

27 (2023) nr 2 (62), s. 43-54

DOI <https://doi.org/10.21697/snr.2023.62.2.5>



This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY-ND 4.0 International) license.  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0>

**Mieczysław Ozorowski**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6081-0134>

Wydział Studiów nad Rodziną UKSW w Warszawie

e-mail: [m.ozorowski@uksw.edu.pl](mailto:m.ozorowski@uksw.edu.pl)

## The strategy of accompanying marriage and the family in the Church in Poland

### Strategia towarzyszenia małżeństwu i rodzinie w Kościele w Polsce

**Abstract:** The Church authorities have for some time been showing a lot of attention to family issues, although it is difficult to look for the word *strategy* in them. A lot of scientific work has been written on this subject in recent years. Similarly to the state and local government documents, we find two parts: analytical and practical, which contain postulates and proposals of actions. The analysis of family issues is presented in the documents promulgated by the councils, synods and last popes and bishops. The pastoral care of families deals with the practical part of this strategy. For several decades, the Church has devoted a lot of strength and resources to maintaining the Christian model of marriage and the family. The Church strongly opposes all alternative forms of marriage and family and all that harms the value of life, monogamous marriage and the family. As part of the Pastoral Care of Families, the church has developed many different forms of support for marriages and families.

**Keywords:** family assistance strategy, family accompaniment, pastoral care of families.

**Abstrakt:** Władze kościelne od pewnego czasu poświęcają wiele uwagi zagadnieniom rodziny, choć trudno wśród nich szukać słowa *strategia*. W ostatnich latach powstało na ten temat niemało prac naukowych. Podobnie jak w dokumentach państwowych i samorządowych, znajdujemy w nich dwie części: analityczną i praktyczną, zawierającą postulaty i propozycje działań. Analiza problematyki rodzinnej przedstawiona jest w dokumentach promulgowanych przez sobory, synody oraz ostatnich papieży i biskupów. Duszpasterstwo Rodzin zajmuje się praktyczną częścią tej strategii. Od kilkudziesięciu lat Kościół poświęca wiele sił i środków na utrzymanie chrześcijańskiego modelu małżeństwa i rodziny. Kościół zdecydowanie sprzeciwia się wszelkim alternatywnym formom małżeństwa i rodziny oraz wszystkiemu, co szkodzi wartości życia, monogamicznemu małżeństwu i rodzinie. W ramach Duszpasterstwa Rodzin Kościół opracował liczne formy wsparcia dla małżeństw i rodzin

**Słowa kluczowe:** strategia pomocy rodzinie, towarzyszenie rodzinie, duszpasterstwo rodzin.

### Introduction

It is impossible to find any document among the ecclesial texts which would be entitled “The Church’s strategy for the family”. However, it does not mean that the Church has lost Her interest in the family. On the contrary, the Magisterium of the Church have issued so many documents devoted to the family, particularly recently. The Church authorities have been focusing their attention and certain care on family issues. Many scientific works have been written on the subject. I have been dealing with the subject of the Church’s assistance to the family myself as

well<sup>1</sup>. The Church is using Her own language which differs from the political and sociological terminology. Documents of the Church indicate the mission, vision or various pastoral programmes instead of the strategy. Similarly, the contemporarily promoted term “accompanying” is more emphasised, instead of the terms “concern”, “care”, “promotion”, “pastoral activity” etc. This article, which is divided into two parts, contains the synthetic conclusions from the basic strategic documents of the Church. Further on, it indicates the examples of certain suggestions of the Church’s activity in the light of the contemporary social challenges.

The documents of the Church and the state and local government documents are usually divided into two parts: analytical and practical. The latter contains the demands and suggestions for practical solutions. The analysis of family issues is contained in a wide range of documents promulgated by councils, by synods and by the latest popes and bishops. The practical part of the article presents the tasks for the pastoral care of families. For the last decades the Church has been devoting time and effort to maintain the Christian models of marriage and the family which have been subjected to a strong ideological pressure of individualism and secularization. The Church strongly opposes any alternative forms of marriage and the family and everything that goes against the value of life, of monogamous marriage and of the family. Apart from providing the positive example of marriage, the documents of the Church contain a strong polemical component with regard to the contemporary culture and social situation. The Church promotes the pastoral care of families as the main source of various forms of assistance and care for marriage and the family.

It should be noticed that despite the crisis of the institution of marriage and of the family, which has been proclaimed by sociologists in Europe and in the world, these institutions remain a superior and priority value<sup>2</sup>. Family is the basic place for transmitting values, norms and patterns of social, moral and religious behaviours. According to sociological research, for the majority of Polish people family still remains the basic value which gives meaning to life<sup>3</sup>.

## I. The doctrinal foundation of the Church’s teaching on the family in Poland

The Church has always paid great attention to the issues concerning marriage and the family. In the past the Church’s activity for these institutions was usually direct and it was realized within the general pastoral care. Occasionally, the Church took certain special initiatives for the family. It usually took place through homiletic and catechetical teaching which were realized in the church and in the family. Traditionally, the concern for the family was shown on the occasion of preparation and ministering sacraments as well as through proclaiming the Word of Christ. For more than 100 years the Church has been noticing the insufficiency of such proceedings and the necessity to undertake special pastoral actions in favour of marriage and the family. We can notice that in the teaching of Popes Leo XIII, Pius IX and Paul VI. However, it was Pope John Paul II who devoted the most attention and concern to these issues and thus He was called “the Pope of the Family”. It is impossible to briefly describe his whole teaching on marriage and the family.

