

REV. GRZEGORZ PYŻŁAK

ACCOMPANYING YOUNG SPOUSES IN THE INITIAL YEARS OF MARRIAGE

Abstract. The release of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* revealed the need in the universal Church to accompany spouses in the initial years of marriage. *The First Instruction of the Polish Episcopate for the Clergy on Preparation of the Faithful for the Sacrament of Marriage and on Pastoral Care of the Family* introduced in Poland in the late sixties highlighted the fact that leaving young spouses alone in the initial stage of their life in marriage is disadvantageous. Therefore, Christian community should gain profound knowledge of the difficulties faced by young spouses in order to provide them with proper aid. St. John Paul II also highlighted the need to accompany young spouses in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (cf. FC, 65).

Pope Francis, concerned about the irresponsible attitude of fiancés towards contracting sacramental marriage, teaches in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* that “the initial years of marriage are a vital and sensitive period during which couples become more aware of the challenges and meaning of married life” (AL, 223). The Pope highlights the greatest opportunity of help in accompanying young spouses after the celebration of the sacrament of marriage. He encourages pastoral workers to assist young couples in order to help them complete the unfinished process of becoming mature in order to face the responsibility to contract sacramental marriage.

The author of the article attempts to explain what accompanying is, what issues should be discussed during meetings with the spouses in the initial years of marriage and what subjects should actively participate in assisting young spouses.

Key words: accompanying; spouses in the initial years of marriage; young couples; subjects accompanying young spouses; pastoral care of the family workers; groups of families; associations; communities.

Rev. Hab. PhD, GRZEGORZ PYŻŁAK – Assistant Professor in the Chair of the Pastoral Care of the Family in the Institute of Pastoral Theology and Catechesis of the Catholic University of Lublin; a priest of the Diocese of Siedlce; address for correspondence: Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: gpyzio@kul.lublin.pl

INTRODUCTION

The growing number of quick divorces of newly contracted sacramental marriages is a very alarming phenomenon for the faithful of the Catholic Church nowadays. It was highlighted by Pope Francis in his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* where he writes that one of the reasons of such a situation is the fact that marriage is now built on “merely physical attraction or a vague affection.”¹ Therefore, to change the fiancés’ attitude towards the sacramental marriage, the Church suggests accompanying the spouses in the initial years after contracting sacramental marriage.² The aim of this attitude is to help young spouses³ to discover that “marriage is not something that happens once for all” (AL, 218). This is the task for the workers of the pastoral care of family who would accompany the spouses in building their marriage with the help of God’s grace (see AL, 218)⁴.

Furthermore, the author of the article presents the issues for discussion with young spouses and stresses the need to indicate the subjects who should participate in the process of accompanying the spouses.

1. ACCOMPANIMENT

Colloquially understood, *accompanying* means keeping somebody company, being close to or assisting someone.⁵ According to the educative method

¹ Cf. FRANCIS, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia. On Love in the Family*, sec. 217 (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2016), 171-2 (hereafter AL).

² The issue of accompanying spouses in the initial years of marriage was raised in *the First Instruction of the Polish Episcopate for the Clergy on Preparation of the Faithful for the Sacrament of Marriage and on Pastoral Care of the Family* from February 12, 1969. This expression was also used by John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. It was also recalled by Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

³ The author will be using the expressions of accompanying young spouses in the initial years of marriage interchangeably with the expression accompanying young couples, as the text refers to them. The other expression is used less often, as the expression young spouses has not been clearly defined. The author recalls the definition of Wilhelm Pluta who considered young spouses as those experiencing the first three years of sacramental marriage. Wilhelm PLUTA, “Duszpasterstwo młodych małżeństw,” *Gorzowskie Wiadomości Kościelne* (1958): 479-91; Grzegorz PYŻŁAK, “Duszpasterstwo rodzin wobec młodych małżeństw,” in *Matrimonio et familiae. Z problematyki małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. Paweł Landwójtowicz (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego UO, 2016), 99-114.

⁴ Grzegorz PYŻŁAK, “Pracownicy duszpasterstwa rodzin i ich zadania,” *Studia nad Rodziną* 37(2015), 19: 67-87.

⁵ Cf. <http://synonim.net/synonim/towarzyszenie>, accessed December 15, 2016.

of St. John Bosco accompanying was treated as an activity connected with objective justification and with educational activity adequate to the situation.⁶

The issue of accompanying spouses is present in the teaching of Popes John Paul II and Francis. In the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II suggested that pastoral care should consist in accompanying families in various stages of their formation and development,⁷ and he used to organize special meetings for pastors and lay workers of the pastoral care of the family in order to work on the idea. Pope Francis, while highlighting the reasons for contracting sacramental marriage, convinces pastoral workers "that it is all the more essential that couples be helped during the first years of their married life to enrich and deepen their conscious and free decision to have, hold and love one another for life" (AL, 217). The Pope warns fiancés against the danger of making the decision to contract sacramental marriage without proper preparation. However, the responsible decision-making of the fiancés is being postponed nowadays. That is why, Pope Francis thinks that accompanying spouses during the initial years of their marriage will help to accomplish this unfinished process (cf. AL, 217).

