

Families: Opportunities and Challenges, ed. Józef Stala, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow Press, Kraków 2019, p. 27–42
The series: „Family Studies”
ISBN 978-83-7438-833-7 (print), ISBN 978-83-7438-834-4 (online)
DOI: <http://dxdoi.org/10.15633/9788374388344.03>

Ireneusz Stolarczyk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8482-0529>

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland

In the Interest of Marital and Family Stability

Ensuring marital stability is a great challenge which has to be approached with a conviction that the future of the European civilization largely depends on the effective promotion of values constituting the root of its cultural heritage.¹ The first part of this article is an attempt to answer the following question: “What are the social and cultural trends of these contemporary changes?” This part provides a general background of the challenges faced by the contemporary marital community. The second part of the essay focuses on formulating a reflection on the effects of contemporary changes in the marital and family lifestyle by answering the question: “How do contemporary changes influence the shape of marital and family life?” The last part of this elaboration leads to a reflection on the specificity of particular actions granting the stability of marital and family life and attempts to answer the question: “What should be done in terms of contemporary social and cultural changes to ensure the marital and family inseparability?”

¹ Cf. O. Chadwick, *Demokracja a religia*, in: *Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, Kraków 1994, p. 128.

1. The general characteristics of contemporary social and cultural changes

What is, if one may say so, “the panorama of contemporary changes”? In this part of the article, we will elaborate on the background and characteristics of social and cultural changes which, undoubtedly, have implications for marital and family lifestyle. One can notice that great social and cultural processes often lead to fundamental shifts in values and people’s behaviors, including their morality. The contemporary mentality aims to relativize everything. It cannot go unnoticed that new processes of values, norms, and model behaviors, being more suited to the cultural and social context, are created.² In the place of established values and norms, individuals treat personal experimentation in the sphere of moral choices as their gauge. The “Axiological free market” poses new problems, dilemmas, and challenges for the contemporary societies, though.

Moreover, contemporary societies are characterized by the far-reaching diversity of particular spheres of life. Economy, technology, science, politics, education, leisure time, health care, transport, culture, morality, religion, etc. form their own structural subsystems with distinct structures of expectations and demands addressed both to individuals and social groups, with their own codes and laws, along with their own modus operandi and rationality. These different spheres of life no longer make a coherent integrity with commonly-shared values and norms or any overriding, norm-making appeal. In fact, the values actually approved by society are often contradictory.³ What is considered acceptable in one of the spheres of life may not be treated as such in another one. Individuals are part of multiple social groups and they are confronted with different, often opposing interests. As a result, the feeling of incompleteness arises.

Integrating the pluralism of “social worlds of life” in one consistent system appears to be more and more difficult. Institutionalized values and norms, passed from one generation to another, cease to maintain their cultural obviousness under the conditions of change and movement. Tradition understood as a simple acceptance of the past (“it has always been this way”)

² Cf. P. Buczkowski, *Ład społeczny i typy przystosowań*, „Studia Socjologiczne” (1990), vol. 1–2 (116–117), p. 31.

³ Cf. J. Orzeszyna, *Kościół wobec globalizacji*, Kraków 2003, p. 38.

has a different significance now.⁴ Models and patterns of behavior rooted in the recent past seem to be inadequate in relation to changing ambitions and aspirations. In a fast-changing society there is little room for the experience of continuity and maintaining traditions.⁵ It is all repeatedly accompanied by the conflict connected to the generation gap as the older generation still follows traditional rules, whereas the youth demand and actually construct the new axiological order.

One may notice the gradual disappearance of such qualities as mono-centrism or top-down normalization; notions such as universalism and totalism arise, along with interpretational claims. It happens that what used to be regarded as pathological is now considered normal and acceptable. The radical pluralization of life choices, lifestyles, orientations, and values is what characterizes the so-called “society of opportunity.” Not only do material goods, but also spiritual and religious values, including the diversity of experiences and sensations connected to them, become a matter of one’s personal choice. The contemporary human is rapidly adjusting to ever-changing life circumstances. It is noticeable that the pluralist society demands their members to be “freedom masters.” The price to pay for such a lifestyle is the disappearance of respect towards values described as universal and timeless.