1 M. Ozorowski, *Strategia pomocy rodzinie w Kościele. Zarys problematyki na przykładzie doświadczeń polskich*, “Studia Aloisiana” 2020, vol. 11, no 3, p. 37–50.

2 J. Mariański, *Kondycja moralna polskiej rodziny*, “Studia Płockie” 2005, vol. 33, p. 149–150.

3 M. Wenzel, *Wartości życiowe. Komunikat z badań CBOS. BS/98/2004*, Warszawa 2004, p. 2–6; J. Żakowski, *Polak, czyli kto?* “Polityka” 2004, vol. 25, p. 6; p.H. Zaręba, *Postawy Polaków wobec zasad moralnych religii katolickiej*, w: *Kościół katolicki na początku trzeciego tysiąclecia w opinii Polaków*, W. Zdaniewicz, p.H. Zaręba (ed.), Warszawa 2004, p. 93–102.

He left a huge literary output concerning these issues, which has continuously been analysed and thoroughly read by the recipients. Among the most important documents in this field there is the post-conciliar apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (FC) from 1981 in which the Pope presented the Christian vision of marriage and in which he presented the designated family assistance programme. In 1983 the Holy See, inspired by John Paul II, promulgated the *Charter of the Rights of the Family*. In 1994 the Pope declared the *Year of the Family* and wrote the Letter to Families *Gratissimam Sane*. The teaching of Pope John Paul II on the family was taken over by His successors: Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. The latter convened two synods devoted to the family at the beginning of his pontificate and promulgated the exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (AL) in 2016. The Pope indicated the necessity to use new methods in the work with families and the need for particular attention to families in difficult and irregular situations. He was the author of the term *accompanying* to marriages and families.

In Poland this need for such actions was noticed and emphasised by Cardinal Wyszyński during the preparations for the Great Novenna of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland (1957–1966)<sup>4</sup>. During these years the Church in Poland suggested a range of pastoral initiatives which would aim at raising the moral and religious level in the families. Thanks to this programme, a greater number of families could defend themselves against the ideological indoctrination and could become a creative medium of the culture rooted in the Catholic tradition<sup>5</sup>. The Strategy and the Programme of the Great Novenna were highly appreciated by the Polish pastoral theologians<sup>6</sup>.

During the Communist regime in Poland the pastoral systemic planning was seriously hampered. Nevertheless, the Polish bishops prioritised the issues regarding marriage and the family. An example of this is the three-year series suggested by Cardinal Primate Stefan Wyszyński and by the Polish Episcopal Council: *Ewangelizacja a rodzina Polska* [*Evangelisation and the Polish Family*]. It was supposed to be realized in three stages: 1978/1979 – *Rodzina Kościołem domowym – Kościół domowy w służbie życia* [*The Family as the Domestic Church – the Domestic Church in the service of life*]; 1979/1980 – *Rodzina w dziele wychowania (ewangelizacji) młodego pokolenia* [*The Family in the service of upbringing (evangelisation) of the young generation*]; 1980/1981 – *Ewangelizacja środowiska przez rodzinę* [*Evangelisation of the environment by the family*]<sup>7</sup>. Similar issues were raised 10 years later: the programme of the liturgical year 1989/1990 under the motto: *Evangelisation of the family and through the family* and of the liturgical year 1993/1994: *Evangelisation of the marriage and family community*. The bishops wanted the faithful to get to know the teaching of John Paul II on the family through these programmes. In the post-war Polish Episcopate, apart from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, there were a few outstanding bishops who were considered to be the active promoters and defenders of the traditional marriage and family. Among these there was Cardinal Karol Wojtyła – later Pope John Paul II, Archbishop Kazimierz Majdański – the founder of the Institute of Family Studies ATK/UKSW, Bishop Wilhelm Pluta and Bishop Stanisław Stefanek. They faced the challenges of contemporary times and tried to plan the strategies for acting in Poland which aimed at helping institutions of marriage and the family.

The Polish Bishops were strategically developing the so called anthropological family accompaniment programme. It was based on the principles of the Catholic social science, that is on the principles of social justice and love. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, in particular

4 A. Skreczko, *Wybrane przejawy troski Kościoła Katolickiego o rodzinę w Polsce*, “Studia nad Rodziną” 2009, vol. 13, no. 1–2, p. 130.

5 A. Skreczko, *Wybrane przejawy troski Kościoła Katolickiego o rodzinę w Polsce*, p. 132.

6 K. Misiaszek, *Programy duszpasterskie: pomoc czy przeszkoda?*, “AK” 1993, vol. 506, no 85, p. 80.

7 A. Skreczko, *Wybrane przejawy troski Kościoła Katolickiego o rodzinę w Polsce*, p. 133.

it was the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes* (GeS 48), was a new impulse for strengthening the activity of the Church for the family. It meant the explicit departure from the juridical understanding of the sacrament of marriage and transition to the pastoral direction where the natural dignity of the relationship and the fundamental significance of the mutual love of the spouses were emphasised<sup>8</sup>.