Accompanying is particularly justified in reference to the formation of each man's identity. It is strongly connected with the need to motivate the man in every period of his or her life and help him or her discover the proper vocation. In the process of discovering one's vocation, it is the identity building which constitutes the existential foundation. Man is not capable of creating the project of himself without answering the vocational call, without gaining self-awareness and the ability to design his own future.⁸

⁶ In his educational activity, St. John Bosco introduced assistance which consisted in the sympathetic accompanying, friendly support for the pupils in the process of self-realization. This preventive presence in the life of the pupils made it possible to avoid punishment and due to the constant contact with individual pupils personal and educational contact with them was being developed. "System prewencyjny—zasady wychowawcze księdza Bosko," accessed December 20, 2016, http://www.diecezja.pl/articles/3._SYSTEM_PREWENCYJNY.pdf; cf. Severino DE PIERI, *Ukierunkowanie w wychowaniu i towarzyszenie powołaniu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, 2002), 64.

⁷ "The Church's pastoral action must be progressive, also in the sense that it must follow the family, accompanying it step by step in the different stages of its formation and development." JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris Consortio. On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, sec. 65 (Wrocław: TUM, 2000), 115-116 (hereafter FC).

⁸ Accompanying in the development of a person also requires their identification with significant people. It takes place during the whole process of growing up. Those who accompany are the people who give life, teach, support, are the reference points necessary for a person's formation. Later in the process, these people gradually withdraw from interfering in the life of the educated person so that he or she could build his or her own identity. S. DE PIERI, *Ukierunkowanie*, 64.

What is more, accompanying is beneficial for the development of the decision-making process. The response to one's vocation is connected with developing a more mature personality. The decision-making should be based on certain values and criteria of choice, which allows to assume proper attitude towards the choice or to follow a different type of vocation.⁹

The final decision to contract marriage is crucial in the process of discerning one's vocation of marriage. Fiancés should make this decision independently. The Church warns that young spouses must not be left alone in the initial stage of their common life. Christian community should be aware of the situation so that it may provide proper aid to the young spouses. That is why the *The First Instruction of the Polish Episcopate for the Clergy on Preparation of the Faithful for the Sacrament of Marriage and on Pastoral Care of the Family* highlights the essential role of the pastoral care of married couples, particularly of young married couples. The instruction mentioned above highlights that "the sacramental act of contracting marriage does not end the cooperation of young spouses with their pastor and with the Church, but it introduces the spouses into the fullness of possibilities in this common work."¹⁰

What is more, the word *accompanying* also refers to the spiritual accompaniment. It is strongly connected with providing aid and advice to the person who wants to start a new life for the truth. This truth means being with God the way we really are. The aim of such accompaniment is to lead the person to the recognition of the truth in his life, to help him attain real freedom and to help him entrust to the Holy Spirit. In this light, it means building the inner self which through faith is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 3:14-19). The inner self strives for the mature realization of the vocation for marriage and for the engagement in the life of the Church where he will be able to share his life of faith with others.¹¹

Spiritual accompaniment concerns God's direct acting through the person who is called to the fullness of life.¹² In spiritual direction it is the Holy

⁹ It is important to pay attention to the fact that a proper decision about vocation cannot be made in the early age, but only after adolescence, when the person has developed at least a minimum level of stability in the personal identity. S. DE PIERI, *Ukierunkowanie*, 64; cf. Krzysztof WOLSKI, "Powołanie małżeńskie," in *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. Edward Ozorowski (Łomianki-Warszawa: UKSW, 1999), 358.

¹⁰ THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, "The First Instruction of the Polish Episcopate for the Clergy on Preparation of the Faithful for the Sacrament of Marriage and on Pastoral Care of the Family," February 12, 1969, sec. 3.1, in Jerzy BUXAKOWSKI, *Wprowadzenie do teologii duszpasterstwa rodzin* (Pelplin: Bernardinum, 1999), 372.

¹¹ Jean-Claude SAGNE, *Towarzystwo duchowe* (Poznań: W Drodze, 2008), 15.

¹² It can be led not only by priests but also by properly prepared lay workers. However, the lay workers must be accepted by the ecclesial community.

Spirit who leads a person's life—His direction should be adopted through listening to what God says and discovering His will in signs and events.¹³

Spiritual direction addressed to young spouses, whose decisions are usually very uncertain and unstable, leads them to develop a more mature identity as humans and Christians. Therefore, only a spiritual director who is capable of establishing a profound contact with God can become an intermediary for a person who seeks help. The adequate process of spiritual direction is implemented in the dialogue between the director and his disciple. Spiritual direction helps discover the inner self by discovering one's permanent and orderly way of conduct.¹⁴

2. THE ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION AT THE MEETINGS WITH YOUNG SPOUSES

In the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis indicated that “the initial years of marriage are a vital and sensitive period during which couples become more aware of the challenges and meaning of married life” (AL, 223). In this regard, there is a need for pastoral accompaniment which would cover the initial period after contracting sacramental marriage. The issues discussed during the meetings with young spouses should concern such aspects as: encouraging the spouses to be open to the gift of children, drawing their attention to the conjugal spirituality, prayer, participation in the Sunday Eucharist, liturgies, devotional practices and the Eucharist celebrated for families, especially on the wedding anniversary. The Church also encourages married couples to attend regular meetings in order to develop their spiritual life and solidarity in the concrete demands of life. What is more, such meetings are vital factors in fostering evangelization through the family (cf. AL, 223).¹⁵

¹³ Marek DZIEWIECKI, “Kierownictwo duchowe narzeczonych i małżonków,” in *Sztuka kierownictwa duchowego. Poradnik dla księży*, ed. Józef Augustyn and Jakub Kołacz (Kraków: WAM, 2007), 552.

