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**Duszpasterstwo osób żyjących w małżeństwie i rodzinie według wybranych
dyrektorów. Aspekt prawno-duszpasterski**

**Ministry of people living in marriage and family according to some directories. Legal-
priestly aspect**

Introduction

In his 1981 *Familiaris consortio* apostolic exhortation, Pope John Paul II writes that „like any living reality, the family is called to development and growth. After preparation during the period of betrothal and after the sacramental marriage, the two people begin their daily journey towards the gradual realisation of the values and duties of marriage”¹. In the light of the Christian faith, the Christian family, in community with the Church, also makes a pilgrimage to the full revelation and realisation of the Kingdom of God. For this reason, the pastoral presence of the Church is necessary to sustain and accompany families at the various stages of their formation and development². „Every effort must be made to organise and develop the pastoral care of families, taking care of this primary field in the conviction that the future of evangelisation depends very much on the «home church»”³.

For the first time the Church defined pastoral care for the marital status and appropriate preparation for it as a legal obligation in the Code of Canon Law of 1983.⁴. The can. 1063

¹ IOANNES PAULUS II, Adhortatio apostolica de familiae christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis *Familiaris consortio*, 22.11.1981, AAS 74 (1982), p. 82-191. Polish text in: *Adhortacje Apostolskie Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 1996, p. 89-208, (hereinafter FC).

² Cf. IBID.

³ IBID.

⁴ *Codex Iuris Canonici. Auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus. Code of Canon Law*, Polish translation approved by the Episcopal Conference, Poznań 1984, (hereinafter: CIC). It should be noted that the doctrinal

n. 4 of the CIC recommends that the Church community should provide assistance to the faithful, so that the married state is preserved in its Christian character and develops in perfection. This assistance should be provided primarily by helping the spouses so that, faithfully preserving and protecting the marriage covenant, they can achieve an increasingly holy and perfect life in the family. The legislator has the responsibility of ensuring that this obligation is met by the ordinary of the site⁵.

The question therefore arises: how, taking into account common law and other ecclesiastical documents, the specific Conferences of Bishops in their directorates for the pastoral care of families formalise the issue of the pastoral care of people living in marriage and family⁶. This question is all the more relevant because the Code legislator, understandably, only in a general, framework manner, codifies this issue. In addition, the individual Conferences of Bishops not only detail the code standards or those contained in other documents, but also take local conditions into account when publishing their directorates⁷.

The answer to the question raised above will be the subject of this submission. The documents of the following Episcopal Conferences will be taken into account: Poland⁸, Italy⁹ and Spain¹⁰.

basis for the pastoral care of families was provided by Pius XI's encyclical on Christian marriage *Casti connubii* of 31 December 1930, see B. MIERZWIŃSKI, *Rodzin duszpasterstwo*, in: R. KAMIŃSKI, W. PRZYGODA, M. FIAŁKOWSKI (red.), *Leksykon teologii pastoralnej*, Lublin 2006, p. 738; F. GAVIN, *Pastoral care in marriage preparation (can. 1063). History, analysis of the norm and its implementation by particular Churches*, Roma 2004, p. 38, see A. BERNÁRDEZ CANTÓN, *Compendio de Derecho matrimonial canónico. Novena edición*, Madrid 1998, p. 203.

⁵ Can. 1064. Cf. B. MIERZWIŃSKI, *Rodzin duszpasterstwo*, op. cit., p. 737; Cf. J. KRZYWDA, *Obowiązek wspólnej troski wiernych o stan małżeństwa i rodziny według wymogów kan. 1063 KPK*, *Ius Matrimoniale* 4 (1999), p. 139-140.

⁶ This article will deal only with the issue of pastoral care of people living in marriage and family. Family pastoral care, on the other hand, is a wider reality, as it also includes people preparing to get married and start a family, cf. B. MIERZWIŃSKI, *Rodzin duszpasterstwo*, op. cit., p. 737. The issue of structures of pastoral care for families will not be addressed either.

⁷ These directorates have not only an exorbitant value, but also take on a legally binding character, as they resemble the relevant disciplinary norms of the Code of Canon Law, or define the ways of implementing the universal norms of the Church, explain their doctrinal rationale and indicate or encourage their faithful observance, cf. A. LÓPEZ MEDINA, *La preparación para el matrimonio: aspectos jurídicos en documentos eclesiales*, *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, 88 (2013), p. 735.

⁸ KONFERENCJA EPISKOPATU POLSKI, *Dyrektorium duszpasterstwa rodzin*, 1.05.2003, Warszawa 2003, (hereinafter: DDR).

⁹ CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA, *Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia*, 25.07.1993, Roma 1993, (hereinafter: DPF).

¹⁰ CONFERENCIA EPISCOPAL ESPAÑOLA, *Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España*, 21.11.2003, Madrid 2003, (hereinafter: DPFIE); See A. LÓPEZ MEDINA, *La preparación para el matrimonio: aspectos jurídicos en documentos eclesiales*, op. cit, p. 735.

1. Definition and need for pastoral care of families

The Church tries to walk with man along the many different paths of his earthly existence. Among these many paths, the family appears to be the first and, for many reasons, the most important, because it fulfils a fundamental function in human life. Hence the Church embraces families with her maternal concern¹¹. It is the task of pastors to support the vocation of spouses in their married and family life by various pastoral means, such as the proclamation of the word of God, the celebration of the liturgy and other spiritual aids, as well as to strengthen them in their difficulties and to confirm them in love so that they can realise their marital and family vocation¹².

All of this is served above all by the pastoral care of families. The question arises, what is this pastoral care? Sometimes the legislators themselves give a definition of this activity of the Church. *The Directory for Family Pastoral Care of the Polish Episcopal Conference* states that „family pastoral care is understood as a system of ecclesiastical activities which aim at the realisation of the salvific plan concerning marriage and family. Its axis is the truth about marriage and family, infallibly conveyed, interpreted and referred to as „signs of the times” by the Teachers' Office of the Church”¹³.

The Directory for the Pastoral Care of the Families of the Church in Spain states that the pastoral care of families is the axis of pastoral and evangelistic action of the whole Church, and the local Church in a special way. The pastoral care of families, as a help from the Church, should be carried out by the members of the ecclesial community according to their own way of participation in the mission of the Church. For all married couples and families, the Church has a word of truth, goodness, understanding, hope, living participation in their sometimes dramatic difficulties; they offer her selfless help to all, so that they can come closer to the ideal of the family desired by the Creator. This pastoral care is a step-by-step accompaniment for families at different stages of their formation and development¹⁴.

According to the *Direttorio di pastoral familiare per la Chiesa in Italia*, the pastoral care of families is the concern of the whole Christian community, of all its members, towards

¹¹ Cf. IOANNES PAULUS II, Lettera alle famiglie *Gratissimam sane*, 2.02.1994, AAS 86 (1994), p. 868-925. Polish text: JAN PAWEŁ II, *List do rodzin*, Wrocław 1998.

¹² CONCILIUM OECUMENICUM VATICANUM II, *Constitutio pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis Gaudium et spes*, 7.12.1965, AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025-1115. Polish text: SOBÓR WATYKAŃSKI II, *Konstytucja duszpasterska o Kościele w świecie współczesnym Gaudium et spes*, in: *Sobór Watykański II. Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje. Polish text. Nowe tłumaczenie*, Poznań 2002, p. 526-606, (hereinafter: GS).

¹³ DDR, n. 1, Cf. B. MIERZWIŃSKI, *Rodzin duszpasterstwo*, op. cit., p. 737.

