rightly notes, although these pre-marital courses are very useful (if they affect the lives of future spouses), they are only an auxiliary measure in relation to what always remains the main ordinary and more effective measure. And that is the vital learning of what it means to be husband, wife, parent and inseparably: what it means to be him (her) in the Lord, by remaining - as a son or daughter - in a Christian family or by living in a Christian community²³. In this way, the canonist of *Santa Croce* wants to highlight the value of preparing (further) for marriage in his own family.²⁴

Emphasising the importance of upbringing for future marital life in the family, also in the dimension of shaping the faith, fully harmonises with what Pope Francis states in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*: „Giving faith to children, in the sense of facilitating its expression and development, allows the family to become an instrument of evangelization and to begin to entrust it to all those who become close to it, even outside the family

²¹ JAN PAWEŁ II, *Adhortacja apostolska „Familiaris consortio”* ..., op. cit., p. 119-120, n. 66.

²² *Directory for the Pastoral Care of Families, Warsaw 2003*, adopted by the Polish Bishops' Conference (May 1, 2003) provides for conducting in each parish (regardless of catechisation at school) - „as an optimal program - an annual premarital catechumenate for young people [underlined in the text - W. G.] with at least 25 meetings, analogous to preparations for First Communion or Confirmation”. (p. 26, n. 25). This form of catechisation (provided for secondary school students) can be considered a kind of pre-marital catechumenate.

²³ C. J. ERRÁZURIZ, *Il matrimonio e la famiglia quale bene giuridico ecclesiale* ..., op. cit., p.104.

²⁴ „Humility in relation to the possibilities of the law, notes M. Andrzejewski, orders that in terms of preparing for marriage, nothing can replace the example of parents supported by the educational and formative work of schools, churches and religious associations” (*Protection of the right to marry and to found a family in Polish law (selected problems)*, in: W. GÓRALSKI (ed.), *Ius connubii – ochrona i ograniczenia w prawie międzynarodowym, polskim i kanonicznym*, Płock 2016, p. 54.

environment itself”²⁵. It is also worth quoting at this point the following fragment of the papal document mentioned, which can be referred to the postulate of running a premarital catechumenate: „There is a need for greater involvement of the entire community, emphasising the particular importance of the testimony of the families themselves, as well as rooting preparation for marriage in the process of Christian initiation with baptism and other sacraments”²⁶.

The Holy Father's diagnosis of a widespread mentality without reference to supernatural goods leads him to pay close attention also to the need to form those who have already married. Above all, it concerns the spouses who experience the first, very important phase of a newly formed community of life.

Already in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, local ecclesiastical communities are strongly encouraged to „help the couple to discover and experience their new vocation and mission ...”, which „relates above all to young families who, in the context of new values and new responsibilities, are more exposed than others, especially in the first years after marriage, to possible difficulties, such as those relating to adaptation to a common life or to the birth of children”²⁷. In this speech to Rota Romana, Pope Francis is precisely about supporting young married couples by Christian communities; by their very nature, these will be primarily parish communities.

The successor of Pope Benedict XVI spoke more widely in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* about the need to help, also on the road of faith, spouses who are living their first years of married life. It is significant here that „the newlyweds must complete this process, which should take place during their engagement”²⁸. As far as the formation of their faith is concerned, the statement that the blessing received by the spouses (in entering into a relationship) „is a grace and an impulse on this constantly open road”²⁹, the same, as is the statement that „the more the spouses try to listen in their conscience to God and His commandments (cf. Rom 2:15) and submit to a spiritual accompaniment, the more their decision will be internally free from subjective judgment and from adapting to the behaviour of their environment”³⁰. And when speaking of the pastoral accompaniment of young married

²⁵ FRANCESCO, „*Amoris laetitia*”. *Esortazione apostolica sull'amore nella familia*, Città del Vaticano-Cinisello Balsamo 2016; Polish text: OJCIEC ŚWIĘTY FRANCISZEK, *Posynodalna Adhortacja Apostolska „Amoris laetitia” o miłości w rodzinie* (19.03.2016), Kraków 2016, p. 228, n. 289.

²⁶ IBID., p. 162, n. 206.

²⁷ JAN PAWEŁ II, *Adhortacja apostolska „Familiaris consortio”* ..., op. cit., p. 126, n. 69.

²⁸ FRANCESCO, „*Amoris laetitia*” ..., op. cit., p. 172, n. 217.

²⁹ IBID., p. 173, n. 218.

³⁰ IBID., p. 176, n. 222.

couples, the Holy Father speaks a significant sentence: „We pastoral workers should encourage families to grow in the faith”³¹.

Returning to the papal allocution made to Rota Romana on 21 January 2017, it should be noted that the Holy Father generally draws attention to the need for parish communities and special groups to support young spouses in their faith by enabling them to have permanent spiritual formation.

Conclusion

The fourth speech made by Francis to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota is undoubtedly a significant element of the Papal Magisterium in the important area of the Church's life and activity, which is marriage and family. This time, the Holy Father has directed his pastoral care towards married couples preparing for marriage and young couples. He considered it an important task to awaken and revive the faith of both, and expressed his conviction that the relationship between marriage and faith, two closely connected realities, has not only a juridical but also a theological dimension.

³¹ *IBID.*, p. 180, n. 227.