After Poland regained freedom in 1989, a new chapter began for the Polish Church. In 1991 the Second Plenary Synod of Poland was convened and it lasted until 1999 (the Second Plenary Synod of Poland). The Synod scrupulously dealt with the issues of the family, which was particularly indicated in the document *W trosce o polską rodzinę* [*For the sake of the Polish family*]. Ten years later the Polish Episcopate promulgated a strategic document on marriage and the family called: *Służyć prawdzie o małżeństwie i rodzinie* [*To serve the Truth About Marriage and the Family*] (EP 2009). The bishops reminded of the traditional teaching of the Church on the family, conducted an analysis of the situation of the family in Poland and appealed to the state and to the local authorities to conduct the pro-family policy in our country. The bishops regularly publish messages on the Feast of the Holy Family, which are addressed to the faithful and which remind of the Christian concept of marriage and the family. The Pontifical Council for the Family as well as the Polish Episcopate continuously remind that family is and should be the basic protagonist of the pro-family policy. The Church continuously appeals to all the experts, in particular to the demographers, economists and political analysts to deepen their scientific research with regard to the role of the family in society despite the ongoing major changes<sup>9</sup>.

The Church in Poland has noticed the need for the thorough scientific formation of the people who accompany the family. Thus a few centres of family accompanying were created in order to educate the personnel for family accompanying in the Catholic spirit. In 1995 the Congregation for Catholic Education issued a document *Wskazania dla formacji alumnów dotyczące zagadnień małżeństwa i rodziny* [*Directives on the Formation of Seminarians Concerning Problems Related to Marriage and the Family*], which has become the basis for the programme of the pro-family education of seminarians and priests<sup>10</sup>. One of the first scientific and formation centres was the Institute of Family Studies ATK in Warsaw, which in 2010 was transformed into the Department of Family Studies UKSW. In 1995 a new field of study “Family studies” was created<sup>11</sup>. What is more, there are a few scientific magazines created at that time which publish articles within the field of family studies e.g. “*Studia nad Rodziną*” [*Family studies*], “*Sprawy rodziny*” [*Family affairs*].

## II. Pastoral postulates

The strategy of family accompaniment does not only involve scientific and analytical activity but mainly real pastoral action. The Church realizes Her strategy of family accompaniment through

8 K. Majdański, *Inspiracje II Soboru Watykańskiego dla studiów nad rodziną*, w: *W służbie godności małżeństwa i rodziny. 10-lecie Instytutu Studiów nad Rodziną ATK*, K. Majdański (ed.), Łomianki 1985, p. 31–37.

9 M. Brzeziński, *Wybrane aspekty polityki prorodzinnej w dokumentach Papieskiej Rady Ds. Rodziny*, “*Studia nad Rodziną*” 2012, vol. 16, no. 1–2, p. 69–86; J. Mariański, *Kondycja moralna polskiej rodziny*, “*Studia Płockie*” 2005, vol. 33, p. 146–147.

10 A. Skreczko, *Troska Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce o rodzinę po drugiej wojnie światowej*, “*Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej*” UwB 2003, vol. 2, p. 41–73.

11 M. Ozorowski, *Historia starań o utworzenie dyscypliny nauki o rodzinie w Polsce*, w: *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, J. Stala (ed.), Kraków 2014, p. 79–96.

Her structures and institutions. They consist of a few levels, according to the ecclesial structure. Generally they are called the pastoral care of the family<sup>12</sup>. The pro-family activity of the Church is conducted by various ecclesial institutions, not necessarily directly connected with families, e.g. through social organizations such as Caritas or through the Catholic media etc. on top of the structure of the pastoral care of the family there was the Pontifical Council for the Family (*Pontificium Consilium pro Familia*). It was established by John Paul II in 1981. It replaced the committee for family affairs created by John Paul II in 1973. Pope Francis joined the Council with the newly-created Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. The teaching and activity of the Council for the Family was described in detail by M. Brzeziński<sup>13</sup>. The Council dealt with such issues as: theology and family catechesis, conjugal and family spirituality, family rights and child's rights, formation of laity who are responsible for the pastoral care of the family, for pre-marriage courses and for the organization of World Families Meetings. We can say that the Council inspired and coordinated the pro-family activity of the Holy See both inside the Church and for the state and international institutions. The Council issued a series of documents and its employees participated in many international conferences promoting the pro-family policy<sup>14</sup>.

### 1. The Structure of the pastoral care of families

Poland, similarly to other countries, established the Polish Episcopal Council for the Family (basically in 1965 but formally in 1995) as well as the National Centre of Pastoral Care of Families (kodr. pl). The Council consists of bishops and counsellors both secular and clergymen. The Council works on the strategy of family assistance in Poland through preparation of documents and initiating actions which aim at supporting marriage and the family (J. Kamiński, 2013). The Council performs memorials and proclamations addressed to the state authorities. One of the most important documents of the Council is *Dyrektorium duszpasterstwa Rodzin [Directorium of the Pastoral Care of Families]*<sup>15</sup>. The central executive body of the Polish Episcopate for the Family is the National Centre of Pastoral Care of Families managed by the domestic chaplain for families and the domestic counsellor of family life. The aim of the Centre is to inform, animate and coordinate the work and be the intermediary between the Polish Episcopate and the diocesan structures within family assistance especially with regard to family life counselling. Each diocese should have its own Diocesan Pastoral Care of Families priest and the Diocesan Family Life Counsellor. Their task is to coordinate work of the deanery and parish pastoral care priests and family life counsellors. They take care of the formation of all the employees of the pastoral care of the family in the diocese<sup>16</sup>. They should also provide proper aids and materials for the work with families. They are also to take care of such diocesan institutions as: Dom Samotnej Matki [Single Mother's House], Katolicki Ośrodek Adopcyjno-Opiekuńczy [The Catholic Adoption and Care Centre], Specjalistyczna Poradnia Rodzinna [Specialist Family Counselling Centre], the helpline, the material assistance for the poor and for families in need etc. The care for marriages and families in the parish is the task

12 R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce. Uwarunkowania – zadania – prognozy*, Lublin 2001, p. 64.

13 M. Brzeziński, *W trosce o życie, małżeństwo i rodzinę. Nauczanie Papieskiej Rady ds. Rodziny w latach 1981-2016*, Lublin 2016.