¹⁴ S. DE PIERI, *Ukierunkowanie*, 96-97; William A. BARRY and William J. CONNOLLY, *Kierownictwo duchowe w praktyce* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1992), 27; cf. Jacek GOLEŃ, “Kierownictwo duchowe małżonków,” in *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, ed. Ryszard Kamiński et al. (Lublin: Bonus Liber, 2013), 407-18.

¹⁵ Józef STALA, “Potrzeba i możliwości wprowadzania elementów ewangelizacji do katechezy rodzinnej,” in *Katecheza ewangelizacyjna w rodzinie, parafii, szkole*, ed. Stanisław Dziekoński (Warszawa: Verbinum, 2002), 17.

The issues concerning young spouses refer to the essential attitude to accept the gift of children. According to the teaching of the Church one of the aims of marriage, apart from the mutual support of the spouses, is parenthood. This means that marriage is fundamentally meant for procreation. Young spouses should be taught of the sacred nature and the beauty of the mission of transmitting life which is based on the cooperation with the love of the Creator. The spouses' response should include their readiness to be open to the gift of children that God wants to bestow on them. One of the essential aspects of responsible parenthood is the regulation of births. Spouses can, for justified reasons, postpone procreation, taking proper care of maintaining the attitude of responsible parenthood.¹⁶

Accompanying should encourage the spouses in the consensual dialog which will enhance the respect for the times of fertility of women and consideration of the dignity of the partner (see AL, 222). To help the spouses, the Church encourages them to use the methods based on laws of nature and fertility (FC, 14, 28-35).¹⁷ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* highlights the fact that the natural family planning methods respect the bodies of spouses, encourage mutual tenderness and favor the education of an authentic freedom (cf. CCC, 2370).¹⁸

The development of the spirituality of the spouses is one of the most essential aspects of accompanying the family. Sacramental Christian marriage is a sign of the engagement of the spouses into the care for its unity and indissolubility and discovering that marriage is a sign of God's grace. In this sacrament, two people become spouses and their spiritual life gains a new dimension. Through the grace of this sacrament, Christ is present in the life of the spouses in a particular way when they implement mutual promises, serve each other, build their love together, meet each other in the spirit of

¹⁶ In responsible parenthood the spouses are obliged to consciously manage their fertility, to recognize and accept their vocation to transmit life and to educate children with the awareness of the responsibility before God in whose creative and saving plans they participate through contracting marriage. Jan ORZESZYNA, "Odpowiedzialne rodzicielstwo," in *Jan Paweł II. Encyklopedia nauczania moralnego*, ed. Janusz Nagórny et al. (Radom: Polwen, 2005), 370; Marian POKRYWKA, "Odpowiedzialne rodzicielstwo," in *Świadek nadziei. Ks. Prof. J. Nagórny twórca i nauczyciel teologii moralnej*, ed. Andrzej Derdziuk (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu, 2008), 354-5.

¹⁷ Cf. PAUL VI, *Encyclical Letter Humanae Vitae. On the Regulation of Birth*, sec. 10-14 (Wrocław: TUM, 1999), 11-6 (hereafter HV).

¹⁸ Cf. CCC, 2370; Jerzy TROSKA, *Moralność życia płciowego, małżeńskiego i rodzinnego* (Poznań: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, 1998); KONFERENCJA EPISKOPATU POLSKI, *Służyć prawdzie o małżeństwie i rodzinie*, sec. 52 (Warszawa: Biblos, 2009), 38.

forgiveness and listen to His words together. Conjugal love, which originates in God's love, helps spouses realize the liabilities arising from the sacrament of marriage.¹⁹ Conjugal spirituality originates in the bond which joins these two kinds of love. This spirituality results in the decision to learn and to do God's will in everyday life, which influences the development and deepening of the conjugal spirituality.²⁰

The issues which concern spirituality should be discussed with reference to the spirituality of an individual, which consists in the personal development. In the initial years of marriage, the spouses should be taught that conjugal spirituality in marriage is based on the personal gift of self. In their spiritual life spouses share their desires, aspirations and hopes, remembering about realizing their common plan which concerns both the life on earth and in eternity. It is vital that each spouse reveals his or her own system of values due to which together they can build the hierarchy of values, which will reflect their Christian faith.²¹

Reference to everyday practice of prayer and participation in the Sunday Eucharist should also be included in the discussed issues, and the importance of these aspects of spiritual practice must be highlighted to young spouses. In addition, it is already in the childhood when the man should understand that prayer is a conversation with God. Prayer must not be a monolog or a recitation of prayer formulas as these do not lead to the personal spiritual development.²² Young spouses should be taught to overcome difficulties in practicing prayer. They should not forget that the Holy Spirit inspires faith and enables every man to experience God's presence, although God Himself is also constantly present.²³ Young spouses must realize that prayer is an essential part of Christian life and an aid in their realization of God's plan.²⁴

Furthermore, spouses should be taught that Eucharist is the most beautiful prayer, therefore, other prayers should prepare for this special one and they

¹⁹ Jerzy GRZEŚKOWIAK, "Sakramentalność małżeństwa w świetle adhortacji apostolskiej 'Familiaris consortio' Jana Pawła II," in *Małżeństwo i rodzina w świetle nauki Kościoła i współczesnej teologii*, ed. Adam L. Szafrński (Lublin: TN KUL, 1985), 80.