The process of changes mentioned above is characterized by the gradual weakening of traditional bonds and social precepts on the one hand and the growth in the field of personal liberties on the other. Nowadays social life allows for a wide choice of options being within range for particular individuals. Values, norms, patterns of behavior and the main life orientations, which used to be regarded as indisputable and obvious, are now considered replaceable or even obsolete and no longer “fashionable.” The common denominator for the changes that are taking place is pluralism and individualization. The scale of commonly-shared contemporary values is moving from authoritativeness (obligation, subordination, submissiveness, responsibility, devotion) towards individualized criteria (including personal fulfilment, the intensity of experience, success, freedom and self-actualization).

⁴ Cf. W. Chudy, *Kłamstwo koncepcją prawdy, człowieka i społeczeństwa*, „Przegląd Powszechny” (1990), vol. 6, p. 398.

⁵ Cf. F. Znaniecki, *Współczesne narody*, Warszawa 1990, p. 58.

It seems that the desire for autonomy, understood in this way, is becoming the main life experience. Personal identity is being created on the basis of highly external elements. Networks of social relationships are not defined by one's family, place of origin or residence but, most of all, by freedom of choice, and are sold by tender as if the logic of free market applies. Numerous traditional views and practices are being questioned.⁶ The very sense of tradition is evaluated selectively, according to individualized criteria, and evidently gets weakened. Ongoing change is the characteristic feature of pluralistic societies.⁷ There is nothing as constant as change. Bearing in mind the substantial progress in the fields of technology and IT, everything is becoming somewhat possible. As a result, the conviction that "almost everything can be achieved" in time evolves into the delusive individual and social mentality.

While describing the contemporary changes, one should notice the ever-growing atmosphere of risk. The contemporary atmosphere of risk seems to worry everyone as no one can feel safe. In Poland, the increase of risk and the feeling of instability has its specificity. First of all, it is one of the natural side effects of the systemic change and has a particular character. The very fact that change emerges builds up insecurity and a sense of anxiety. Secondly, the increase in instability and risk is a manifestation of processes of a more universal character, related to the transition to the postindustrial phase and the accelerating globalization.⁸

Embedded in different social contexts, the contemporary human life is subjected to the influence of various rules and norms, which frequently promote the hedonist lifestyle. The postmodern men and women are focused on the present time and intend to make the most of their *hic et nunc* existence.⁹ By the same token, the 'other' can be treated according to his/her ability to fulfill 'our' own desires (needs) in the shortest possible time. When the future is not planned and the present time is the most important notion, the word "today" matters more than "tomorrow." As a result, we face the issue of human's relation to time, the sense of responsibility for the

⁶ Cf. J. Orzeszyna, *Kościół wobec globalizacji*, p. 48.

⁷ Cf. C. Taylor, *Źródła współczesnej tożsamości*, in: *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, Kraków 1995, p. 12.

⁸ Cf. S. Opara, *Dwa modele przemian cywilizacji*, „Dziś” (1996), vol. 1, p. 43.

⁹ Cf. O. Chadwick, *Demokracja a religia*, in: *Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, p. 136.

surrounding environment and one's fate, and the following succumbing to the temptation of isolating oneself in the private space, without becoming open to others.

In the contemporary world (including Poland), the radical change of the social and cultural context in which ethical aspects, worldviews, lifestyles, and value systems are being created becomes visible. A significant feature of pluralist societies is the disastrous consequential process of the gradual loss of importance within such aspects as values and moral rules. In particular, moral norms which are traditionally related to religion are slowly losing their significance. Within the relatively free "moral market," various worldview "offers" are competing with one another.¹⁰ Contemporary society destroys many of the traditional authorities, contributing to the effect that some individuals find themselves at life's crossroads. They are unable to fall back on the fixed beliefs and stable patterns of action.¹¹ The perception of everyday life is no longer geared towards what is right (values) but towards what is beneficial (interests). In other words, the culture of utility rules over the culture of norms.

At this point, it seems worth to notice that Polish moral transformations were not rapid, as many assert. They evolved much earlier and the pivotal moment from the year 1989 means as much as the entering into the new phase of the same process that we had been experiencing in the 1970s and 1980s. Some point out to anomie, understood as the breakdown of moral and cultural structures, or the ongoing moral crisis which started at the end of the 1970s and the resulting frustrated society.¹² Other critics notice the radicalism of social, cultural, systemic, and economic changes which are impossible to be "absorbed" by many Poles. It is the Polish citizens who "pay the highest price" in this situation and become "the victims" of transformation processes (the so called "generation of losers"), which, undeniably, has an impact on the sphere of their moral life.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Buczkowski, *Ład społeczny i typy przystosowań*, p. 33.