14 M. Brzeziński, *Wybrane aspekty polityki prorodzinnej w dokumentach Papieskiej Rady Ds. Rodziny*, "Studia nad Rodziną" 2012, vol. 16, no. 1–2, p. 69–86.

15 Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, *Dyrektorium Duszpasterstwa Rodzin* (01.05.2003), Warszawa 2003 (DDR).

16 G. Pyżlak, *Pracownicy duszpasterstwa rodzin i ich zadania*, "Studia nad Rodziną" 2015, vol. 19, no 2, p. 67–87.

of general pastoral care. Nevertheless, the deaneries and in parishes there should appoint priests who work in the pastoral care of the and who cooperate with the laity in this field.

The Church's accompaniment to the family is realized within the general pastoral care through proclaiming the Word of God and through ministering sacraments. The priests implement the message of the Church's teaching through catechesis, preaching homilies and the parish retreats. This assistance mainly concerns the spiritual matters. What is more, there is the specialist Pastoral Care of Families which mainly aims to care for the community dimension of marriage and the family. It should also support building the conjugal and family bonds<sup>17</sup>. Conflicts destroy the bond between husband and wife. With time they can turn into a long-term crisis. Therefore, this is where the spiritual guidance and professional counselling which will allow for deepening conjugal and family bonds (AL 51–57, 120–125)<sup>18</sup>. One of the aids which prevent conflicts is leading the conjugal and family dialogues<sup>19</sup>. At first the Church expresses Her concern for preserving the natural unity and indissolubility of marriage. Then She takes care for the spouses so that they could discover that they are the domestic Church and so that they could take care of their spiritual life, for the prayer and for sacramental life in the family<sup>20</sup>. The basis for this is the spouses' participation in the three-fold mission of Christ: the shepherd, the prophet and the priest (DDR 52–55).

## 2. Concern for life

One of the most important tasks for the Pastoral Care of Families is the concern for human life because one of the basic tasks of the family is to serve life (FC 28). The Church pays special attention to defending the life of the unborn, to teaching the natural methods of family planning and to the pro-family educating of children and young people. The Church opposes abortion, contraception, medically assisted artificial procreation (*in vitro*) and any activity which is harmful to the human life<sup>21</sup>. The Church encourages to pray for the unborn children especially through the Krucjatę Modlitwy w Obronie poczętych Dzieci [The Crusade Prayer to defend the unborn children] or through the spiritual adoption of a conceived child<sup>22</sup>. Since 2005 Poland has been celebrating the National Day of Life on March 24th. One of the most precious initiatives is the so called Window of Life [*okno życia*]<sup>23</sup>. In our country there are many active and thriving movements for the unborn life protection which spread the information about the dignity of each conceived child. They are associated in Polska Federacja Ruchów Obrony Życia [the Polish Federation of Life Protection Movements]<sup>24</sup>. The Church implements the policy of family accompaniment through the promotion and teaching of natural family planning methods<sup>25</sup>.

17 E. Ozorowski, *Małżeństwo jako komunia osób*, "Studia nad Rodziną" 2002, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 130–149.

18 M. Ryś, *Psychologia małżeństwa. Zarys problematyki*, Warszawa 1993.

19 D. Rubacha, *Dialog małżeński i rodzinny*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie" 2009, vol. 2, p. 222–233.

20 R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce. Uwarunkowania – zadania – prognozy*, Lublin 2001, p. 225.

21 J. Kamiński, *Troska o życie ludzkie*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, p. 324–334.

22 Sz. Stulkowski, *Duchowa adopcja dziecka poczętego*, w: *Komisja Duszpasterstwa Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, Program duszpasterski Kościoła w Polsce na lata 2006/2009. Kościół niosący Ewangelię nadziei, Rok 2008/2009. Otoczmy troską życie*, p. Stulkowski (ed.), Poznań 2008, p. 320.

23 <https://caritas.pl/projekty/okna-zycia>.

24 <https://jedenznas.pl>.

25 U. Dudziak, A. Deluga (eds.), *Naturalne planowanie rodziny. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Szczecinek 2006.

The Church takes particular care for the beginning and the end of the human life. She firmly opposes euthanasia<sup>26</sup>. One of the tasks entrusted to the Pastoral care of the families is to expose the hypocrisy of the supporters of euthanasia (DDR, 70). The teaching of the Church commands to take care for the elderly and for the sick, particularly at the end of their lives (FC 27, AL). The family home should be the place where they can end their lives in peace among their families. What is more, the Church supports the palliative care and the hospice care. It is also the task for the Pastoral Care of Families. The support is offered to the dying as well as to their families<sup>27</sup>. It is specifically realized in the palliative care through home hospices and through family carers<sup>28</sup>. The Church is one of the main inspirers of this hospice movement. The Church's strategy in the field of the life issues consists in taking care of life from the moment of conception until the natural death.