²⁰ Franciszek ADAMSKI, "Duchowość życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego," in *Miłość, małżeństwo, rodzina*, ed. Franciszek Adamski (Kraków: Petrus, 2009), 132.

²¹ Piotr PORĘBA, "Wychowanie religijne w rodzinie," in *Wychowanie w rodzinie*, ed. Franciszek Adamski (Kraków: Petrus, 2010), 99.

²² Franciszek BLACHNICKI, *Jeśli się nie odmienicie* (Krościenko: Oaza, 2000), 39.

²³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter Dominum et Vivificantem. On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World*, sec. 65, Opoka Website, accessed January 5, 2017, http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/jan_pawel_ii/encykliki/dominum_1.html.

²⁴ Jan PRZYBYŁOWSKI and Edmund ROBEK, *Teologia modlitwy* (Ząbki: Apostolicum, 2004), 148.

should be the continuation of the Eucharist.²⁵ Pope Paul VI discussed the issue of family prayer as he addressed priests in such a way, „Teach married couples the necessary way of prayer and prepare them to approach more often with great faith the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance. Let them never lose heart because of their weakness” (HV, 29). The Holy Mass is a foretaste of the ultimate encounter with Christ and through Him it is our communion with God in eternity.²⁶ Therefore, the value of Eucharist should be highlighted to encourage young spouses to participate in it together with their families and to share its wealth of values.²⁷

In Her teaching, the Church indicates the important truth of the conjugal life: that the family was created by God as a community of persons bound with the bonds of love.²⁸ That is why, the aim of the family is to build the community of life and love following the example of the communion of the Most Holy Trinity (cf. FC, 21).²⁹ The realization of this mission can be effective when the life of the spouses is built on the Gospel. New evangelization in the family and by families is necessary nowadays.³⁰ According to the teaching of John Paul II, this evangelization should be based on presenting the meaning of conjugal and family life as well as of the mission of the Christian family in the contemporary world (cf. FC, 86). Therefore, ministering liturgies, devotions and the Eucharist, especially at wedding anniversaries, is essential for promoting evangelization by families. Anniver-

²⁵ Henri CAFFAREL, *Szkoła modlitwy* (Lublin: Światło-Życie, 1998), 106.

²⁶ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Europa*, sec. 75, Opoka Website, accessed January 7, 2017, http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/jan_pawel_ii/adhortacje/europa_28062003.html.

²⁷ The Second Vatican Council in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* teaches that “The two parts which, in a certain sense, go to make up the Mass, namely, the liturgy of the word and the eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship,” that is why it is the obligation of the faithful to participate in the whole Holy Mass, especially on Sundays and on the Holy Days of Obligation; cf. PAUL VI “Sacrosanctum Concilium. Konstytucja o Liturgii Świętej,” December 4, 1963, in *Sobór Watykański II. Konstytucje, dekrety, deklaracje*, sec. 56, (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1967), 54; cf. Grzegorz KOC, *Funkcje założone i realizowane domowego Kościoła Ruchu Światło-Życie. Studium z duszpasterstwa rodzin w świetle materiałów formacyjnych i badań małżonków domowego Kościoła* (Siedlce: Unitas, 2013), 92-101.

²⁸ Cf. “Powołanie do życia w małżeństwie i rodzinie,” in *II Polski Synod Plenarny*, sec. 3-9 (Poznań–Warszawa: Pallottinum, 2001), 30-2 (hereafter DPSP).

²⁹ Wiesław PRZYGODA, “Funkcja królewska rodziny—apostolat w rodzinie i przez rodzinę,” in *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, ed. Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek (Lublin: KUL, 2010), 284.

³⁰ Cf. Jan SZKODOŃ, “Ewangelizacja w rodzinie i przez rodzinę,” in *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, 242.

saries celebrated by young spouses help them to notice God's gifts and to be grateful for them.³¹ Furthermore, family gatherings can contribute to deepening the bonds between the living family members as well as with those who passed away.³² It is also necessary to stress that family must be built on the foundation of the sacrament of marriage. Such a family can fully participate in the life of the Church, educating their children in the Catholic way and effectively evangelize other married couples and families through the testimony of life (cf. DDR, 64).

The document of *the Second Polish Plenary Synod* highlights the fact that "married couples and families need support from the circles of Christians."³³ In order to promote that pastoral care priests are encouraged by a pastoral postulate to create parish cafés, clubs and meeting places where married couples and families could meet, share their views and spend time together.³⁴ Such meetings are to promote the development of spiritual life and solidarity in concrete demands of the life of young spouses.³⁵

3. THE SUBJECTS WHO ACCOMPANY YOUNG SPOUSES

The parish where young spouses realize their vocation has a very important role to play in the process of accompanying them in the initial years of marriage. In the parish community there are certain subjects who are to accompany young spouses in a particular way. These are: priests, the lay workers of the pastoral care of the family, the experienced spouses and associations, ecclesial movements and communities (cf. AL, 223).³⁶

The pastoral care of the family is one of the subjects who accompany young spouses. It is to remind that marriage and family vocation should be a deep community of life and love for man and woman, as it was constituted

³¹ Józef WYSOCKI, *Rytuał rodzinny* (Włocławek: Wydawnictwo Duszpasterstwa Rolników, 2003), 537.

³² Cf. KONFERENCJA EPISKOPATU POLSKI, *Dyrektorium Duszpasterstwa Rodzin*, sec. 57 (Warszawa: Vita Familiae, 2003), 45 (hereafter DDR).