¹¹ Cf. W. Chudy, *Kłamstwo koncepcją prawdy, człowieka i społeczeństwa*, p. 403.

¹² Cf. O. Chadwick, *Demokracja a religia*, in: *Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, p. 132.

2. The contemporary changes and their impact on the marital and family life

The reflection above pertaining to the contemporary social and cultural changes poses another question: “how do the contemporary changes influence the shape of marital and family life?” It is widely accepted that family is one of the most important educational units. Not only does it show the well-established set of skills and knowledge but also it presents a given system of values, pursuits, and aspirations. Despite indubitable and multileveled threats it faces, family remains the basic environment of socialization, where life is transferred, and, to most of us, it is the main source of satisfaction and a safeguard of one’s mental balance.¹³ Even though it is said that “the family is in retreat,” both international and national surveys report that the majority of people would like to live in a family and are planning their future bearing in mind the importance of this particular social unit.

However, the contemporary social and cultural changes provoke and cause certain disturbances in the functioning of a family. They often threaten the family’s very existence.¹⁴ The modification of the roles played by the family, far-reaching metamorphoses, abandoning the traditional model of marriage and family, the attractiveness of extramarital forms of communal life (the pluralism of forms), the revolution in the sphere of pro-family values have become the topics which are widely reported nowadays. The causes of the growing crisis are, in fact, of a cultural character and the changes are so far-reaching that some critics treat them as a peculiar “anthropologic revolution.”

Sociology attempts to embrace these new models of family. Informal relationships, open relationships, relationships in the “trial version,” or with “an expiration date” are often given the status of a family.¹⁵ A lot of effort has been made to force through the thesis that the notion of a family, understood traditionally as a solid relationship being a communion of two people of opposite sex who are exclusively devoted to each other, is gradually changing. There is a visible attempt to formulate a new definition of marriage

¹³ Cf. J. Orzeszyna, *Kościół wobec globalizacji*, p. 69.

¹⁴ Cf. Z. Skorny, *Cywilizacja konsumpcyjna – blaski i cienie*, „Problemy” (1991), vol. 4, p. 21.

¹⁵ Cf. C. Taylor, *Źródła współczesnej tożsamości*, p. 14.

and family. It is contended that family life and family relations can take on different forms, neither of which is privileged. The manipulation of the term “family,” by means of attaching to it the content and phenomena of various kinds, inevitably leads to a conviction that this term is ambiguous and empirically useless. The so-called sexual revolution, being able to transform whole societies, the visible liberation of marital and family matters from the oppressive influence of the Church, alternative forms of marital life (marriage – yes, family – no), and the relativization of ethical criteria pertaining to inter-family responsibilities are often addressed in the discussion about contemporary families.¹⁶ Many young people are afraid of the risk connected with the commitment to marital fidelity for the whole life.

It has to be noted that all these lead to an inevitable weakening and destabilization of a family. As a result, the instability of marriage and family, as a consequence of abandoning the traditional family structures, is on the increase. Nowadays one can observe various manifestations of the so-called “modern family” formation, including the increasing complexity and pluralization of forms of marital and family life, adjusting the family life to individual plans of their members, the reduction of its value by means of creating relationships for shorter parts of life, the emancipation of women and the following elimination of any obligations connected to their social role, parenting formed according to one’s own ideas, and the possibility to negotiate the mutual relations within the family.¹⁷

Questioning the religious assumptions and commandments has its noticeable repercussions in reference to marriage and family. Birth control has started to be widely used, regardless of the Catholic Church’s opinion on this practice. Children are no longer “a gift from God” but are an effect of a well-planned conception. Hedonist attitudes towards sexuality are being favored, while the conviction that we are responsible for our family life before God is quietly being rejected. Any mistakes can be erased, for instance, through the termination of a pregnancy. The very institution of marriage is not only dissolvable but also it can be ended faster and easier than ever before. A person does not feel attached to any vows taken to God.¹⁸ Personal comfort

¹⁶ Cf. O. Chadwick, *Demokracja a religia, w: Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, p. 139.

