

Introduction

“The family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself. Thus, far from being closed in on itself, the family is by nature and vocation open to other families and to society, and undertakes its social role. The very experience of communion and sharing that should characterize the family’s daily life represents its first and fundamental contribution to society. The relationships between the members of the family community are inspired and guided by the law of ‘free giving.’ By respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and every one as the only basis for value, this free giving takes the form of heartfelt acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity. Thus the fostering of authentic and mature communion between persons within the family is the first and irreplaceable school of social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love...” (Familiaris Consortio 42–43).

According to Pope John Paul II the family is the place of origin and the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society: it makes

an original contribution in shaping humanity, in particular by presenting and transmitting values. Consequently, the social role of the family certainly cannot be connected only with procreation and upbringing, but is much wider and deeper.

A healthy, strong, happy family plays an important role in the well-being of society. Authors of this volume: *Strong Families – Strong Societies* underline that what happens to marriage and family has a direct impact on the society and thus, taking into consideration the long-lasting wellbeing of society, it is important to strengthen and support families in such a way that may lead to the transformation of family policy. Making the family foundations a strong reality means a shift from a culture that marginalises families to a new culture of responsible family policies and holistic support. Furthermore, in the 21st century when the family is “under pressure” there is a required extensive, systemic and continuous work, sustained by a culture, multidisciplinary studies and legislative means, that will protect the nature of the family and its links with society.

Inevitably the study of strong families opens positive perspectives on how to support families to make them healthy, stable, strong, happy, successful, well balanced and optimal. The advantage of this book is the multidimensional and holistic approach that tends to find solutions to families’ weaknesses, troubles and problems. Researchers, family studies experts, educators and therapists describe not only the family’s weaknesses and threats, but also the family’s opportunities, chances, strengths, that may become the basis for the continued growth of a family, a society, a nation, the Church and the State.

In the first part of this multi-author monograph, experts from Central and Eastern Europe provide a platform for promoting marriages and families’ strengths. Józef Stala highlights the role and meaning of marital love in building a stable marriage; Richard Kucharčík presents the main reasons for supporting the natural marriage model; Nadia Delicata takes a new look on *Human Vitae*, Alena Mátejová and Pavol Tománek characterise family and current social-legal measures for its members in the Slovak Republic; Antoni Świerczek sketches the role of the family in shaping humanity and Magdalena Syga, on the basis of the example of Polish emigrants in the Netherlands, interprets the predictors of adaptation to the life situation of an emigrant and his/her family.

Families experience many stressors in their life and face various problems, so, in the second part of this monograph, authors from Slovenia and Poland (Christian Gostečnik, Robert Cvetek, Tanja Pate, Tanja Valenta, Barbara Simonič, Tanja Repič Slavič, Kristina Greif, Drago Jerebic, Sara Jerebic, Saša Poljak Lukek, Tadeusz Michalik) try to meet these challenges responsibly, effectively and efficiently by presenting violence, physical and sexual abuse, addictions in the family, the consequences of abuses in the daily life of the survivors and dynamics of childhood parentification and consequently searching for the systemic therapy.

In the light of the present challenges and opportunities which a contemporary family and society are facing, this multi-author monograph may contribute to better understanding and provide a stable relationship between the family and society.

Editor Elżbieta Osewska