³³ "Powołanie do życia w małżeństwie i rodzinie," in DPSP, 44, 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ G. PYŻŁAK, "Duszpasterstwo rodzin," 107-108.

³⁶ It is necessary to introduce mediation in accompanying man. The vocational path cannot be built without the support from other people, circles or communities. Vocation usually originates in the meeting place of many intermediators: people, events, situations or challenges. S. DE PIERI, *Ukierunkowanie*, 64.

by the Creator and is subjected to His laws. The dialogue between God and man, preceded by the choice of a proper person and the proper choice of vocation, is the essence of the Christian vocation which results from Baptism.³⁷ Therefore, contracting sacramental marriage must be based on the firm and realistic decision of the fiancés (see AL, 223). Apart from that, pastoral care should provide help to young couples in their growing in love as well as in the trials and difficult moments they face.³⁸

Accompanying spouses in the initial years of marriage should confirm spouses in understanding the doctrine of the Church on marriage. Knowing the doctrine regards perceiving marriage as: a sacrament, the covenant pursuant to the creation of God, an indissoluble and monogamous relationship of man and woman, which is strengthened with the vow of the mutual fidelity.³⁹ Pastors should also take care for the functioning of the counseling which is deeply rooted in the concrete demands of conjugal and family life. The spouses must be aware that the priests who work in the parish, as well as the workers of the parish and the diocesan family counseling center and psychological guidance are also available to help them (see AL, 211).⁴⁰

Pastoral accompaniment should regard the young couples' growing in faith through encouragement for frequent confession, spiritual direction and participation in retreats. The sacrament of Reconciliation is a unique gift for the spouses; it does not violate the dignity of a person but it allows to develop and improve it. It also gives the chance to be true to oneself and to take responsibility for past mistakes. *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* reminds that „God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely

³⁷ See Stanisław HAREZGA, „Powołanie,” in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 16 (Lublin: TN KUL, 2012), col. 142.

³⁸ This aid can also be provided by the parish committees for the pastoral care for the family through: organization of parish meetings of families, help in constituting and existence of small circles of married couples, organization of pre-marital courses, help to families and pastors in the preparation of children to the First Holy Communion, organization of family counselling, as well as cooperation with other parish committees. Cf. Elżbieta WÓJCIK, „Kilka propozycji dla duszpašterstwa rodzin w parafii,” *Katecheta* 4 (1983): 183-4.

³⁹ „Małżeństwo w doktrynie chrześcijańskiej,” Wikipedia, accessed January 5, 2017, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%C5%82%C5%BCe%C5%84stwo_w_doktrynie_chrze%C5%9Bcija%C5%84skiej.

⁴⁰ Psychological counseling is a type of aid addressed to healthy people who experience life crises, adaptive difficulties or to those who face problems which result from their current life situation. The counseling aims at identifying the problem and finding a satisfactory solution in a relatively short time. Cf. Czesław CZABAŁA and Sylwia KLUCZYŃSKA, eds., *Poradnictwo psychologiczne* (Warszawa: PWN, 2015); Elżbieta SUJAK, *Kontakt psychiczny w małżeństwie i rodzinie* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1983).

as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness.”⁴¹ Therefore, pastors should support spiritual direction for young couples as it will help them on their way to salvation. The spouses are of concern to the Church in their striving for holiness and for the fullness of life with God, as well as for fulfilling His will according to one’s personal vocation. The spiritual directors of young couples in the initial years of marriage should be chosen among properly prepared priests and lay pastoral workers.⁴²

Among the offers of help to young couples in the initial years of marriage there is also participation in retreats. The aim of a retreat is to deepen the conjugal bond and help young spouses to understand the sacramental dimension of the relationship. This can be achieved through a proper form of dialog between the spouses which will, on the one hand, help them understand each other better, and, on the other, solve the conflicts between them.⁴³ Pas-

⁴¹ PAUL VI, “Lumen gentium. Dogmatic constitution on the Church,” November 21, 1964, in *Sobór Watykański II. Konstytucje, dekrety, deklaracje*, sec. 9, 112.

⁴² During the period of 1987-2003 Rev. Henryk Krzysteczko highlighted the offer of accompanying the family in various stages of development. Therefore, the service was introduced at first in the position of “a family fiduciary,” which was later changed by the decree of archbishop Damian Zimoń into “the family counsellor” it maintained in the „Stowarzyszenie Mediatorów i Powierników Rodzin.” „Powiernicy rodzin” are people who, after getting a postgraduate degree of the family studies, received the canonical mission from their bishop, which authorized them to cooperate with pastors in the service for marriage and the family in terms of accompanying. The name “powiernik rodzin” (Polish: family fiduciary) consists in a specific method of getting closer to a person through the use of educational methods based on the achievements of pastoral movement *Pastoral Counseling*, which is based on listening. However, the main source of the idea of the service to marriage and family was the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* concerning “accompanying it step by step at different stages of its formation and development” (FC, 65). The fiduciary of the family worked mainly in the parish family counseling center. But since the pro-family education realized at the lessons of „Przygotowanie do życia w rodzinie” [Preparation for family life] was introduced at schools, such fiduciaries have been working there. The fiduciary helps fiancés, spouses and families to make an insight into themselves, he or she provides them with information, helps to properly understand the teaching of the Church and helps the spouses in making proper decisions which means helping them choose the good. The family fiduciary acts according to the principle of the “unconditional positive regard” created by Carl Rogers, ensuring the facilitative and emphatic environment through the attitude of unconditional acceptance without any judgement or disapproval but with empathy, to liberate the client to change his life. It is also vital to highlight the importance of reconciliation, apology and forgiveness, and the sacrament of Reconciliation which will also bring the healing strength. Therefore, a fiduciary in pastoral care of the family closely cooperates with a confessor. Cf. Henryk KRZYSTECZKO, *Towarzystwo małżeństwu i rodzinie przez powierników rodzin* (Katowice: Księgarnia Św. Jacka, 2011), 20-1.