¹⁷ Cf. S. Opara, *Dwa modele przemian cywilizacji*, p. 45.

¹⁸ Cf. W. Chudy, *Kłamstwo koncepcją prawdy, człowieka i społeczeństwa*, p. 407.

and momentary whims replaced religious commitment and one's devotion to chosen values.

Transformative processes within families are often related to the modernization of contemporary society. The increase in the number of young people who cohabit before marriage is an easily noticeable phenomenon nowadays. What is more, the duration of this kind of relationship is extending. It is also becoming widely approved and is starting not to be perceived (or, it already has) as a problem of a moral nature. As a result, the number of children born of extramarital relationships is growing. It is also noticeable that young people decide to be joined in marriage increasingly later: women at the age of 28 and men at the age of 30, which is approximately five years later than it used to be twenty years ago. Under the name of the so-called family planning, the decision of getting married or having a child is postponed due to the will to acquire university education or developing one's professional career. To some, even the confinement date cannot interfere with vacations that have already been planned. The fact that social roles such as marriage and maternity seem to interfere with independence and professional career reveals a much larger dilemma, namely "one's own life or living for the others."¹⁹

Recently the choice between having children or remaining childless is a matter of calculation (profit-loss ratio). Sociologists emphasize that children are often treated as an expense that an average consumer covers throughout the life course. And yes, children cost more than a luxurious, cutting-edge car, a trip around the world, or one's lavish mansion. What is worse, the spending on children will probably grow in time and its level is impossible to be predicted, even if approximately. In a world which no longer offers tried-and-tested career paths and stability of employment, and its residents constantly change their jobs and places of residence, the fact that mortgages are granted without stable interest rates and payment date means taking a considerably high risk and being exposed to perpetual anxiety and restlessness.

Significant transformations take place also in the sphere of the inseparability of marriage and stability of this relationship. The meaning of the vow "till death us do part" undergoes a substantial change. The conviction that this vow does not fit into the mentality of modern people for whom

¹⁹ Cf. M. Ryba, *Przemiany społeczne i polityczne w procesie globalizacji*, „Człowiek w Kulturze” (2002), vol. 14, p. 123.

strict commitments (without the clause “in effect until further notice”) seem unacceptable has recently been promoted.

The pro-divorce mentality has been recognized widely and the dominant culture promotes divorce as a way to solve the marital problems (the logic of egalitarianism). The increasing number of divorces is accompanied by the phenomenon of remarriage. The institutions of marriage and family seem to lose their distinctive, stable character and are lowered to the level of an easily-solvable legal contract.

The transformations taking place within European families indubitably affect Polish families and can be considered as some kind of a challenge.²⁰ However, it is too soon to recognize any new, visible, massively distributed moral and cultural orientations radically different from earlier patterns, characterized by the individualistic understanding of freedom, relativist treatment of values and norms, hedonist model of activity, and the carefree lifestyle. Especially among teenagers, some tendencies aimed at the weakening of basic moral orientations which used to be deeply rooted in tradition and religion are less clear nowadays. It proves the strong position of permissive morality in today's society.

Although they live in a morally insecure and unstable world, Poles are not that entirely disoriented. Their axiological awareness is neither a nihilist desert, nor a safe fortress, though. Even though the conviction that Western Europe is subject to extensive processes of radical relativism and moral skepticism is somewhat exaggerated, there is no denying that such transformative moral processes are partly visible also in Poland, especially among teenage groups.²¹ In the European cultural climate, the spread of the misinterpreted sense of tolerance and moral relativism is a distinctive trend of our civilization. Thus, the Polish society faces a very serious challenge.

²⁰ Cf. J. Orzeszyna, *Kościół wobec globalizacji*, p. 87; J. Stala, E. Osewska, *Anders erziehen in Polen. Der Erziehungs- und Bildungsbegriff im Kontext eines sich ständig verändernden Europas des XXI. Jahrhunderts*, Tarnów 2009; J. Stala, *Familienkatechese in Polen um die Jahrhundertwende. Probleme und Herausforderungen*, Tarnów 2008; J. Stala, *W kierunku integralnej edukacji religijnej w rodzinie. Próba refleksji nad nauczaniem Jana Pawła II w kontekście polskich uwarunkowań*, Tarnów 2010; J. Stala, *Katecheza rodzinna w nauczaniu Kościoła od Soboru Watykańskiego II*, Tarnów 2009; J. Stala, *Katecheza o małżeństwie i rodzinie w Polsce po Soborze Watykańskim II. Próba oceny*, Tarnów 2004; *Strengthening Families*, red. J. Stala, J. Garmaz, Kraków 2016; *The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives*, red. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2015.