¹⁴ Cf. DPFIE, n. 154-155.

spouses and families, with the aim of helping them to gradually realise the values and tasks of marriage and family at different stages of their lives, towards the full revelation and realisation of the Kingdom of God. This pastoral care appears to be a wise, patient and loving accompaniment for spouses and families by submitting various pastoral proposals that are appropriate to their condition and stage of life¹⁵. It is „a specific and special form of pastoral care whose source and responsible initiator is the Church herself, acting through her structures and through her staff”¹⁶. The aim of this pastoral action is to help spouses and families to develop on an ongoing basis, so that they can live by their particular vocation and mission and thus make their daily lives holier and more intense. This activity of the Church is intended to foster human maturity and faith of every married couple and every family, in order to increase their participation in church and social life¹⁷. The accompaniment and support of spouses and families should be universal (involving all families, not only Christian, but also those in difficult or abnormal situations) and progressive¹⁸.

„The urgent need for the pastoral presence of the Church to support the family should (...) be stressed. Every effort must be made to organise and develop the pastoral care of families, taking care of this primary field in the conviction that the future of evangelisation depends very much on the «home church»”¹⁹. The indispensability and urgency of the pastoral care of families are underlined by the discussed directorates.

The editors of the *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Poland remind that „the Church recognizes the service of the family as one of its most important tasks, as «the first and for many reasons the most important way of mission and service». She wants to offer this help to those who know the value of marriage and family and who try to remain faithful to them; to those who in «uncertainty and anxiety seek the truth and to those who wrongly encounter obstacles in realizing their own vision of the family»”²⁰.

The *Family Pastoral Care Directory of the Church in Spain* notes that with the celebration of the sacrament of marriage, a new phase of family pastoral care is beginning. It must not be forgotten that the necessary and momentous preparation for marriage remains at

¹⁵ Cf. DPF, n. 92-93, 95.

¹⁶ DPF, n. 95.

¹⁷ Cf. DPF, n. 93.

¹⁸ Cf. DPF, n. 96.

¹⁹ FC, n. 65.

²⁰ DDR, *General Assumptions*, p. 9.

the service of building a family home - when difficulties arise, and when the spouses are in greater need of help from the Church, which must show that They are a mother²¹.

The authors of the *Direttorio di pastoral familiare per la Chiesa in Italia* remind us that there is a particularly urgent need for the pastoral care of families today, both in relation to the contemporary situation, where ambushes tearing apart the family fabric and undermining nature and the supernatural unity of the family do not diminish, breaking down the moral values on which it is based and develops, and in relation to the need to raise awareness of the importance of the family and its mission in the Church and in society²². The Directory insists that the pastoral care of families should occupy a central place in all the Church's pastoral activities, since in fact almost all the aims of the Church's activities relate directly or at least indirectly to marriage and family. The pastoral care of families is and must be linked and integrated with the overall pastoral action of the Church, which recognises the family not only as a circle or a particular sector of its activities, but as an essential dimension of all its activities²³.

2. Evangelisation of marriages and families

It should be noted that not only „more than ever, in our times it is necessary to prepare young people for marriage and family life”²⁴, but it is equally necessary to have a stronger pastoral care of marriages and families, their evangelisation, which would seek to restore the Christian identity of marriage and the family, so that the family itself becomes a community of persons at the service of human life and faith, the first and life-giving social cell, a believing and evangelising community, a true home church, a centre of communion and service to the Church²⁵.

The instructions discussed are about the need to evangelise marriages and families. *The Family Pastoral Care Directory of the Church* in Spain deals with the issue of young marriages (first years of marriage)²⁶. The editors recall that the pastoral care of marriages up

²¹ Cf. DPFIE, n. 150-151.

²² Cf. DPF, n. 94.

²³ Cf. DPF, n. 97.

²⁴ FC, n. 66.

²⁵ Cf. PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER LA FAMIGLIA, *Preparazione al sacramento del matrimonio*, 13.05. 1996, Roma 1996, n. 14. Polish text: PAPIESKA RADA DS. RODZINY, *Przygotowanie do sakramentu małżeństwa*, in: K. LUBOWICKI (ed.), *Posoborowe dokumenty Kościoła Katolickiego o małżeństwie i rodzinie*, Kraków 1999, t. 1, p. 389 - 425, (hereinafter: PSM).

²⁶ „It is to be hoped that young couples - especially in the first five years of their married life - will be adequately supported through courses for young spouses, conducted in parishes or deaneries”; PSM, n. 74.

to five years after marriage is one of the most important and decisive stages of this Church activity. The success of the later stages depends largely on how the spouses survive these first years in their community. By accompanying families, the Church should help them to discover and live their new vocation and mission. This help is essential, because many spouses show great deficiencies in Christian formation²⁷. This pastoral accompaniment, which ensures the continuity of the formation undertaken in preparation for marriage, should be particularly relevant to matters of marital love, service to life and education²⁸. In particular, attention should be paid to the various events that determine the development of the family by nature. In the first years of marriage, efforts should be made to bring the spouses closer to the Church, which will support them at decisive moments, such as baptism, First Communion and Confirmation or the choice of state by the children. Other situations include the birth and upbringing of children, work, illness, death, etc. Sometimes the marriage itself needs support. In all these events, the family should be aware of being accompanied by the Church so that they can live their vocation²⁹. At this stage, the pastoral care of families has two fundamental aims. On the one hand, it must support the human and spiritual formation of the spouses (e.g. family catechesis, lectures and retreats for couples). On the other hand, it should be gradually integrated into the ecclesial community (with the parish, marriage groups, through participation in the activities of parents' schools)³⁰. According to the document under discussion, the Christian community, especially the parish, should be involved in supporting structures for the reception, accompaniment and apostolic inclusion of young couples. An important issue in the pastoral accompaniment of young married couples is to help other married couples who have long had the experience of marriage and family. They can serve their own human experience, as well as gifts of faith and grace, either spontaneously (blood ties, neighborhood) or in an organized way³¹. To this end, the formation of marriage groups should be promoted in order to facilitate dialogue and communication of experiences, using appropriate formation means, thus carrying out a mission to welcome and support couples who come to the parish for family reasons. The idea is for families to recognise that it is natural to come closer to the parish community, not only to participate in the sacred activities, but because of human events and problems that may surpass them. The editors remind us that much still needs to be done to make parish communities more family-friendly and encourage -

²⁷ Cf. DPFIE, n. 156.

²⁸ Cf. DPFIE, n. 157.

²⁹ Cf. DPFIE, n. 157.

³⁰ Cf. DPFIE, n. 157.

³¹ Cf. DPFIE, n. 159 ; Cf. FC, n. 69.

for more effective formation of young couples - the initiatives aimed at the reception and inclusion of new marriages in various activities and movements, both at parish level or, if it seems more appropriate, at inter-parish level. The „Family management centres”, „Parents' schools”, „Family spirituality movements” or „Family associations” can provide valuable assistance in this activity”³².

Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España devotes much attention to the issue of upbringing in the family. The document first emphasises the legal and essential, irreplaceable and inalienable duty of both parents, as the first educators of their children. This is to be an integral upbringing that develops all dimensions of their personality: physical, intellectual, moral, with respect for personal and social dignity³³. The bishops stress the truth about the fundamental importance of the family home, the right atmosphere in it for the full upbringing of children. They call on parents not to spare their time to accompany their children in the development of their personality and on the path of growth in their faith. They should shape their offspring not only with words but also with an example of their lives. This „accompaniment” of children is essential when using television, the Internet, reading, regarding places and ways of entertainment or company. It is also important for children to cooperate with their parents in their upbringing³⁴.

The Spanish legislator is of the opinion that different educational institutions must cooperate with parents in the upbringing of their children, but cannot replace them. It is clear that parents also have a duty to cooperate with those entities involved in education, especially in Catholic schools³⁵. The presented document reminds us that schools and other educational centres, especially catechisation, should be mentioned among the associations operating in this area. As far as educational institutions are concerned, the active participation of parents in the school's educational project and their monitoring of the specific activities that the school carries out should be encouraged. It is reminded that it is up to parents to choose their school and to decide on educational projects that must correspond to their own convictions³⁶, and thus contribute to improving the conditions and means of education of their children,

³² Cf. DPFIE, n. 160-162. The initiatives mentioned, aimed at accepting and enabling the inclusion of new marriages in various activities and movements, are „Día de la familia”, „Semana de la familia”, „Encuentros de espiritualidad matrimonial y familiar”, „Catequesis de adultos”, „Retiros and „Convivencias familiares”, cf. DPFIE, n. 161.