⁴³ Stanisław DYK, “Rekolekcje rodzin,” in: *Duszpasterstwo rodzin*, 453-6.

tors should also encourage young spouses to use the Word of God, which is the source of life and spirituality for the family. It should also become “a criterion of judgment and a light in discerning the various challenges that married couples and families encounter” (AL, 227).

However, many married couples drop out of the Christian community, which is one of the most urgent problems nowadays. Pastors who meet young spouses should take advantage of every occasion to present them the beautiful ideal of the Christian marriage, e.g. when young parents reappear in the parish asking for Baptism or the First Holy Communion for their child or when the spouses participate in a funeral or a wedding of a relative or a friend (cf. AL, 230). Pastors can also offer a pastoral conversation during the pastoral visit in the house of the spouses.⁴⁴

In the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis highlights the importance of pastoral accompaniment to young spouses. Short-term preparation for marriage is a proper moment to indicate this service.⁴⁵ It is the best time to show the fiancés the names of places, advisers or available families who could help them in marriage or family crises (cf. AL, 211). This pastoral activity should engage lay people in various organizational and structural stages of pastoral care of the family. Lay faithful who are bestowed with appropriate qualities and are honestly eager to participate in introducing the Gospel into the reality of conjugal and family life can also be helpful.⁴⁶

Experienced couples have a very important role to play in accompanying young couples in the initial years of marriage, as they have experience, which results from long years of their married life and from their care for the constructive formation of marriage (cf. AL, 223). Aid can also be provided by missionary families and the families of fiancés. The role of missionary families is connected with their readiness to give testimony and to take a particular challenge—God’s mission—at any moment. The Bishop usually asks such families to volunteer in the missions and to go to dechristianized places in order to start the Church there. They also participate in the life of the parish

⁴⁴ Dariusz LIPIEC, “Odwiedziny duszpasterskie rodzin,” in *Duszpasterstwo rodzin*, 420.

⁴⁵ Cf. Jan KRAJCZYŃSKI, *Prawo rodziny do opieki duszpasterskiej* (Płock: Apostolicum, 2007), 358-9; Grzegorz PYŻŁAK, *Formacja świeckich pracowników duszpasterstwa rodzin. Studium z duszpasterstwa rodzin w świetle badań doradców życia rodzinnego i absolwentów diecezjalnych studiów rodziny* (Lublin: KUL, 2013), 31-172.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Kodeks Prawa Kanonicznego*, 528.1 (Poznań: Pallotinum, 1984), 241. Lay people are obliged to grow deep faith, be devoted to the Church, their conjugal and family life should be in order and imbued with the apostolic spirit. Bronisław MIERZWIŃSKI and Paweł LANDWÓJTOWICZ, “Geneza i rozwój duszpasterstwa rodzin,” in *Duszpasterstwo rodzin*, 53.

and community to accompany those who are preparing for marriage and other spouses through the testimony of their life.⁴⁷ The families of fiancés should also help young couples to face the challenges of the Christian marriage in the initial years of their common life. It is also vital to present them the unconditional life choice of the sacramental marriage.

In addition, groups of families are also a good source of support to young couples. “They can share some practical suggestions to young families, e.g. such activities as planning free time together, moments of recreation with the children, different ways of celebrating important events, shared opportunities for spiritual growth. Implementation of these can help young spouse to learn a better communication” (AL, 225).⁴⁸

The parish is a place where such experienced couples can help younger couples, with the cooperation of associations, ecclesial movements and new communities (AL, 223).⁴⁹ The Catholic families associations are very effective in the renewal of families in the Church and in society, and, as a result, they are perceived as a more developed form of the pastoral care of the family.⁵⁰ In the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II taught that they should emphasize life according to the Gospel and encourage them to create solidarity between people, formation of conscience and realization of love in family and social life (cf. FC, 72).⁵¹ Catholic associations who consist of a certain group of people, who gather in order to achieve certain goals connected with the life of the Church, also play a very important role.⁵² Apart from that, young spouses in the initial years of mar-

⁴⁷ Droga Neokatechumenalna, *Statut, Uroczystość Zestania Ducha Świętego*, May 11, 2008, sec. 33, accessed January 16, 2017, http://www.camminoneocatecumenale.it/public/file/pl_Statut_2008-05-11.pdf.

⁴⁸ Stefan FRYDRYCHOWICZ, “Komunikacja interpersonalna w rodzinie a rozwój dorosłych,” in *Rodzina a rozwój człowieka*, ed. Barbara Harwas-Napierała (Poznań: UAM, 2003), 102-10.

⁴⁹ Creating associations of families in the countries of western Europe resulted from the appearing dangers to families, from the need to experience faith and apostolate in marriage and family, from the need to make friends with other families and from the development of personalist philosophy and from the beginning of the formation of theology of marriage and family. Bronisław MIERZWIŃSKI, “Elementy teologii praktycznej małżeństwa i rodziny,” in *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, vol. 1, ed. Kazimierz Majdański (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1980), 244-5; Alina PETROWA-WASILEWICZ, *Leksykon ruchów i stowarzyszeń w Kościele* (Warszawa: KAI, 2000), 13-355.