### 3. Preparation for family life

The Church emphasises the importance of a proper preparation for marriage and family life. It is indicated in consecutive documents – from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council (PCoC 49) and the Code of the Canon Law (CCC can. 1063), the teaching of Popes and the consecutive instructions issued by the Holy See and by different Episcopates<sup>29</sup>. It should proceed in three stages – the remote preparation, the proximate preparation and the immediate preparation (DDR 18). We can say that the Church takes the long-term preventive measures. They consist in adaptation of the subject matter of the meetings to various stages of personalities of the faithful who want to start the family. The preparation is meant not only to transmit the knowledge and doctrine of marriage and of family and the practice of married and family life. The remote preparation takes place in the family and at school through catechesis and at the class of *Wychowanie do życia w rodzinie* [Education for family life]<sup>30</sup>. The pre-marriage catecheses are an indispensable factor for introducing into the Christian model of marriage (DDR 24–26). The proximate preparation is realized in the parish during meetings and discussions with priests directly before contracting sacramental marriage. The prospective spouses should participate in the catecheses on faith and on the theology of marriage. They should go to the meetings in the family life counselling centre and go to pre-marriage confession (DDR 27–36).

### 4. Family counselling centres

One of the main tools of realization the strategy of family accompaniment are the family counselling centres which have been operating in Poland for a few decades. The Church worked out the whole system of family counselling. It is described in the Directory for Family Counselling [Dyrektorium Poradnictwa Rodzinnego] (DDR 37–50)<sup>31</sup>. They are based on the Parish Family

26 B. Chyrowicz (ed.), *Eutanazja: prawo do życia – prawo do wolności*, Lublin 2005.

27 P. Krakowiak, *Duszpasterstwo w zespołowej opiece paliatywno-hospicyjnej. Nowe wyzwania*, "Teologia i Człowiek" 2009, vol. 14, p. 139–157.

28 <https://www.hospicja.pl>.

29 G. Pyżlak, *Przygotowanie do życia małżeńskiego i rodzinnego*, w: *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, p. 341–371.

30 M. Chmielewski, *Katecheza rodzinna w kontekście współczesnych uwarunkowań społeczno-eklezyjalnych*, w: *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, A. Tomkiewicz, W. Wieczorek (eds.), Lublin 2010, p. 305–321.

31 P. Ładwójtowicz, *Duszpasterskie poradnictwo małżeńskie – założenia teoretyczne*, w: *Matrimonio et familiae. Z problematyki małżeństwa i rodziny*, "Człowiek, Rodzina, Społeczeństwo" t. 26, Opole 2016, p. 167–183.

Counselling Centres. They aim at, among others, promoting pro-family attitudes as well as teaching the principles of responsible parenthood and helping in solving problems in families and problems with educating children (DDR 39). Apart from the counselling centres in the parishes, the Church encourages to establish Specialist Family Counselling Centres in the dioceses which would employ specialists of various fields: psychologists, educators, lawyers, doctors and educators of Natural Family Planning (DDR 44). A lot of time and effort is devoted to the teaching of responsible parenthood and to the methods of recognizing fertility in order to prevent using contraception and protect from abortion<sup>32</sup>.

The helpline should definitely be a part of the counselling centre structure in order to provide assistance to people in need who want to remain anonymous<sup>33</sup>. The Church authorities also encourage to organize single mothers houses and The Catholic Adoption and Care Centres (DDR45–46). The Church also tries to help families in need. It is usually done through the diocesan Caritas. This aid is mainly addressed to children.

### 5. The spiritual dimension of counselling

The Church aims at leading people to salvation. Counselling has the spiritual dimension and it is realized through apostolate and evangelization<sup>34</sup>. The Church's strategy is realized in the proposal for spouses and parents to participate in the catecheses for adults, in preparing children and young people for each consecutive sacrament, in teaching the ability to read the Holy Scripture. The Church encourages spouses to frequently go to confession<sup>35</sup>. An honest conversation with a priest has a deeply therapeutic meaning<sup>36</sup>. Family is a domestic Church therefore parents are reminded not only about the Sunday Mass but also about the whole liturgical year which is an occasion to deepen their spiritual life (DDR 51–55). *Rytuał rodzinny* [*The family ritual*] by bishop Józef Wysocki is a valuable tool in this respect<sup>37</sup>.

The Church in Poland offers the families the annual visit of a priest at homes of the faithful during the Christmas period, these are called *kolęda*<sup>38</sup>. Priests encourage the faithful to solemnly celebrate anniversaries: of the wedding, of births of children, of the death of family members etc. (DDR 57). Poland is the country of pilgrimages, therefore, the offer of various pilgrimages is also very broad as there are plenty sanctuaries to go to, particularly Jasna Góra. There is also a wide range of offers of pious ways of spending free time during holidays for young people and for the whole families (DDR 59).

### 6. Accompaniment to the family in difficult situations

Families in difficult situations should be in the centre of attention of the Church. They should be taken care of in a particular way. In the situation of a conflict which can end in a separation or

32 A. Dziuba, *Narzeczeni wobec ludzkiej płodności. Studium pastoralne*, Rzeszów 2009; W. Kućko (ed.), *Vademecum narzeczonych*, "Biblioteka Duszpasterstwa Rodzin", no. 4, Płocki Instytut Wydawniczy, Płock 2017.

33 M. Kalinowski, *Duszpasterski telefon zaufania*, "Efektywne zarządzanie Parafią" 2004, no. 5, p. 1–17.

34 J. Krajczyński, *Prawo rodziny do opieki duszpasterskiej*, Płock 2007.

35 M. Dziewiecki, *Kierownictwo duchowe narzeczonych i małżonków*, w: *Sztuka kierownictwa duchowego. Poradnik dla księży*, J. Augustyn, J. Kłacz (eds.), Kraków 2007, p. 549–558.