³³ Cf. DPFIE, n. 176-177.

³⁴ Cf. DPFIE, n. 179.

³⁵ *Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España* stresses that the participation of parents in the life of a Catholic school makes it possible to create a „community of education” within that school, cf. DPFIE, n. 181.

³⁶ Cf. *Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica*, Città del Vaticano 1992, n. 2229. Polish text: *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, (hereinafter: CCC).

especially with regard to the subject of teaching - Catholic religion. Together with the Diocesan Education Department and Catholic educational institutions, parents must seek out educational environments and institutions that safeguard the right to choose and the right of parents to raise their children according to their Catholic beliefs³⁷.

It is important to stress that every educational centre has the duty to provide advice to parents in the pedagogical and psychological difficulties that they may observe in their children during their studies. For this reason, it is highly recommended that each educational centre should have a specialist in the field of family sciences who will provide multiple assistance to parents.³⁸

The Spanish legislator encourages parents to take an active part in the activities of the various associations of parents of students, to take initiatives to create new educational centres and to belong to or support other educational associations that exist for this purpose. The bishops recall that it is important for parents to cooperate in catechising and the whole process of education in the faith so that there is a true message of faith. To this end, it must be possible, together with the diocesan catechetical department, to provide every assistance so that parents know about the catechesis that their children receive, to undertake, as far as possible, to explain certain issues properly, or even to carry out real family catechesis with a few more educated parents. Also, in the celebration of the sacraments it is always necessary to emphasise the role of parents in the formation of the faith and to offer them concrete means for its implementation. We should also support family attendance at Sunday Mass, as an excellent form of witness to the faith³⁹.

The attention of the *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Spain, is important, where parents are urged not to burden their children with too much extra-curricular activities, in order not to reduce their family experience. With regard to leisure time, too, parents are made aware that it should be an integral formation for their children in the virtues and values of Christianity⁴⁰.

The *Direttoria di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia* also sees an urgent need to evangelise young couples and families. The authors point out that young couples and families, due to their specific experiences and problems, have a right and a need for special pastoral

³⁷ Cf. DPFIE, n. 180-181.

³⁸ Cf. DPFIE, n. 181.

³⁹ Cf. DPFIE, n. 182-183; see D. BOROBIO, *Catecumenado e iniciación cristiana. Un desafío para la Iglesia hoy*, Barcelona 2007, p. 173.

⁴⁰ Cf. DPFIE, n. 184.

care, for which each parish is primarily responsible⁴¹. The editors see this care for young couples in their reception, accompaniment and support. It is pointed out that it is not enough to take care of those who come to the parish, but it is necessary to look for young couples who often tend to retreat or find it difficult to open up to the community. Accompanying young couples should help them to recognise their vocation and mission in the faith and to live in the concrete everyday life of their lives, and to overcome the difficulties that are an obstacle and barrier to development. To this end, spouses should be given the opportunity (as a proposal) to „reflect on the mystagogy” that can help them to „remember” the gift and grace received on their wedding day. It is necessary to help young people to recognise and live out their vocation to unity, while recognising and respecting the unique uniqueness of each spouse. The emphasis should be placed on marital chastity and the promotion of responsible parenthood, as well as offering young families the necessary help to fulfil their educational task. At this stage of family pastoral care, it is worthwhile to offer young family spouses various forms of participation in the life of the Church and society with tact and courage⁴².

The instructions of the Italian bishops also give some guidance for determined, specific initiatives relevant for young spouses. Pastoral interest and a suitable and cordial welcome for families recently living in the parish is recommended. Parishes where preparation for marriage takes place should report the spouses and their address to the parishes where they will live after the wedding celebration. Within the parish or at interparish level, an annual meeting is proposed specifically for the spouses with one year's seniority to promote and support listening, meeting and confrontation. It will be an opportunity to experience moments of recollection, to deepen reflection, to present concrete and varied opportunities for growth and appropriate involvement adapted to the different sensitivities, situations and availability of families.

In planning the parish catechesis and in the most extensive cultural proposals organised by Christian communities, it is recommended that attention be paid to the problems and needs of young families and that a suitable space be created for them to discuss issues that may be of direct interest and involvement.

The bishops recommend that young spouses should have the opportunity to nurture an accurate and richer spiritual path. Therefore, moments or days of spirituality specially designed for couples and young families should be promoted. These families should be

⁴¹ Cf. DPF, n. 100-101.

⁴² Cf. DPF, n. 102-103.

invited to participate in some family group in the parish, or in some association or movement for marital and family spirituality. It would be valuable to enable spiritual leadership at an appropriate level⁴³.

The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Italy proposes the organisation of meetings, debates, and exchanges of experience on strictly educational matters, in order to help and sustain young families in the fulfilment of their task for the true human and Christian upbringing of children within the family itself, in cooperation with the school and the parish and with its strictly educational works, such as oratories, associations or groups. In particular, when preparing children for the sacraments of Christian initiation, parents are to be invited to participate in catechesis and meetings that will help them to rediscover the profound meaning of these sacraments, which they themselves have received and which they are now asking for for their children⁴⁴.

The authors of the *Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia* call on pastors to indicate young spouses the specialists and provide tools and secure places for proper teaching of natural methods for regulating conception and for proper sexual education of those living in marriage, so that their sex life is fully and truly human⁴⁵. The Directory requires special attention to be paid to young families who are put to the test as a result of difficulties or experiencing temptations or prospects of breaking up or failing their marriage. They should be offered proximity, help and support from priests, other vulnerable families, Christians who are mature in their faith and family counselling centres. They should be offered proximity, help and support from priests, other vulnerable families, Christians who are mature in their faith and family counselling centres⁴⁶.

Sacramental ministry is an important moment of accompaniment for families. Italian bishops recall that „as part of the pastoral care of young spouses, baptismal ministry is particularly important. Usually, for spouses, the birth of a child is, in fact, a joyful and expected event, which in itself raises important questions about the meaning of life and calls for the faith of the spouses themselves, who ask for baptism for their child”⁴⁷. Hence, „the parents of a baptised child, as well as the godparents, should be duly instructed about the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations associated with it”⁴⁸. This preparation should

⁴³ Cf. DPF, n. 104.

⁴⁴ Cf. DPF, n. 104.

⁴⁵ Cf. DPF, n. 104.

⁴⁶ Cf. DPF, n. 104.

⁴⁷ DPF, n. 105.

⁴⁸ CIC, can. 851, n. 2.

be both a personal meeting of parents and godparents with the pastor, and a Community preparation in which more marriages take part. This preparation can take place while waiting for the birth of the child. An important help for the proper preparation for baptism can be the children's catechism „Let the children come to me” („Lasciate che i bambini vengano a me”)⁴⁹. The *Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia* also addresses the problem of baptisms of children of parents who are in an irregular marital situation. It is valuable instruction of the Directory that, when parents living in an irregular marital situation ask for baptism of a child, it should be checked whether there are conditions that allow for celebration and, in particular, whether there is a legitimate hope that the child will receive a true Christian upbringing⁵⁰. This moment is an important opportunity to evangelise such parents to help them consider their life in the light of the Gospel and invite them to conversion⁵¹.

