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## FAMILY IN EUROPE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS YEAR'S THEME MEETINGS, CONFERENCES AND MUTUAL ACTIONS

Looking at today's youth in Poland and Europe, it is hard not to see the deepening crisis. Above all it is a crisis of values, and thus—as a kind of moral corruption, which mainly affects the family.

What is the source of this state of affairs? We also ask ourselves—being a parent, teacher, researcher or priest. Could be traced to a number of reasons, but perhaps the most important reason is the crisis of the family. Parents are supposed to raise their children, but do not always do it responsibly. Often overworked, tired of everyday life, a kind of struggle for survival, or overly caring about their own success, neglect the education of their children, throwing the whole burden on teachers and educators. But it is hard not to notice that the school also slowly loses its educational mission, putting emphasis mainly on teaching. No time for children, interest on the part of parents is one of the problems of modern youth. Left “itself” young people do not have where to find patterns, do not know where to look authorities. They often tries to draw the attention of parents doing various controversial things, such as. tattoos, pierces the body, stealing, getting into bad habits. Parents, as a compensation for the lack of their presence, give expensive gifts or money. Young people deprived of normal contact with their parents do not know the value of family, not quite know how to function properly in society. They want attention and love that can not be replaced by any money. This need is not according to the age.

Another—important—reason is the mentality of the world, focused on career and essence of money. Modern young men from all sides are led to believe that this is the easiest way to happiness. They believe that those who have more, are more happy. Liberalism and various hedonistic tendencies

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calling for the use of life without any restrictions, to be (self) free, to act according to his own will, ignoring the others. Young people seem to think that their social position determines the wallet, occupation and belonging to the upper class. Some young people believe that money can open every door, that money let them to be “somebody.” It seems that nowadays youths do not need God and Church of course. They have no ecclesial consciousness that they are the Church. It is strongly observed the lack confidence, and even if they believe in God, it is on their own—a special way. This is not always God in Trinity, but often a kind of deity, which the young man creates himself; deity, which is not requiring that accepts the values and principles of conduct, which is guided by a young man.

Young man from each side is bombarded with slogans as *Carpe diem!* Youth focused on the gaining goods, making money loses deeper meaning of life. Availability and social acceptance of contraception is a major source of difficulty young couples. It is visible increases more and more numerous couples staying in non-sacramental relationships. Marriage vow becomes old-fashioned habit. Marriages consciously refrain from having children or choosing to 1 up to 2 kids.

Widely available mass culture has a strong impact on today’s youth. She or he is seeking authority, patterns and ideas. Young people are highly susceptible to influence and copy what they see on the screen, and often it is simply inappropriate. Fights at school, on the street, aggressive behaviour become universality, which hard for young people, their parents and even society to deal with.

One of the major problem of youth in contemporary Poland and Europe is the lack of individuality, and thus also of assertiveness. Such young people lose the ability to express their own opinion, and in extreme cases even begins to identify with the views advocated by their surroundings. The lack of constructive discussions, where young people can confront their disagreement, can lead to a loss of social dialogue.

Of course—these reflections are very general and does not relate to the total of all Polish and European teenagers. We see and experience, that there are so many young people generous and hardworking, which depends not only on the welfare of their own. Fortunately, we have chance to work and meet those youth, whose catalogue of values is still build on those three „God, Honour, Homeland.” What is worth to point out, according to many researches, a family and traditional form of family is still the most valuable value for most young people in Poland.