36 J. Młyński, *Rozmowy, które leczą*, Tarnów 2017.

37 J. Wysocki, *Rytuał rodzinny*, WDR, Włocławek 2003.

38 D. Lipiec, *Odwiedziny duszpasterskie rodzin*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, p. 418–432.



a divorce, the family needs the assistance of a therapist or a psychologist (AL. 242–246). Family counsellors should have proper knowledge in order to send the people with problems to proper specialists<sup>39</sup>. The Church tries to help childless parents to foster a child and, if it is not possible, She supports them in finding other forms of life fulfilment. Priests also try to accompany families with disabled children (DDR 68)<sup>40</sup>. The Church structures contain various forms of assistance for families with members who are addicted to drugs, alcohol and with other behavioural addictions<sup>41</sup>. Traditionally the Church takes care of elderly people. What is more, She organizes the pastoral care of widows, widowers and lonely (DDR70–71).

### 7. Providing accompaniment to families in irregular situations

The Church notices the processes which lead to the crisis and destruction of the institution of the family. In Her teaching the Church criticises and exposes. Nevertheless, She does not leave people in their misery but reaches out to them. She tries to support divorced people and those who live in separation. She offers them various forms of engagement into the life of the parish, and the children from such relationships are particularly taken care of (DDR 73)<sup>42</sup>.

The Pope and bishops encourage to create the pastoral care of other people who are in irregular relationships: single-parent families, mixed marriages, cohabiting couples, homosexual relationships and others (AL 247–252). As a result of numerous divorces and the increase in the number of cohabiting couples, the Church organizes the pastoral care of non-sacramental relationships, giving them the chance to find their place in the Church for those who cannot contract sacramental marriage in the Church (DDR 74)<sup>43</sup>.

### 8. Pro-family movements

People have the natural need to join in communities, groups and associations. It is also characteristic for the faithful (ChL 29)<sup>44</sup>. It would be perfect to transform parishes into communities of families. In Poland there are various family-oriented religious movements. One of the oldest and most popular religious movements is the Domestic Church [Kościół Domowy] which belongs to the oasis movement founded by Father Franciszek Blachnicki (DDR 76). There are also other important movements in Poland including the pro-lifers associated in Federacja Ruchów Obrońców Życia [the Federation of Pro-life Movements] (DDR 77–80). Families can also join Stowarzyszenie Rodzin Katolickich [the Catholic Family Associations] or get engaged into Akcja Katolicka [The Catholic Action] (DDR 81–82). These are the typical Polish greatest movements

39 E. Sujak, *Poradnictwo małżeńskie i rodzinne*, Katowice 1995; L. Szymczyk, *Poradnictwo rodzinne jako forma wsparcia małżeństwa i rodziny*, “Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne” 2016, vol. 49, no 1, p. 183–197.

40 A. Kiciński, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin z niepełnosprawnościami*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, p. 546–564.

41 A. Baran (ed.), *Duchowa terapia osób uzależnionych*, Warszawa 2006.

42 G. Pyżlak, *Duszpasterstwo związków niesakramentalnych*, “Roczniki Teologiczne” 2006, vol. 53, no. 6, p. 175–186; W. Kućko, *Implementacja posynodalnej adhortacji apostołskiej „Amoris laetitia” papieża Franciszka w duszpasterstwie związków nieregularnych w diecezji płockiej*, “Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana” 2020, no 36, p. 197–219.

43 J. Mariański, *Kondycja moralna polskiej rodziny*, “Studia Płockie” 2005, no 33, p. 141–159; M. Ozorowski, *Miejsce ludzi rozwiedzionych w Kościele*, w: Kościół, Rodzina, Życie, M. Ozorowski, A. Skreczko (ed.), Warszawa 2011, p. 145–154.

44 W. Śmigiel, *Uczestnictwo wiernych świeckich w budowaniu Kościoła-Wspólnoty. Studium teologiczno-pastoralne w świetle nauczania Kościoła (1961–2009)*, Lublin 2010.

for families. Spouses and parents can also join many other movements and associations – local or international ones, e.g.: Droga Neokatechumenalna [The Neocatechumenal Way], Chemin Neuf, Spotkania Małżeńskie [The Marriage Encounters], Przymierze Rodzin [The Covenant of Families], Focolari Movement, Wspólnoty Jerozolimskie [Jerusalem Communities], the Emanuel Community, Equipes Notre-Dame, the Schoenstatt Movement etc<sup>45</sup>.

## Conclusions

The strategy of family accompaniment and providing aid to the family by the Church are broad topics. It is not possible to make a thorough review of all the issues concerning them. The article is only an overview. Although it is not possible to find the word ‘strategy’ in the Church’s teaching, the Church has Her clear vision of marriage and the family and of the way of accompanying the family. Recently many scientific publications have been written on this subject. The article is divided into two parts (similarly to the state and local government documents): the analytical and practical which contains postulates and proposals for measures. The first part of the review of family issues presents a variety of documents promulgated by councils, synods and the latest popes and by particular bishops. The practical part of this strategy is devoted to the pastoral care of families as well as to the general pastoral care and to other ecclesial institutions which address the family in their actions. For a few decades the Church has been devoting a lot of effort and means to preserve the Christian model of marriage and the family. The Church strongly opposes all the alternative forms of marriage and the family and to all that goes against the value of life, of monogamous marriage and the family. Apart from the positive message about marriage, the ecclesial documents contain a large polemical component. The Church developed a variety of forms to support marriage and the family within the pastoral care of the families, which was briefly described in the second part of the article. The assumptions are noble but the implementation differs depending on the conditions of the Church in each particular place.