The editors of *Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia* also address the issue of pastoral accompaniment to elderly families („after the first years of marriage”⁵²). The primary purpose of the Church's pastoral activity in this regard is to help spouses to discover and live out their vocation and mission. This is done in older families through formation for the creation of an authentic community of persons, in order to sustain the individual couples in their task of transmitting life responsibly and respecting it, helping them to carry out their original and inalienable educational task (family counselling centres, parents' and family associations, „schools” for parents, the implementation of a harmonious and systematic pastoral care of children and young people: oratories, the creation or development of associations which aim to serve the service of upbringing, the proposal to organise sport and leisure time in a genuinely human and Christian perspective, the encouragement and administration of Catholic schools, the appropriate and reasonable recognition of the work of Catholic teachers in public schools) and the promotion of true family spirituality in every family⁵³.

The Italian Directory also supports all specific initiatives aimed at developing families and their members. These initiatives are: family groups, family associations and movements,

⁴⁹ Cf. DPF, n. 105.

⁵⁰ Can. 868 §1: „For a child to be baptised with dignity it is required : 2° so that there is a legitimate hope that the child will be brought up in a Catholic manner; if there is no such hope at all, baptism must be postponed according to the provisions of particular law, informing the parents of the cause”.

⁵¹ Cf. DPF, n. 106.

⁵² „Dopo i primi anni di matrimonio”, DPF, n. 107.

⁵³ Cf. DPF, n. 107-112.

family holidays and anniversaries (including various anniversaries), social and political initiatives⁵⁴.

The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Italy recalls that the family is not only the subject of family pastoral care, but is also an active and responsible subject of this pastoral care, hence it has a specific mission in the Church and society. When it comes to the participation of spouses and families in the life and mission of the Church, it is founded on the sacrament of marriage, through which they are called to participate in a proper and original way and in various forms in the life and mission of the Church, closely linked to the identity of the family itself, which is a „deep community of life and love”⁵⁵. Like the Church, the family is invited to be a believing and evangelizing community in obedience to the word of God (prophetic task of the family). This will be possible by meditating on the word of God in the family, by living the mystery of marital and family love, Christian upbringing of children at different stages of their development through word and witness of life (e.g. family catechesis, preparation for the sacraments, cooperation with the school, appropriate atmosphere at home, religious furnishing of the home, performing acts of mercy, supporting emerging vocations to serve God in their children)⁵⁶. The Directory draws attention to the fact that the faith and evangelising mission of a Christian family also bear in mind the missionary nature of the Catholic family. The missionary activity of a Catholic family has different scopes: within its own family, especially when a member of the family does not have faith or is dead; towards other families in forming them to live by faith and the sacrament of marriage, through some form of direct involvement in the field of mission⁵⁷.

Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia also exposes the priestly task of the family („the family is called to sanctify itself and to sanctify ...”)⁵⁸. This task is carried out by the family through family prayer, which is an intrinsic requirement that stems from the nature of the family, which is a „home church”, and which is also a commitment deriving

⁵⁴ Cf. DPF, n. 126-133.

⁵⁵ FC, n. 50; cf. DPF, n. 136-137.

⁵⁶ Cf. DPF, n. 138-144.

⁵⁷ Cf. DPF, n. 145-146. „Just as Aquila and Pryskiella were missionary couples at the dawn of Christianity¹³⁴, so today the Church testifies to its never-ending novelty and will flourish through the presence of Christian spouses and families who go to missionary areas at least for a certain time to preach the Gospel, serving man with the love of Jesus Christ Christian families make a special contribution to the missionary cause of the Church by cultivating missionary vocations among their sons and daughters and, more generally, through the whole work of education which prepares „children from an early age to know more and more about God's love for all people”, FC, n. 54.

⁵⁸ DPF, n. 147; „This is a priestly task that the family can and should perform in internal communion with the whole Church through the daily reality of married and family life: in this way the Christian family is called to sanctify itself and to sanctify the Church community and the world”, FC, n. 55.

from the sacrament of marriage. By the time they pray together, the spouses must prepare themselves from the time of their engagement and before the children are born in marriage. This marriage prayer should be transformed into a family prayer at the birth of the children. An important task for parents is to bring their children up to pray (example of parental prayer and teaching them different forms of prayer). The Italian bishops emphasize that family prayer should take different forms: Sunday and Christmas Eucharist, reading at home in faith and listening in silence to the word of God, especially the gospel, living every Friday, a remembrance of the Passion and Death of the Lord according to the spirit and letter of the Church's regulations by practicing prayer and penance, saying one's prayer and saying grace, performing acts of Marian devotion, especially the rosary. It is valuable encouragement of the discussed document so that the more disposed families to recite the Liturgy of the Hours, at least some part of it, at certain times. Christian spouses and their families are also called upon to join the various prayer groups existing in the parish or local church. They are also encouraged, as far as possible, to stay in a cloister for spiritual renewal. Spouses are also recommended to participate in retreats⁵⁹.

Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia also draws attention to the need to involve families in the service of man. This is done by participating in the mission of the Church and in the service of Christian mercy in its spiritual and material dimensions⁶⁰. The document stresses that a particular expression of family service to human beings is the readiness to adopt children who have no parents or who have been abandoned, as well as to welcome the elderly and the sick, and to show them closeness and care.⁶¹

The Family Pastoral Care Directory of the Church in Poland also devotes much attention to the issue of evangelisation of marriages and families, which is carried out by the Church, diocese and parish. This pastoral ministry serves both to evangelise families and assists them in their evangelising mission. Above all, the family has the right to expect spiritual help from the Church to „live by faith, to abide in Christ and the Church, taking care of its development and its safety among contemporary threats”⁶². These aids for families from the Church community are the word of God reaching families through Scripture and through the teaching of the Church. Pastors should therefore encourage brides and grooms, already during pre-wedding meetings, to acquire a copy of Scripture, which should be regularly read

⁵⁹ Cf. DPF, n. 148-154.

⁶⁰ Cf. DPF, n. 156-159.

⁶¹ Cf. DPF, n. 160-1611.

⁶² DDR, n. 51.

and considered in the family; to ensure that there are references to marital and family issues in their preaching; and to ensure that retreaters raise the issues of marital and family spirituality broadly enough, not only during state teaching. Every parish should take care to include in the pastoral programme the catechises, which is systematically announced to spouses and parents, e.g. every month. Appropriate meetings with parents should be held for the occasion of baptism, First Communion of children, and the Confirmation of youth. In addition to the theology and liturgy of the given sacrament, current family matters must be discussed (e.g., new Church documents, threats from the „civilization of death”, signs of hope, etc.). It is necessary to remind the necessity of the principle of growing marital love and responsible parenthood and to inform about the functioning of the Parish Family Centre⁶³. Then, pastors should encourage and enable regular use of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation by spouses, young people and fiancées, take care that the matters of this sacrament are discussed during missions, retreats, conferences and catechesis for spouses, ensure that spouses are provided with appropriate texts on the examination of conscience, in line with changing living conditions, that the parish family counselling centre functions well, both as regards regular on-call time and as regards the competence of the people working there, and that they are well informed about the centre; in the parish display case, in parish advertisements, in leaflets, in local media or on the parish website, take care of a better „quality” of confessions on the part of confessors, who should properly shape the conscience of penitents following the instructions of the Church⁶⁴.

Pastors should make sure that families properly experience the Church's liturgical year (Christian experience of Sundays, Christian holidays, liturgical periods, name days, anniversaries of the dead, baptism, Confirmation and marriage, anointing of the sick and a funeral in the family, the pilgrimage of married couples and families to Jasna Góra, organised by the Pastoral Care of Families every year on the fourth Sunday of September)⁶⁵. The Directory recalls that an important role in the pastoral care of families is played by a well-prepared and carried out pastoral visit to the family (carol), experiencing wedding anniversaries, the birth and baptism of children, the death of loved ones, the pilgrimage of married couples and families to closer and further sanctuaries, in accordance with Christian principles of spending free time, especially Days of the Lord⁶⁶.

⁶³ Cf. DDR, n. 52.