²¹ Cf. P. Buczkowski, *Ład społeczny i typy przystosowań*, p. 36.

It has to be highlighted that just because pro-family values (such as the position of family in one's life) are generally approved in Poland, it does not mean that certain particular moral norms, which are a result of more general rules, are fully accepted too.

3. Towards the stabilization and respect for the durability of marriage and family

The last part of this elaboration poses the specific question: “what can be done to ensure the durability of marriage and family bearing in mind the contemporary social and cultural changes?”. A noticeable moral relativism is particularly alarming from the perspective of family life. In this debate, Church plays the role of “the opposition” to this mentality. Even if the contemporary culture deservedly has directed attention to the autonomous character of individuals and their life on Earth, it, in fact, overstated this autonomy by promoting the thesis that one's life is entirely in their hands.²² According to this view, norms leading the marital and family life belong exclusively to the so-called “human ethics” and they are a manifestation of the law granted to individuals by themselves.²³ For the contemporary person the value of his or her deeds is self-evaluated. Meanwhile a person for whom the value of freedom is of utmost importance and who is concentrated on their own self and personal immediate targets will show little interest in his or her spiritual development, in which the responsibility for others and care for the common good, including family's wellbeing, plays a significant role.²⁴

At this stage of transformations in the marital and family morality, the Church's stance seems to be ignored to a large extent, partly by Catholics themselves. That is why the integral pro-family education defending the dignity and importance of marriage and family is needed more than ever before. Instead of the sense of doubt, the pedagogy of hope and founding the whole process of education on the Catholic parents seems to be

²² Cf. C. Taylor, *Źródła współczesnej tożsamości*, p. 19.

²³ Cf. M. Ryba, *Przemiany społeczne i polityczne w procesie globalizacji*, p. 128.

²⁴ Cf. P. Wojciechowski, *Wolność nie może być katastrofą*, „Więź” 35 (1992), vol. 12 (410), p. 11.

necessary.²⁵ Moral upbringing understood as educating toward moral experiences should be developed. Pro-family values ought to become the center of the public life as an important way to improve the morality of the modern society.²⁶ In the contemporary society, the family cannot be taken for granted and a given, once and for all as an element of social and moral heritage (gift), but rather as something demanding the ongoing care for today's and tomorrow's shape (task).

Moreover, the lack of respect for the durability of marriage and family is consistent with the morality crisis trend. What can be done in such a situation? While looking for an answer to questions of this kind, it worthwhile to refer to the thesis, known for instance from the encyclical titled *Pacem in terris* that one cannot think about the world peace unless he or she has the internal peace in their hearts. Hence, the program of social transformations in the largest, worldwide scale should be first understood as the effort towards changing the mentality of a given individual. Such a practice may be viewed as the bottom-up style of Church activity. Thus, the preliminary statement in the topic of actions undertaken to stabilize the situation of marriages and families (in other words, the program of changing the general tendencies) is the comprehensive effort to improve the conscience of an individual.

An indispensable task in the life of every human being is the improvement of one's conscience in striving for the moral truth. A well-developed conscience is able to protect from the anxiety, egoism, pride, or the exaggerated guiltiness. It creates inner peace and is the foundation of authentic freedom. Conscience is a constant disposition of a thinking and free being. Conscience becomes the chance for self-development when its freedom is closely related to God's commandments.

The conscience is thus a signpost for behavior in given situations of human life. Conscience-based moral norms provide a general perspective, which, at least to some extent, shows the ways in which each person should organize their personal, marital, family, and social life. The development of conscience is a process which takes place in time in each and every one of us, and in the entire humanity. Conscience is developed not only by parents and educators, but also at work and in the married life. Conscience does

²⁵ Cf. A. Szostek, *Człowiek wobec wartości*, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 41 (1994), vol 6, p. 168.