## Bibliography

- Baran A. (ed.), *Duchowa terapia osób uzależnionych*, Warsaw 2006.
- Bieleń R., *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce. Uwarunkowania – zadania – prognozy*, Lublin 2001.
- Brzeziński M., *W trosce o życie, małżeństwo i rodzinę. Nauczanie Papieskiej Rady ds. Rodziny w latach 1981–2016*, Lublin 2016.
- Brzeziński M., *Wybrane aspekty polityki prorodzinnej w dokumentach Papieskiej Rady ds. Rodziny*, “Studia nad Rodziną” 2012, vol. 16, no. 1–2, s. 69–86.
- Chmielewski M., *Katecheza rodzinna w kontekście współczesnych uwarunkowań społeczno-eklezyjalnych*, w: *Rodzina jako Kościół* dSomowy, A. Tomkiewicz, W. Wieczorek (ed.), Lublin 2010, s. 305–321.
- Chyrowicz B. (ed.), *Eutanazja: prawo do życia – prawo do wolności*, Lublin 2005.
- Dudziak U., Deluga A. (ed.), *Naturalne planowanie rodziny. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Szczecinek 2006.
- Dziewiecki M., *Kierownictwo duchowe narzeczonych i małżonków*, w: *Sztuka kierownictwa duchowego. Poradnik dla księży*, J. Augustyn, J. Kłacz (eds.), Cracow 2007, s. 549–558.
- Dziuba A., *Narzeczeni wobec ludzkiej płodności. Studium pastoralne*, Rzeszów 2009.

45 A. Skreczko, *Wybrane przejawy troski Kościoła Katolickiego o rodzinę w Polsce*, “Studia nad Rodziną” 2009, vol. 13, no. 1–2, p. 129–148; W. Śmigiel, *Zrzeszenia rodzin katolickich w Polsce*, “Roczniki Pastoralno-Katechetyczne” 2010, vol. 57, no. 2, p. 65–75.

- Franciszek, Adhortacja *Amoris laetitia* (16.03.2016), Vatican 2016 (AL).
- John Paul II, Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (22.11.1981), Vatican 1981 (FC).
- John Paul II, Exhortation, *Christifideles laici* (30.12.1988), Vatican 1988 (ChL).
- John Paul II, Letter to Families, *Gratissimum sane* (2.02.1994), Vatican 1994.
- Kalinowski M., *Duszpasterski telefon zaufania*, "Efektywne zarządzanie Parafią" 2004, no 5, s. 1–17.
- Kamiński J., *Struktury funkcje Duszpasterstwa Rodzin*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, s. 295–308.
- Kamiński J., *Troska o życie ludzkie*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, s. 324–334.
- Kiciński A., *Duszpasterstwo rodzin z niepełnosprawnościami*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, s. 546–564.
- Kłys J.A. (ed.), *Nauki o rodzinie*, Warsaw 1995.
- Kućko W., *Implementacja posynodalnej adhortacji apostolskiej „Amoris laetitia” papieża Franciszka w duszpasterstwie związków nieregularnych w diecezji płockiej*, "Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana" 2020, no 36, s. 197–219.
- Kućko W. (ed.), *Vademecum narzeczonych*, "Biblioteka Duszpasterstwa Rodzin", no. 4, Płocki Instytut Wydawniczy, Płock 2017.
- The Council for the Family of the Polish Bishops' Conference, *Zadania pracowników duszpasterstwa rodzin [The tasks of the pastoral care of families workers]* (20.12.1984), "Sprawy Rodziny" 1985, no 2, s. 25–26.
- The Conference of the Polish Episcopal Council, *Dyrektorium Duszpasterstwa Rodzin* (01.05.2003), Warsaw 2003 (DDR).
- The Conference of the Polish Episcopal Council, *II Polski Synod Plenarny (1991–1999)*, Poznań 2001.
- The Conference of the Polish Episcopal Council, *Służyć prawdzie o małżeństwie i rodzinie [Serving the truth about marriage and the family]*, Warsaw 2009.
- Congregation for Catholic Education for Seminaries and Scientific Institutes, *Wskazania dla formacji alumnów dotyczące zagadnień małżeństwa i rodziny [Indications for the formation of alumni concerning marriage and the family]*, Vatican 1995.
- Krajczyński J., *Prawo rodziny do opieki duszpasterskiej*, Płock 2007.
- Krakowiak P., *Duszpasterstwo w zespołowej opiece paliatywno-hospicyjnej. Nowe wyzwania*, "Teologia i Człowiek" 2009, no 14, s. 139–157.
- Ladwójtowicz P., *Duszpasterskie poradnictwo małżeńskie – założenia teoretyczne*, w: *Matrimonio et familiae. Z problematyki małżeństwa i rodziny*, "Człowiek, Rodzina, Społeczeństwo" vol. 26, Opole 2016, s. 167–183.
- Leo XIII, Encyclical on Christian Marriage *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, Vatican 1880, [http://kodr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/leon\\_xiii\\_arcanum\\_divinae.pdf](http://kodr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/leon_xiii_arcanum_divinae.pdf) (access from July 15th, 2020).
- Lipiec D., *Odwiedziny duszpasterskie rodzin*, w: R. Kamiński (ed.), *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, s. 418–432.
- Majdański K., *Inspiracje II Soboru Watykańskiego dla studiów nad rodziną*, w: *W służbie godności małżeństwa i rodziny. 10-lecie Instytutu Studiów nad Rodziną ATK*, K. Majdański (ed.), Łomianki 1985, s. 24–37.
- Mariański J., 2005, *Kondycja moralna polskiej rodziny*, "Studia Płockie" 2005, no 33, s. 141–159.
- Misiaszek K., *Programy duszpasterskie: pomoc czy przeszkoda?*, "AK" 1993, vol. 506, no 85, s. 75–88.
- Młyński J., *Rozmowy, które leczą*, Tarnów 2017.
- Ozorowski E., *Małżeństwo i rodzina jako związek ludzi wierzących w Chrystusie*, "Studia nad Rodziną" 2005, vol. 9, no. 2, s. 13–22.
- Ozorowski E., *Małżeństwo jako komunizm osób*, "Studia nad Rodziną" 2002, vol. 6, no. 2, s. 130–149.
- Ozorowski M., *Miejsce ludzi rozwiedzionych w Kościele*, w: *Kościół, Rodzina, Życie*, M. Ozorowski, A. Skreczko (eds.), Warsaw 2011, s. 145–154.
- Ozorowski M., *Historia starań o utworzenie dyscypliny nauki o rodzinie w Polsce*, w: *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, J. Stala (ed.), Cracow 2014, s. 79–96.
- Ozorowski M., *Strategia pomocy rodzinie w Kościele. Zarys problematyki na przykładzie doświadczeń polskich*, "Studia Aloisiana" 2020, vol. 11, no. 3, s. 37–50.
- Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, Vatican 1968, [http://kodr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/humanae\\_vitae.pdf](http://kodr.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/humanae_vitae.pdf) (access from July 15th, 2020).