⁶⁴ Cf. DDR, n. 53.

⁶⁵ Cf. DDR, n. 54.

⁶⁶ Cf. DDR, n. 55-59.

The Polish Directory underlines that although the pastoral care of families is by its very nature addressed towards the family, which is its object, then, however, „the family is also an entity in this pastoral care according to the principle that it is an evangelised and evangelising community and that it is to be holy and sanctifying”⁶⁷. Therefore, according to the document under discussion, the evangelising mission of the family will be to a firm openness to life and responsible planning of the number of its offspring, welcoming the incoming children with full confidence in God's providence and educating them Catholicly; caring for the elderly and sick in the family (especially the parents); the effort put into the upbringing of difficult children (lost, injured, addicted); effective evangelization of other families through witness of life and word alone (sacrificial involvement in various works in the parish: participation in the Parish Council, membership in the Association of Catholic Families, in the Catholic Action, in charity groups, in the Circles of the Holy Rosary); the evangelising presence of parents at school (knowing and exercising their rights on school grounds)⁶⁸.

3. Life service and family assistance

The primary task of marriage and family is to serve life, to make the first blessing of God-Creator in history a reality: to transmit, through the birth, the image of God from person to person⁶⁹. Fertility is a gift, the purpose of marriage, because conjugal love by its nature aims to be fertile. The child does not come into the world from outside as added to the mutual love of the spouses; it emerges at the heart of this mutual gift, of which it is the fruit and fulfilment⁷⁰. Procreation is a specific part of the spouses' mission. Hence, one of the fundamental elements of family pastoral care is to help understand the value and dignity of human life.

The *Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España* states that, based on the knowledge acquired during the preparation for marriage, the pastoral care of families will seek to discover and express the value of motherhood and fatherhood, the true meaning of responsible parenthood, the human and Christian way of dealing with potential infertility problems. Bishops write that, because of the spread of an anti-natalistic mentality in modern

⁶⁷ DDR, n. 60.

⁶⁸ DDR, n. 61-65.

⁶⁹ Cf. FC, n. 28.

⁷⁰ Cf. CCC, n. 2366.

society, the witness of families living with fidelity and generosity in the mission of passing on life and upbringing is highly desirable. They call for every child to be received and treated only as a gift. They stress that only the conjugal act is an adequate place to transmit life, in accordance with the dignity of the child, as a gift and a fruit of love. They stress that only the conjugal act is an adequate place to transmit life, in accordance with the dignity of the child, as a gift and a fruit of love⁷¹.

It is an extremely important task in the service of life to show and train spouses about the principles of responsible parenthood and to teach that parents are co-workers in the love of God the Creator. The Spanish bishops highlight the duty of spouses to transmit their lives, thus fulfilling the original Creator's blessing. Consequently, they are responsible to God for carrying out this task. They remind us that the virtue of chastity unites sexuality, marriage and procreation. Based on this virtue, a person is able to grasp the full meaning of his or her bodily devotion open to fertility.⁷²

It is important to remind the Spanish Directory that an integral part of the pastoral care of families is the education of couples in methods of recognising fertility. In order to carry out this task, professionals trained in various methods of recognising fertility, working with the associations called upon to do so, are required. Particular care must be taken to ensure that there is talk of authentic upbringing in the virtue of chastity, and not simply learning the technique of recognising fertility, so as not to impoverish the sense of responsible fertility management. It should be pointed out that this is not about „natural methods of contraception”, but about the anthropological and, at the same time, moral difference that exists between contraceptives and the reference to periodic rhythms. The Directory of the Church in Spain stresses that, for this teaching to be effective, it is necessary to coordinate at diocesan level the various training centres. Each church's family management centre should employ natural method instructors so that those interested have easy access to the instructors and can solve any problems that may arise. Therefore, already during pre-marriage courses, it is necessary to inform about centres or instructors who work in the diocese or pastoral area⁷³. The document under discussion recommends, in cooperation with the diocesan pastoral care of health care, the support for the training (in terms of methods of observing human fertility

⁷¹ Cf. DPFIE, n. 163-166; see DPF, n. 107.

⁷² Cf. DPFIE, n. 168. It is noteworthy a short presentation in this directorate of the doctrine of responsible parenthood, which should always be present in premarital courses, where knowledge about the side effects of contraceptives and their effects on miscarriages, and about the unacceptability of contraceptive sterilisation, should be shown. The bishops recommend the training of health services in their task of serving the family, cf. DPFIE, n.169-170.

⁷³ Cf. DPFIE, n. 171.

and their anthropological value) of health care workers - gynaecologists, family doctors, paediatricians, pharmacists, nurses and other sanitary staff - so that they can receive scientific and integral education in this area⁷⁴.

It is worth noting the Spanish legislator's interest in families with many children, spouses „who, through common and prudent reflection, generously undertake the appropriate upbringing of even more offspring”⁷⁵. Such families should be provided with pastoral accompaniment (especially of the parish community), receive assistance in the human and religious upbringing of their children, as well as proximity in the face of the difficulties they may encounter. The parish community must be mindful of material assistance to ensure the participation of these „numerous” families in certain activities, as well as facilitating the care of their children so that they can participate in them⁷⁶. In order to properly protect the rights of these families within the State, guidance should be offered to them by the family division and associations set up for this purpose⁷⁷.

The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Italy also stresses the need for a genuine service to life. According to this manual, an important task in this matter is to promote responsible procreation. The legislator notes that „in our cultural context, privileged attention must be given to the issue of transmission of life”. Therefore, knowing that human parenthood is a gift of life that is born of the gift, it is necessary to „rediscover and once again clearly propose the true meaning of responsible procreation” and reaffirm that it „is a heavy, joint responsibility of the spouses and that can be carried out concretely”, but „requires the joint commitment of both spouses to periodic restraint, in the service of which the recourse to methods of natural fertility regulation remains”⁷⁸.

The authors of the *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Italy call on the spouses and families, by all democratic means, to demand and propose to society and institutions the creation and maintenance of social, economic and political conditions, so as to encourage procreation, and so that the various activities of science and bioengineering increasingly respect the dignity of the person. At the same time, parents should oppose the

⁷⁴ Cf. DPFIE, n. 172.

⁷⁵ GS, n. 50.

⁷⁶ Cf. DPFIE, n. 173.

⁷⁷ Cf. DPFIE, n. 174.

⁷⁸ DPF, n. 108. The authors of the Directory envisage obtaining assistance from Christian communities on the issue of responsible parenthood. At the same time, the Christian community should proclaim the invaluable value of human life and the great value of fertility without any misunderstanding or fear. The same community, which respects families with many children, is supposed to offer proximity, support and concrete help to women and spouses who, despite the difficulties, intend to carry out a pregnancy until the date of birth, IBID.

various opportunities created by new reproductive technologies that are incompatible with moral standards⁷⁹.

The *Direttorio di pastoral familiare per la Chiesa in Italia* also highlights the importance of family counselling services for the service of life within the pastoral care for families. These counselling centres, in Italian conditions, are indeed not pastoral structures, but rather aim at the development of man in marriage and family. The bishops state that they have a link with the structures of family pastoral care in that they strive for the true good of the person, the spouses and the family, focusing on sexuality and life, but have a different perspective and methodology. Pastoral care works to support Christian life and the building of the Church, concentrating on the riches of evangelisation, sacramental grace, spiritual formation and Church witness. Counselling centres, on the other hand, operate in the optics of personalistic anthropology, which is closely linked to the Christian vision of man and woman, and rather look at personal and relational dynamisms and make use of the achievements of the humanities and their methodology. Therefore, in every diocese, family counselling centres with guaranteed (certain) Catholic inspiration should be promoted, valued and professionally supported,⁸⁰ as well as other family counselling centres for Christian initiatives, whose physiognomy and relations with the Church community are precisely defined in individual statutes. They have a similar, analogous value to advice centres for Christian inspiration⁸¹. The authors of the directorate under discussion appeal for the Christian community, in a spirit of openness and discernment, to appreciate their activities and to support, as far as possible, the various forms of cooperation and coordination between these centres and bodies of pastoral care for families⁸². The Italian legislature, realistically speaking, recommends the creation of interdiocesan centres where individual dioceses do not have the opportunity to organise their own⁸³, and points out the great benefit of the presence of Catholics (counsellors) in public family centres⁸⁴, and also calls for the promotion in dioceses of centres for natural methods of regulating conception (sometimes independent of Christian-inspired family centres), which will employ counsellors and teachers of various natural methods of recognising fertility⁸⁵. Attention is also drawn to the creation of centres, structures and appropriate services for the reception, defence, promotion and care of human life, in particular

⁷⁹ Cf. DPF, n. 171-172.