⁵⁰ Cf. B. MIERZWIŃSKI, “Elementy teologii praktycznej,” 245.

⁵¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici. On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council*, sec. 29 (Wrocław: TUM, 1995), 73-4.

⁵² Edward SZTAFROWSKI, *Podręcznik prawa kanonicznego*, vol 1 (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1985), 342.

riage can join movements and Christian communities that help in building friendship and brotherhood.⁵³

The members of the *domestic church* in Poland are married couples who get engaged into the offered formation. Married couples join the *domestic church* in order to help one another in the development of conjugal spirituality, in building conjugal unity and in creating the best conditions for raising children in the Christian spirit. During the gatherings, they share the joys and sorrows of their conjugal life, they share the Gospel and present the results of the realization of the commitments. Young spouses can also take part in various kinds of retreat.

Apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* encourages parishes, schools and other institutions to support families and to help them grow. The ways of help might include: meetings of couples living in the same neighborhood or families of friends, talks by experts who can help them deal with certain family problems (cf. AL, 229).

CONCLUSION

Accompanying young spouses in the initial years of marriage is one of the most important requirements highlighted in the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis *Amoris Laetitia*. Vital challenges for the Church nowadays appear “when [conjugal] love is merely [built on] physical attraction or a vague affection” (AL, 217), so She should take proper care for young spouses in the initial years of marriage, as this time is essential for growing in the awareness of “the challenges and meaning of married life” (AL, 223).

Pastoral accompaniment consists in the pastors’ and lay pastoral workers’ eagerness to assist young spouses in the initial years of marriage, in the objective confirmation of their observations, as well as in taking adequate educational actions in certain situations. People and institutions who take up such challenges should know the problems which young spouses face and they should present young couples the beautiful ideal of Christian marriage.

⁵³ Wiesław ŚMIGIEL, “Ruchy, stowarzyszenia, wspólnoty i grupy wspierające rodzinę jako Kościół domowy,” in *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, 459-61.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADAMSKI, Franciszek. "Duchowość życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego." In *Miłość, małżeństwo, rodzina*, edited by Franciszek Adamski, 121-37. Kraków: Petrus, 2009.
- BARRY, William A. and William J. CONNOLLY. *Kierownictwo duchowe w praktyce*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1992.
- BLACHNICKI, Franciszek. *Jeśli się nie odmienicie*. Krościenko: Oaza, 2000.
- CAFFAREL, Henri. *Szkoła modlitwy*. Lublin: Światło-Życie, 1998.
- DZIEWIECKI, Marek. "Kierownictwo duchowe narzeczonych i małżonków." In *Sztuka kierownictwa duchowego. Poradnik dla księży*, edited by Józef Augustyn and Jakub Kołacz, 549-58. Kraków: WAM, 2007.
- DE PIERI, Severino. *Ukierunkowanie w wychowaniu i towarzyszenie powołaniu*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, 2002.
- DYK, Stanisław. "Rekolekcje rodzin." In *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, edited by Ryszard Kamiński, Grzegorz Pyżlak, and Jacek Goleń, 443-56. Lublin: Bonus Liber, 2013.
- FRYDRYCHOWICZ, Stefan. "Komunikacja interpersonalna w rodzinie a rozwój dorosłych." In *Rodzina a rozwój człowieka*, edited by Barbara Harwas-Napierała, 101-22. Poznań: UAM, 2003.
- GOLEŃ, Jacek. "Kierownictwo duchowe małżonków." In *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, edited by Ryszard Kamiński, Grzegorz Pyżlak, and Jacek Goleń, 407-18. Lublin: Bonus Liber, 2013.
- GRZEŚKOWIAK, Jerzy. "Sakramentalność małżeństwa w świetle adhortacji apostołskiej 'Familiaris consortio' Jana Pawła II." In *Małżeństwo i rodzina w świetle nauki Kościoła i współczesnej teologii*, edited by Adam L. Szafranski, 55-98. Lublin: TN KUL, 1985.
- HAREZGA, Stanisław. "Powołanie." In *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 16, col. 142-4. Lublin: TN KUL, 2012.
- JOHN PAUL II. *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio. On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*. Wrocław: TUM, 2000.
- Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*. Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994.
- KOC, Grzegorz. *Funkcje założone i realizowane domowego Kościoła Ruchu Światło-Życie. Studium z duszpasterstwa rodzin w świetle materiałów formacyjnych i badań małżonków domowego Kościoła*. Siedlce: Unitas 2013.
- KONFERENCJA EPISKOPATU POLSKI. *Dyrektorium duszpasterstwa rodzin*. Warszawa: Vita Familiae, 2003.
- KONFERENCJA EPISKOPATU POLSKI. *Służyć prawdzie o małżeństwie i rodzinie*. Warszawa: Biblos, 2009.
- KRAJCZYŃSKI, Jan. *Prawo rodziny do opieki duszpasterskiej*. Płock: Apostolicum, 2007.
- KRZYSTECZKO, Henryk. *Towarzyszenie małżeństwu i rodzinie przez powierników rodzin*. Katowice: Księgarnia Św. Jacka, 2011.