- Pietrzykowski T., *Spór o eutanazję. Etyczne problemy prawa*, Katowice 2007.
- Pius XI, Encyklika o małżeństwie chrześcijańskim *Casti Connubi*, Vatican 1930. [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/pius\\_xi/encykliki/casti\\_connubi\\_31121930.html](https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/pius_xi/encykliki/casti_connubi_31121930.html) (access from July 15th, 2020).
- Poleszczuk J., *Rodzina, małżeństwo, prokreacja: Racjonalizacja strategii reprodukcyjnych*, w: *Polacy wśród Europejczyków. Wartości społeczeństwa polskiego na tle innych krajów europejskich*, A. Jasińska-Kania, M. Marody (eds.), Warszawa 2002, s. 257–279.
- Pyźlak G., *Pracownicy duszpasterstwa rodzin i ich zadania*, „Studia nad Rodziną” 2015, vol. 19, no 2, s. 67–87.
- Pyźlak G., *Przygotowanie do życia małżeńskiego i rodzinnego*, w: *Duszpasterstwo Rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, Lublin 2013, s. 341–371.
- Pyźlak G., *Duszpasterstwo związków niesakramentalnych*, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 2006, vol. 53, no 6, s. 175–186.
- Rubacha D., *Dialog małżeński i rodzinny*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 2009, no. 2, s. 222–233.
- Ryś M., *Psychologia małżeństwa. Zarys problematyki*, Warsaw 1993.
- Skreczko A., *Troska Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce o małżeństwo i rodzinę w okresie Wielkiej Nowenny (1957–1966)*. *Studium teologiczno-pastoralne*, Białystok 2002.
- A. Skreczko, *Troska Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce o rodzinę po drugiej wojnie światowej*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” UwB 2003, no 2, s. 41–73.
- Skreczko A., *Wybrane przejawy troski Kościoła Katolickiego o rodzinę w Polsce*, „Studia nad Rodziną” 2009, vol. 13, no. 1–2, s. 129–148.
- Sujak E., *Poradnictwo małżeńskie i rodzinne*, Katowice 1995.
- Stułekowski Sz., *Duchowa adopcja dziecka poczętego*, w: Komisja Duszpasterstwa Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Program duszpasterski Kościoła w Polsce na lata 2006/2009. Kościół niosący Ewangelię nadziei. Rok 2008/2009. Otoczmy troską życie*, Sz. Stułekowski (ed.), Poznań 2008.
- Śmigiel W., *Uczestnictwo wiernych świeckich w budowaniu Kościoła-Wspólnoty. Studium teologiczno-pastoralne w świetle nauczania Kościoła (1961–2009)*, Lublin 2010.
- Śmigiel W., *Zrzeszenia rodzin katolickich w Polsce*, „Roczniki Pastoralno-Katechetyczne” 2010, vol. 57, no. 2, s. 65–75.
- Szymczyk L., *Poradnictwo rodzinne jako forma wsparcia małżeństwa i rodziny*, „Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne” 2016, vol. 49, no 1, s. 183–197.
- Wenzel M., *Wartości życiowe. Komunikat z badań CBOS*. BS/98/2004, Warsaw 2004, s. 2–6.
- Wieczorek W. (ed.), *Naturalne planowanie rodziny w ujęciu wybranych dyscyplin naukowych*, Lublin 2008.
- Wysocki J., *Rytuał rodzinny*, WDR, Włocławek 2003.
- Zaręba S. H., *Postawy Polaków wobec zasad moralnych religii katolickiej*, w: *Kościół katolicki na początku trzeciego tysiąclecia w opinii Polaków*, W. Zdaniewicz, S.H. Zaręba (eds.), Warszawa 2004, s. 93–102.
- Żakowski J., *Polak, czyli kto?* „Polityka” 2004, no. 25, s. 6.