⁸⁰ Cf. DPF, n. 249-251.

⁸¹ Cf. DPF, n. 249-251.

⁸² Cf. DPF, n. 252.

⁸³ Cf. DPF, n. 253.

⁸⁴ Cf. DPF, n. 254.

⁸⁵ Cf. DPF, n. 254-255.

homes for families in difficulty and single mothers (where the reception of conceived life is motivated and specific support is provided)⁸⁶. The editors of this Directory recall (and encourage) that the local churches also devote a great deal of attention and resources to other forms of activity and service to life, in pursuit of the „imagination of mercy”. It is about helping in situations of various deficiencies, deviation, illness or marginalisation (renewal communities for drug addicts, housing communities for minors, accommodation and treatment centres for AIDS patients)⁸⁷.

Much attention is paid to the service of life and family assistance by *the Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Polish Episcopal Conference. The bishops write that in view of the growing threats to marriage and family on the one hand and the increasingly difficult challenges faced by families on the other, it is necessary to organise assistance to families in an appropriately wide range. One form of assistance for spouses and parents is professional family counselling, support for single mothers, families with no children, and material assistance for families, especially children⁸⁸. The Directory distinguishes the following forms of family counselling: parish family counselling centres, specialist counselling centres, and a helpline⁸⁹. As far as the forms of family assistance are concerned, the document under discussion includes single mothers' homes (where women could stay, give birth to a child under professional care, and then decide whether to give the child for adoption or raise it by themselves)⁹⁰, Catholic adoption and care centres (it is recommended that every diocese should have such a centre)⁹¹, material assistance to families (there should be a well-organised charitable team in every parish)⁹², assistance to children who, whether due to the death of their parents, their divorce or the deprivation of their parental rights, have been deprived of their family environment (foster families and family orphanages, day care centres for children)⁹³.

⁸⁶ Cf. DPF, n. 256.

⁸⁷ Cf. DPF, n. 257.

⁸⁸ Cf. DDR, n. 37.

⁸⁹ See DDR, n. 37-44.

⁹⁰ Cf. DDR, n. 45.

⁹¹ Cf. DDR, n. 46.

⁹² Cf. DDR, n. 47. The DDR's comment that „to help wisely, that is to say patiently remove the sources of poverty and then help those who, for reasons beyond their control, need ad hoc or periodic support” is very valuable, IBID.

⁹³ Cf. DDR, n. 48-50.

4. Pastoral care for families in special situations

The Church pays much attention to families in difficult situations⁹⁴. Today's socio-cultural reality reveals many marital situations that are difficult or incorrect. These marriages and families should be the focus of the Church's attention and should be given special care. This care is needed not only by individual families, but by entire categories of families⁹⁵.

According to the *Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia*, the situations mentioned above make it necessary for the Church to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus with its moral requirements for marriage and for the family, with love but in truth, showing clearly the Gospel principles (marriage is inseparable, those who are in an irregular matrimonial situation still belong to the Church, although they are not in full communion with her, because their state of life is in conflict with the Gospel of Jesus, and they cannot be admitted to the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion if they remain in that state, they must regret and repent)⁹⁶. However, following the example of Jesus, the Church must develop friendly and compassionate pastoral care for all marriages and families, discerning and properly distinguishing between the various forms of marital anomalies and the various factors that underpin these *irregolarities*. „It will be the concern of pastors and the local community to know these situations, each separately, and their specific causes”⁹⁷ not to speak with approval or tolerance of irregularities, but to arrive at an objective assessment of the moral responsibility of individuals, to identify appropriate pastoral interventions and care and to propose concrete ways of conversion⁹⁸. The Italian bishops strongly emphasise that, in order to be accessible and „merciful”, pastoral care in these cases will have to include both the aspect of assistance and the prevention of abnormal situations. Hence the need for a comprehensive renewal of the pastoral care of married couples and families. Pastors, while remaining faithful to the teachings of the Church, especially as confessors, counsellors and spiritual guides of individual believers and families, overcoming individualism, personal predilection and a purely emotional approach, are called upon to approach with sincere fraternity those who live in difficult matrimonial or irregular situations, to inform and give guidance based solely on faithfulness of the Church's to their Lord⁹⁹. It is valuable to note that

⁹⁴ Cf. FC, n. 77-85.

⁹⁵ Cf. DDR, n. 66, Cf. DPF, n. 189.

⁹⁶ Cf. DPF, n. 194-199.

⁹⁷ FC, n. 81.

⁹⁸ Cf. DPF, n. 200.

⁹⁹ Cf. DPF, n. 201-203.

if there is a suspicion of nullity of the marriage, the faithful should be supported by competent persons in verifying the validity of their marriage. Therefore, the dioceses are to offer the possibility of a professional hearing and consultation¹⁰⁰.

The *Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España* states that pastoral care must always take into account the reality of family life. Only in this way will it be possible to provide the help they need. The various situations of married couples and families demand a specific pastoral attention.

Childlessness is a difficult circumstance for many married couples. *Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España* reminds us that physical infertility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who, having exhausted the permitted medical remedies, suffer from infertility may also join with the Lord's cross, and may also give proof of their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing important services for their neighbour, in which they should be supported¹⁰¹. The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Poland recommends that, in the difficult situation of infertility, parents should be helped to see the blessing of adopting a child in need of parents and point out the existence of Catholic Care and Adoption Centres. If they agree to such a solution, it is necessary to support them in achieving the status of an adoptive family; if they are unable to accept the adoption, it is necessary to help them to accept and accompany them on their journey of the cross. There must be forms of involvement for the benefit of others shown, through more intensive participation in the life of the parish, in its works of mercy, or in helping families with many children; they must be given special care and it must be shown why the Church stands up for the unacceptability of artificial insemination¹⁰².

It is an annoying situation for many families to have sick and disabled children. Polish bishops point out that such families require special assistance. Therefore, pastors should contact and support such families more often, help them to organise themselves (associations, foundations, etc.), point out the possibilities of obtaining material, medical or psychological help¹⁰³. The Italian Directory, speaking of such families, states that their members need the support of their relatives, prayerful accompaniment and sound and thorough spiritual direction. The friendly closeness and help of people and friendly families and the constant

¹⁰⁰ Cf. DPF, n. 204-206.

¹⁰¹ Cf. DPFIE, n. 186 and 189. The DPF, no. 113, states similarly. The Italian bishops call on scientists to continue research to eliminate the various causes of infertility, or to cure it, so that infertile spouses can become fertile while preserving their personal dignity and that of the child, cf. DDR, n. 113, Cf. DPFIE, n. 188.

¹⁰² Cf. DDR, n. 67.