²⁶ Cf. Z. Skorny, *Cywilizacja konsumpcyjna – blaski i cienie*, p. 23.

not just “fall from the sky,” since it has its history and its creators. It emerges due to the proper upbringing and education. It is our awareness of what is right and wrong which is being created gradually by means of good, positive experiences and it is deforming whenever we act against our conscience or when we experiment by muting the so-called “pangs of conscience.”

What happens when one’s conscience is constantly damaged and broken? It gets muted and all human actions are, from then on, based on egoism as there is no visible line between what is good and bad. As a result, one’s will becomes weakened and a person loses their perceptiveness and clear head.²⁷ Despite the apparent freedom, human actions become insecure, tainted and a person lacks the internal harmony and the sense of belonging to God. A muted conscience leads us to sin: what was initially considered a pleasure brings us to a ruin and moral death that is difficult to be resurrected from. Sin is a form of disregarding God who conveys his message by means of the conscience.²⁸ Through sin, we destroy the Godly aspect in us and we begin to function independently, which always leads to a failure.²⁹ Being unfaithful to one’s conscience equals being unfaithful to God himself.

There is a number of reasons why a Catholic should not approve the dissolution of a marriage and the family. First of all, it is a cause for dismay and can provoke a plague of divorces. The principle of “overcoming evil with good” is violated, along with the sign of marital fidelity. Moreover, the lack of consent for such solutions is a proof and an act of care towards other sacramental marriages experiencing any crises. Finally, a civil divorce is moral evil breaking the covenant marriage.

Another question arises: “are there any situations in which civil divorce might be accepted as something positive?”. The answer is negative.³⁰ In some extreme cases, an alternative solution to a divorce is separation as it is fairly less painful both for children and the spouses themselves and it does not do harm to other married couples and their children. Spouses who decided on separation do not form new marriage-based relationships and, as a result, are faithful to their marriage vows.³¹

²⁷ Cf. P. Buczkowski, *Ład społeczny i typy przystosowań*, p. 37.

²⁸ Cf. P. Wojciechowski, *Wolność nie może być katastrofą*, p. 14.

²⁹ Cf. M. Ryba, *Przemiany społeczne i polityczne w procesie globalizacji*, p. 129.

³⁰ Cf. F. Znaniecki, *Współczesne narody*, p. 95.

³¹ Cf. P. Wojciechowski, *Wolność nie może być katastrofą*, p. 18.

Every family breakdown is a greater or smaller trauma. There are no marriages and children who survive it without a scar. However, every breakdown starts with misunderstandings, quarrels, or, what is worse, alcohol and adultery. Domestic violence and visits at court (first connected with the divorce and then related to settlement and division of property) are becoming frequent. One can only imagine the great horror that children of divorced couple have to go through.

Asking the following question seems worthy in this situation: “What are the reasons for the dissolution of marriages and families?” One may assert that the number of reasons equals the number of divorces. Each story is one of a kind as there are no two people who are alike. Fr. Jan Palyga distinguishes several causes or reasons why couples decide upon divorce. “Marital infidelity holds the first place. According to the statistical data, even these days, it is one of the main reasons for the dissolution of marriage. The winner of the second place, with only slightly smaller number of points, is alcohol and drug abuse. The majority of people with alcohol or drug use disorder are men, but recently the number of women abusing alcohol has been growing too. The third cause of divorces is the lack of residential property and money. Indeed, it seems that even the strongest affection would not stand the test of time if the family has no place to live and has to share a living space with their parents or even strangers. Another frequently mentioned cause of getting a divorce is *character incompatibility*. This broad term encompasses every possible reason for the divorce. On the other hand, there are some profound differences between people but they seem to stem from the immature personalities and the inability to commit to marriage and establish a family on the one or both sides (thus resulting in divorces) than being of incompatible characters. Moreover, the decision to get married is nowadays made too carelessly, without the necessary assessment in the field of *who is who*. This all leads to tensions, misunderstanding and fights between spouses and, sooner or later, results in a divorce.”³²

It should also be noted that in the discussion of pastoral challenges in the context of marriage and family dissolution an “evangelical” approach in its dual role ought to be adopted:

³² J. Palyga, *Niesakramentalni. Duszpasterstwo rozwiedzionych żyjących w nowych związkach*, Częstochowa 2003, pp. 12–15.