- LIPIEC, Dariusz. "Odwiedziny duszpasterskie rodzin." In *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, edited by Ryszard Kamiński, Grzegorz Pyżlak, and Jacek Goleń, 418-32. Lublin: Bonus Liber, 2013.
- MIERZWIŃSKI, Bronisław. "Elementy teologii praktycznej małżeństwa i rodziny." In *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, vol. 1, edited by Kazimierz. Majdański, 157-262. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1980.
- MIERZWIŃSKI, Bronisław and Paweł LANDWÓJTOWICZ. "Geneza i rozwój duszpasterstwa rodzin." In *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, edited by Ryszard Kamiński, Grzegorz Pyżlak, and Jacek Goleń, 45-66. Lublin: Bonus Liber, 2013.
- FRANCIS. *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia. On Love in the Family*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2016.
- PAUL VI. *Encyclical Letter Humanae Vitae on the Regulation of Birth*. Wrocław: TUM, 1999.
- PETROWA-WASILEWICZ, Alina. *Leksykon ruchów i stowarzyszeń w Kościele*. Warszawa: KAI, 2000.
- PLUTA, Wilhelm. "Duszpasterstwo młodych małżeństw." *Gorzowskie Wiadomości Kościelne* (1958): 479-91.
- POKRYWKA, Marian. "Odpowiedzialne rodzicielstwo." In *Świadek nadziei. Ks. Prof. J. Nagórny twórca i nauczyciel teologii moralnej*, edited by Andrzej Derdziuk, 351-60. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu, 2008.
- PORĘBA, Piotr. "Wychowanie religijne w rodzinie." In *Wychowanie w rodzinie*, edited by Franciszek Adamski, 99-116. Kraków: Petrus, 2010.
- CZABAŁA, Czesław and Sylwia KLUCZYŃSKA, eds. *Poradnictwo psychologiczne*. Warszawa: PWN, 2015.
- "Powołanie do życia w małżeństwie i rodzinie." In *II Polski Synod Plenarny*, sec. 3-9, 30-2. Poznań-Warszawa: Pallottinum, 2001.
- PRZEWODNICZĄCY KONFERENCJI EPISKOPATU. "Pierwsza Instrukcja Episkopatu Polski dla Duchowieństwa o Przygotowaniu Wiernych do Sakramentu Małżeństwa i o Duszpasterstwie Rodzin," February 12, 1969, sec. 3.1. In Jerzy BUXAKOWSKI. *Wprowadzenie do teologii duszpasterstwa rodzin*, 372. Pelplin: Bernardinum, 1999.
- PRZYGODA, Wiesław. "Funkcja królewska rodziny—apostolat w rodzinie i przez rodzinę." In *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, edited by Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek, 281-93. Lublin: KUL, 2010.
- PRZYBYŁOWSKI, Jan and Edmund ROBEK. *Teologia modlitwy*. Ząbki: Apostolicum, 2004.
- PYŻŁAK, Grzegorz. *Formacja świeckich pracowników duszpasterstwa rodzin. Studium z duszpasterstwa rodzin w świetle badań doradców życia rodzinnego i absolwentów diecezjalnych studiów rodziny*. Lublin: KUL, 2013.
- PYŻŁAK, Grzegorz. "Pracownicy duszpasterstwa rodzin i ich zadania." *Studia nad Rodziną* 37(2015), 19: 67-87.

- PYŻLAK, Grzegorz. "Duszpasterstwo rodzin wobec młodych małżeństw." In *Matrimonio et Familiae. Z problematyki małżeństwa i rodziny*, edited by Paweł Landwójtowicz, 99-114. Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego UO, 2016.
- SAGNE, Jean-Claude. *Towarzystwo duchowe*. Translated by Katarzyna Kubaszczyk. Poznań: W drodze, 2008.
- STALA, Józef. "Potrzeba i możliwości wprowadzania elementów ewangelizacji do katechezy rodzinnej." In *Katecheza ewangelizacyjna w rodzinie, parafii, szkole*, edited by Stanisław Dziekoński, 13-31. Warszawa: Verbinum, 2002.
- SUJAK, Elżbieta. *Kontakt psychiczny w małżeństwie i rodzinie*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1983.
- ŚMIGIEL, Wiesław. "Ruchy, stowarzyszenia, wspólnoty i grupy wspierające rodzinę jako Kościół domowy." In *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, edited by Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek, 453-64. Lublin: KUL, 2010.
- SZTAFROWSKI, Edward. *Podręcznik prawa kanonicznego*, vol. 1. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1985.
- SZKODOŃ, Jan. "Ewangelizacja w rodzinie i przez rodzinę." In *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, edited by Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek, 233-43. Lublin: KUL, 2010.
- TROSKA, Jerzy. *Moralność życia płciowego, małżeńskiego i rodzinnego*. Poznań: Papieński Wydział Teologiczny, 1998.
- WOLSKI, Krzysztof. "Powołanie małżeńskie." In *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, edited by Edward Ozorowski, 358-9. Łomianki-Warszawa: UKSW, 1999.
- WÓJCIK, Elżbieta. "Kilka propozycji dla duszpasterstwa rodzin w parafii." *Katecheta* 4(1983): 183-4.
- WYSOCKI, Józef. *Rytuał rodzinny*. Włocławek: Wydawnictwo Duszpasterstwa Rolników 2003.



The preparation of the English version of Roczniki Teologiczne (Annals of Theology) no. 6 and its publication in electronic databases was financed under contract no. 753/P-DUN/2017 from the resources of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for the popularization of science.