¹⁰³ Cf. DDR, n. 68.

help of volunteers will also be of great help.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the Directory of the Church in Spain recommends that the pastoral care of families and the entire Christian community should provide special assistance to families with children with disabilities or illnesses (disability, cancer, multiple sclerosis, drug addiction, AIDS, rape victims, ill treatment, especially women and children).¹⁰⁵ In many cases, it will be necessary to seek help from people or specialist centres (adoption centres, associations and volunteer centres)¹⁰⁶. These families should be especially offered educational plans that correspond to an integral human vision. The sacramental ministry should also help these families more intensively, making sure that they do not feel misunderstood, but that they are accompanied in their difficult situation.¹⁰⁷

Another challenge for the pastoral care of families is families with addicts. The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Poland enumerates cases of alcoholism, drug addiction, sectarianism and panerotism. As treatment is very difficult here, more attention should be paid to prevention through awareness-raising, creating support groups and supporting healthy peer groups among young people. It is definitely necessary to support the environmental defence movements against alcohol advertising, against pornography and against sectarian activities. In specific cases, it is necessary to help by patiently serving the sacrament of reconciliation, or by identifying a treatment centre for a particular addiction¹⁰⁸. The Italian bishops appeal to Christian communities, especially parishes and volunteers, for discreet proximity and care for families where there are problems of discomfort and deviation in their children (sexual violence, medication, spread of AIDS)¹⁰⁹.

The directorates under consideration then take up the issue of families with the elderly. The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Polish Episcopal Conference makes a precise distinction between: elderly people and families with elderly people. The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Polish Episcopal Conference makes a precise distinction between: elderly people and families with elderly people. Pastors should be effective reminders that older spouses, with their experience and distance to life, can be very effective apostles of Christianity in everyday life. They can also very effectively engage in prayerful, material and

¹⁰⁴ Cf. DPF, n. 120.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. DPFIE, n. 190.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. DPFIE, n. 191.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. DPFIE, n. 192.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. DDR, n. 69.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. DPF, no 115-118; DPFIE rightly advocates in n. 193 family therapy in cases where children are dependent on alcohol, drugs and similar substances. The assistance of volunteers, other families and associations, as well as social and health care is important in this regard.

advisory help for their grandchildren and other needy people. Through their pastoral activities, they are also supposed to help young people understand the world of the elderly, the lonely and the sick by talking about this problem, organising meetings with the elderly and reminding them that treating grandparents properly is the best way to prepare children to deal with their parents when they get old. It is valuable and very timely to point out that the hypocrisy of supporters of euthanasia should be strongly condemned¹¹⁰.

The Italian Directory stresses that special attention should be paid to older spouses. Pastors and other family pastoral workers have a duty to get to know better the condition and dynamism of each elderly spouse and help them at the same time to know and accept it, also resorting to human tools that can help them to overcome difficulties and suffering. It will also be necessary to make families aware of their duty to take direct care - as far as possible - of their elderly people. The parish must play an important role in this respect, including through organised volunteering and other forms of solidarity between families¹¹¹.

The authors of *Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España* also recognise the problems of elderly people living in families and couples with many years of marriage experience. It is concluded that it is necessary to help families where there are elderly people so that they can involve them in the development of family life, providing them with the care they need. Older people in the family environment play an important role in bringing up younger people. Older spouses must also be aware that the situation in which they find themselves is an invitation to grow up in their marriage as a community of life and love. They have a special mission to educate human and Christian grandchildren, which will sometimes have to complement this task of parents. Elderly people should be involved in church and social life (in various movements and associations appropriate to their age and condition, such as *Vida Ascendente*). It is stressed that this movement is a very important part of the pastoral care of families, where the parish community plays a special role¹¹².

An important area of family pastoral care is the care of widows, widowers and single people. The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Poland notes that the death of one of the spouses puts the other party in a special situation. Usually the care of such a person belongs to the family, especially to children. If, however, for various reasons, he or she does not find such care, the parish community, through the *Caritas* groups, should take appropriate

¹¹⁰ Cf. DDR, n. 70.

¹¹¹ Cf. DPF, n. 122-123.

¹¹² Cf. DPFIE, n. 196-197. *Vida Ascendente* is an ecclesiastical movement of the secular apostolate for pensioners and the elderly, found as a public association of the faithful by the plenary assembly of the Spanish Bishops' Conference on 21 November 1986.

care of him or her. Sometimes, more than material, spiritual assistance is needed, and this assistance should be provided especially by the pastoral care. People who have not married for various reasons and live alone should also feel needed and loved in the family of the Church, which reaches them through the parish community, which should be made aware of this problem by pastors. Pastoral care for widows, widowers and the lonely will often manifest itself in enabling them to engage in a more complete parish life, which will help them to transform the pain of loneliness into a good to those in need.

The situation of widowed and lonely people will be discussed and recommended to God at special services, held on the occasion of Christmas, relevant saints of the Lord, as well as retreats and missions. For obvious reasons, special care should be taken of those who still have dependent and raising children. It is a matter of great importance for the proper formation of the child's personality in the absence of one of the parents, which should at least partly be supplemented by Christian neighbourly and parish love. It is valuable note that widowed people with a deepened religious life should be informed about the Church's practice of consecrating widows and widowers¹¹³.

The Spanish bishops call for special support for widowed people. Family pastoral care should find ways to accompany these people in discovering the meaning and value of their condition. When the situation demands it, material or legal assistance must be provided to them. In a special way, young widows should be helped in raising their children. Pastors are to support the widowed by organising „moments” and „spaces” of reflection and prayer, by creating groups, associations and Christian movements of men and women widowers.¹¹⁴

The situation of the widowed is also dealt with by the Italian directorate. Parishes are especially recommended to help them discover the state of widowhood, its meaning and possibilities, to motivate their own life through prayer, reflection and effective and active involvement in the community. Pastors should support groups and movements of Christian widows, help younger widowers to raise their children, or help them to live in chastity if they intend to marry again¹¹⁵.

An important issue in the Church's work on behalf of families is the care of immigrant families. The Spanish Episcopate recommends in this respect that the pastoral care of families should cooperate with the Diocesan Agenda for Migration in order to integrate these families into the society and the ecclesial community of the host country, respecting both the native

¹¹³ Cf. DDR, n. 71.

¹¹⁴ Cf. DPFIE, n. 198-199.

¹¹⁵ Cf. DPF, n. 124-125.

culture of these families and the culture of the country of settlement¹¹⁶. The Italian bishops are also calling for a friendly reception, integration and recognition of the rights of immigrant families. The aim is for these people to find their homeland in the Church. Christian communities should therefore be open to their reception and integration, both through concrete gestures and simple solidarity, and through systematic institutional activity¹¹⁷.

Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España also addresses the problem of families where violence occurs. In such situations, Centros de Orientación Familiar should offer consultation and appropriate action to restore harmony. The bishops remind us that if there is serious abuse, separation should be accepted as a lesser evil. In addition, it is possible to examine whether there are no legitimate grounds for annulling a marriage¹¹⁸.

The *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Polish Episcopal Conference calls for a pastoral interest in persons and families affected by random events: fire, disability, chronic illness, death in the family or other accidents. In these situations, the family care of relatives, and especially of pastoral workers, must be given a particularly strong voice. Their care for people so experienced requires not only an immediate interest in them, but also a long-term accompaniment of individuals and entire families. Most often it is not so much material help, although it is also important, but rather patiently showing the meaning of such events in the light of the faith that assures us that God is the Father who neither dies nor goes away; he is Love that is always faithful and does not pass away¹¹⁹.

Pastoral care for families should also cover all cases of families in abnormal situations. On the one hand, unfavourable trends in economics, politics and media and, on the other, the often encountered psychological, spiritual and religious immaturity of people getting married, cause a dangerous phenomenon of impermanence of marriages. As a result, a certain number of people either live in separation without entering into further marriages, or are abandoned by their spouse and live alone with a sense of harm. These people are often burdened with educational care for their offspring¹²⁰.