- intra-ecclesiastical: by means of religious instruction on the significance of marriage and family from the perspective of faith. Both teenagers and young spouses should be made aware of the mysteries of human and Christian love;
- extra-ecclesiastical: by promoting authentic, worldly values of marriage and family. The Church has to address the topic of inseparability of marriage. The Ministry should defend the rights of a given individual, rather than an institution in this respect, regardless of whether it is of civil or canonical and sacramental character.³³

As Christians, we cannot adopt the attitude of resignation by leaving the battlefield. We should intervene in these matters by introducing our values and making an effort to change society according to our vision of the human's vocation. However, this cannot be realized in a form of strategically and tactically programmed war. The Christian evangelization should be implemented by means of new forms in line with the pluralist structure of the world we live in.³⁴ By respecting the healthy pluralism of the society, Christians have to offer what is good, in the form of a marital inseparability, as a manifestation of fidelity and endurance.

4. Conclusion

Recently we have been witnessing the growing number of civil divorces. Undoubtedly, it is due to the contemporary society we are all part of. Such factors and circumstances as spouses being separated for long, their business trips in mixed gender company, a liberal lifestyle in the sphere of human intimacy promoted by the mass media, and pressures from the side of aggressive eroticism, to name just a few, indisputably affect contemporary marriage in a negative way. All these factors weaken the marital bonds and contribute to the decision about getting a divorce. Unfortunately also, the consciences of many Christians seem to work in accordance with this crisis as they seem to ignore the negative aspects of such solutions and they consider this alternative even in their own lives.

³³ Cf. A. Szostek, *Człowiek wobec wartości*, p. 170.

³⁴ J. Pałyga, *Niesakramentalni. Duszpasterstwo rozwiedzionych żyjących w nowych związkach*, p. 49.

The teachings about the inseparability of marriage and family, similarly to the entire Christian message, are directed to men and women of all times. However, to fully promote the truth about the inseparability of marriage, it is necessary for both the Church and individual families in particular, to bear witness to its existence.

Bibliography

- Buczowski P., *Ład społeczny i typy przystosowań*, „Studia Socjologiczne” (1990), vol. 1–2 (116–117).
- Chadwick O., *Demokracja a religia*, in: *Europa i społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, Kraków 1994.
- Chudy W., *Kłamstwo koncepcją prawdy, człowieka i społeczeństwa*, „Przegląd Powszechny” (1990), vol. 6.
- Opara S., *Dwa modele przemian cywilizacji*, „Dziś” (1996), vol. 1.
- Orzeszyna J., *Kościół wobec globalizacji*, Kraków 2003.
- Pałysa J., *Niesakramentalni. Duszpasterstwo rozwiedzionych żyjących w nowych związkach*, Częstochowa 2003.
- Ryba M., *Przemiany społeczne i polityczne w procesie globalizacji*, „Człowiek w Kulturze” (2002), vol. 14.
- Skorny Z., *Cywilizacja konsumpcyjna – blaski i cienie*, „Problemy” (1991), vol. 4.
- Stala J., *Familienkatechese in Polen um die Jahrhundertwende. Probleme und Herausforderungen*, Tarnów 2008.
- Stala J., *Katecheza o małżeństwie i rodzinie w Polsce po Soborze Watykańskim II. Próba oceny*, Tarnów 2004.
- Stala J., *Katecheza rodzinna w nauczaniu Kościoła od Soboru Watykańskiego II*, Tarnów 2009.
- Stala J., Osewska E., *Anders erziehen in Polen. Der Erziehungs- und Bildungsbegriff im Kontext eines sich ständig verändernden Europas des XXI. Jahrhunderts*, Tarnów 2009.
- Stala J., *W kierunku integralnej edukacji religijnej w rodzinie. Próba refleksji nad nauczaniem Jana Pawła II w kontekście polskich uwarunkowań*, Tarnów 2010.

Strengthening Families, eds. J. Stala, J. Garmaz, Kraków 2016.

Szostek A., *Człowiek wobec wartości*, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 41 (1994), vol. 6.

Taylor C., *Źródła współczesnej tożsamości*, in: *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany.*

Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo, Kraków 1995.

The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives, eds. E. Osewska,

J. Stala, Kraków 2015.

Wojciechowski P., *Wolność nie może być katastrofą*, „Więź” 35 (1992), vol. 12 (410).

Znaniński F., *Współczesne narody*, Warszawa 1990.