The editors of the *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Polish Episcopal Conference on Separation recommend a thorough catechesis of young people in the parish, during which,

¹¹⁶ Cf. DPFIE, n. 200; See PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA PASTORALE PER I MIGRANTI E GLI ITINERANTI, Istruzione *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (La carità di Cristo verso i migranti), 3.05.2004, Città del Vaticano 2004, AAS 96 (2004), p. 762-822. Polish text: PAPIESKA RADA DS. DUSZPASTERSTWA MIGRANTÓW I PODRÓŻNYCH, Instrukcja *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, Lublin 2008.

¹¹⁷ Cf. DPF, n. 121.

¹¹⁸ Cf. DPFIE, n. 201.

¹¹⁹ Cf. DDR, n. 72.

¹²⁰ Cf. DDR, n. 73.

long before the wedding, young people will be able to understand the basic marital and family responsibilities, which can prevent many marital and family tragedies. The authors suggest that married couples living in formal or de facto separation, and abandoned persons, should be known to pastors. They should strive to introduce them to parish groups (living rosary, charity groups, etc.) where they could experience support through witnessing to the lives of others and help those in need. Children of such marriages require special spiritual and sometimes material care. Pastors will offer them the opportunity to participate in parish children's groups, and to remember them, for example when organizing holidays and leisure¹²¹.

The Direttorio di pastorale familiare per la Chiesa in Italia states that there are situations when married life together becomes virtually impossible for various reasons. In such cases, the Church allows the physical separation of the spouses and the cessation of the life together. In such circumstances too, the Church's pastoral activity must be carried out with particular care in truth and love, so as to help people to live out the situation in a Christian way, while remaining faithful to the inextricable knot of their marriage. Pastors should help spouses to avoid separation, including through consultation and support by counselling centres with Christian inspiration¹²². When the conditions for separation also provided for by the Code of Canon Law are in place¹²³, and the spouses exercise their right to interrupt their coexistence, the Christian community, starting with the pastors and the more vulnerable married couples, must with attention, discretion and unity: recognise the value of the witness of fidelity that particularly the innocent spouse offers, accepting also the suffering and loneliness that the new situation causes; support the separated spouse, especially if he or she is innocent, in sadness and loneliness, inviting him or her to participate in community life with love and prudence; show them respect, understanding, solidarity and concrete support, especially at times when the temptation arises to move from loneliness to divorce and civil marriage; help them „to remain ready for a possible new beginning to their previous married life”¹²⁴. The Bishops point out that spouses living in separation must not experience any difficulties in being admitted to the sacraments¹²⁵.

The Directorio de la pastoral familiar de la Iglesia en España states on the separation of spouses that „there are, however, situations where married life together becomes virtually

¹²¹ Cf. DDR, n. 73.

¹²² „Of course, separation should be considered a last resort when all reasonable efforts have been in vain”, FC, n. 83.

¹²³ See Can. 1152-1153.

¹²⁴ FC, n. 83.

¹²⁵ Cf. DPF, n. 207-208.

impossible for various reasons. In such cases, the Church allows the physical separation of the spouses and the cessation of the life together. The spouses are still husband and wife before God and cannot enter into a new marriage. In this difficult situation, the best solution, if possible, would be reconciliation. The Christian community should help these people to live out the situation in a Christian way, while remaining faithful to the inextricable knot of their marriage”¹²⁶. The bishops remind us that as soon as there are objective reasons laid down by law and all possibilities for reconciliation have been ¹²⁷ exhausted, it may be advisable to resort to separation, bearing in mind that only the innocent party can fairly support a separation; it is always necessary to contact the competent ecclesiastical authority, which, in that case, may authorise recourse to a secular court¹²⁸; it is necessary to help settle the formalities before the ecclesiastical authority and possibly the civil authority, thus preventing any insults that might occur in the process and hampering any attempt at reconciliation¹²⁹.

The comment of the *Family Pastoral Care Directory* of the Church in Spain, according to which it is important to bear in mind not only the promotion of marriage, when marriage is important, but also when it appears to be an obvious possibility of invalidity of a given marriage. In this case, both family counselling centres and church judges should use the necessary pastoral measures to ensure that the spouses, if possible, are brought to the validity of the marriage and to resume their lives together. However, when, after consultation in the family counselling centre, the spouses have decided to take legal action to declare the marriage null and void, to dissolve the marriage in favour of the faith or to obtain dispensation from a marriage that has been entered into and not fulfilled, they must be made aware, among other things, that they must be prepared to submit to the rulings of the Church on these matters. They should not anticipate a court judgment, even if they have the subjective moral certainty that their marriage is invalid. The Spanish bishops remind us that it is necessary for legal advice to be provided to the spouses by genuinely Catholic professionals who are able to explain not only the procedures themselves but also the meaning of the procedures and accompany the spouses in a specific conflict situation. It is therefore also important to coordinate the church courts with the Centros de Orientación Familiar in view of such marital situations¹³⁰. The following recommendation is of great importance, according to which, in proceedings for the annulment of the prohibition (clause) on entering into a new marriage by

¹²⁶ Cf. DPFIE, n. 212; CCC, n. 1649.

¹²⁷ Cf. CIC can. 1151-1155; CCC, n. 2383; FC, n. 83-84.

¹²⁸ Cf. CIC can. 1692; Cf. CCC, n. 2383.

¹²⁹ Cf. DPFIE, footnote 226.

¹³⁰ Cf. DPFIE, n. 213.

persons who might annul the new marriage (once their marriage has been declared void), the church courts will also be able to ask the *Centros de Orientación Familiar* for appropriate expertise (psychological, spiritual, etc.)¹³¹. Referring to the can. 1689, this Directory recommends that, in the judgement, the parties should be reminded of their moral or civil obligations, which may be binding on one party to the other and on children, to ensure the maintenance, upbringing and transmission of the faith. The document reminds us to take great care to ensure that, as far as possible, children suffer as little as possible and have no regrets for their parents. Particular attention should be paid to the maintenance obligation towards children, as prescribed by the court, as well as respect for established visits¹³².

Conclusion

The appeal contained in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* to make every effort to organise and develop the pastoral care of families has been taken up by many conferences of bishops. The purpose of this presentation was to show, from a legal and pastoral point of view, the pastoral care of people living in marriage and the family in the light of the selected directorates. The directorships of the Church in Italy, Spain and Poland were taken into account. The article shows the definition of family pastoral care as a system of ecclesiastical activities which aim at realization of the salvific plan concerning marriage and family based on the truth about marriage and family, infallibly transmitted, interpreted and referred to the „signs of the times” by the Teachers' Office of the Church.

Attention has been drawn to the issue of the evangelisation of marriages and families, which would seek to restore the Christian identity of marriage and the family, so that the family itself becomes a community of persons at the service of human life and faith, the first and life-giving social unit, a believing and evangelising community, a true home church, a centre of communion and service to the Church.

The question of serving life and helping the family was then addressed. It was stated that the primary task of marriage and family is to serve life. Fertility is a gift, the purpose of marriage. Procreation is a specific part of the spouses' mission. Hence, one of the fundamental elements of family pastoral care is to help understand the value and dignity of human life. One form of assistance for spouses and parents is professional family counselling, support for

¹³¹ Cf. can. 1684 §1, 1685.

¹³² Cf. DPFIE, n. 213.

single mothers, families with no children, and material assistance for families, especially children.

Finally, the issue of pastoral care for families in special situations has been raised. It was reminded that the Church devotes much attention to families in difficult situations. Today's socio-cultural reality reveals many marital situations that are difficult or incorrect. These marriages and families should be the focus of the Church's attention and should be given special care. This care is needed not only by individual families, but by entire categories of families.

It should be stressed that the directorates in question, based on the provisions of the Code of Canon Law and other juridical norms, as well as making extensive use of other documents of the universal Church and the particular Churches, offer extensive and effective assistance to married couples and families in all dimensions, which, if put into practice, will undoubtedly promote the revival of marriages and families and the fulfilment of their mission towards God, the Church and society.