

Reports, forum

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**A Report from the International
Academic Conference
We Cherish Family Life
(*Pielęgnowujemy życie rodzinne*)
organised by the Pontifical University
of John Paul II in Krakow
and Polskie Stowarzyszenie Familiologiczne,
Krakow, 21–22 October 2022**

The international academic conference, *We Cherish Family Life (Pielęgnowujemy życie rodzinne)*, was held from 21st to 22nd of October 2022, in the historic Auditorium of Collegium Novum of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. It was organised by the Pontifical University of John Paul II (UPJPII, Department of Theology, Tarnów Section) and Polskie Stowarzyszenie Familiologiczne. The conference was under the patronage of Marlena Małąg, the Minister of Family and Social Policy, and Prof. Przemysław Czarnek, the Minister of Education and Science. Over 200 people participated in the conference, which was yet another symposium organized by the above mentioned two institutions, regarding contemporary marriage and family.

On the promulgation of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love) in 2016, Pope Francis emphasized that everyone should experience a call to love and cherish family life. Therefore, the theme of the conference is: *We Cherish Family Life (Pielęgnowujemy życie rodzinne)*. There were 20 speakers on Friday and 18 on Saturday: 16 Poles and 22 guests from foreign academic centres: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Syria. Special guests included: Andrzej Jeż, the bishop of Tarnów, Prof. Przemysław Czarnek, the Minister of Education and Science, Beata Kempa, a member of the European Parliament (European Conservatives and Reformists), Mikołaj Pawlak, the Polish Children Ombudsman, Prof. Wojciech Świątkiewicz, a renowned sociologist and the first representative of the discipline 'family studies' in Centralna Komisja ds. stopni i tytułów naukowych [The Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles].

The first part of the conference was entitled: *Preparation for Marriage and Family Life*. The chief organizers were also its heads: Prof. Elżbieta Osewska, President of Polskie Stowarzyszenie Familiologiczne, and Fr Prof. Józef Stala from the Pontifical University of John Paul II (in Krakow). After the participants were greeted, a letter from Wiesław Śmigiel, the bishop of Toruń and the head of Rada ds. Rodziny Konferencji Episkopatu Polski [Family Council of the Polish Bishops' Conference] was read out. There was a short presentation on the history of the Jagiellonian University and the Auditorium of Collegium Novum, and their relations with John Paul II in particular. The introductory speeches were delivered by: bishop Andrzej Jeż, Fr Prof. Tomasz Rozkrut on behalf of Fr Prof. Robert Tyrała, the Rector of the Pontifical University of John Paul II, and Fr Prof. UPJPII Marek Kluz, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology Section in Tarnów. As a result, the following papers were presented: Prof. Wojciech Świątkiewicz (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland): *Sociological Introduction to Family Life*; Prof. Birutė Obelenienė (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania): *Does Comprehensive Sexuality Education of Young People Help Them to Prepare for Marriage and Family Life?*; Prof. Dana and Pavel Hanes (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia): *The Importance of the Family in the Eyes of Children (before and after the coronavirus)*; Dr Tiago Miguel Fialho Neto (Research Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of Portugal): *Family and Religious Education in Portugal: Real or False Friends?*; Dr Osmo and Lea Vartiainen (Education Department / Catholic Church in Finland): *Challenges and Opportunities of Religious Education and Family in Finland. A Catholic Minority View*; Dr Patricia Kieran (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland): *Families*

and Family Life in Ireland: Challenges for the Future; Dr John Berry (University of Malta, Malta): *The Maltese Family between Tradition and Contemporary Life*; Prof. KA Teresa Olearczyk (Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University, Poland): *Życie rodzinne – wspólnota czy osamotnienie?* [Family Life: a Community or Desolation?]; Prof. Ivan Platovnjak (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia): *The Importance of Marriage Groups for Family Life*; Mikołaj Pawlak (The Polish Children Ombudsman): *Prawo dziecka do rodziny* [The Right of a Child to Have a Family]; Prof. UJ Andrzej Kulig (Deputy Mayor of the City of Cracow for Social and Municipal Policy): *Polityka prorodzinna Krakowa* [Pro-Family Policy in Krakow]; Fr Prof. UPJPII Robert Nęcek (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow): *Komunikacja małżeńska kluczem wychowania do dialogu z Bogiem na przykładzie Emilii i Karola Wojtyłów* [The Communication between Spouses as the Key to Education of a Dialogue with God: the Example of Emilia and Karol Wojtyła]; Dr hab. Noemi Bravena (Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic): *How to Present Values and Religious Concepts in Czech Families and Kindergartens?*; Dr Mariusz Kuźniar (Česká biskupská konference, Praha, Czech Republic): *The Main Characteristics of Today's Czech Family: Religiosity and Catechesis*; Assistant Prof. Saša Poljak Lukek (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia): *Vulnerability and Spirituality in the Alcohol Recovery Process*. At the end of the presentations, there was a discussion and a summary of the first day of the conference.

On Saturday, the second part of the conference was entitled: *Family Life – Risks, Opportunities and Challenges*. It commenced with the address by Prof. Przemysław Czarnek, the Minister of Education and Science. He admitted that after many months of various consultations, he issued a regulation on establishing a separate academic field ‘family studies’ and restoring the discipline ‘family studies.’ He said: “It is done so that specialists in family studies do not have to ‘go round’ social studies, theology and other fields, and may focus their efforts on presenting the whole and objective truth about the family”. He also underscored that there are already provisions on the amendment to ‘The Law on higher education and science’, which will allow all academic institutions to obtain the necessary license in order to pursue the discipline ‘family studies.’ Prof. Elżbieta Osewska and Fr Prof. Józef Stala have been particularly engaged in establishing the field ‘family studies’ and restoring the discipline. Prof. Czarnek thanked them and awarded them with special diplomas, “for academic achievement and their engagement in restoring ‘family studies’ as a discipline and as an academic field.” Moreover, Prof. Czarnek handed over a cheque for over a million zlotys

(for academic purposes) to the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. Minister Czarnek also awarded a diploma to the Rector of UPJPII, Fr Prof. Robert Tyrała. Subsequently, there were papers delivered by Beata Kempa (member of the European Parliament, European Conservatives and Reformists): *Państwo a instytucja rodziny – szanse, zagrożenia i modele wsparcia* [The State and the Institution of the Family: Opportunities, Threats and Models of Support]; Fr Prof. UKSW Waldemar Cisło (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Poland) and George Mamlouk (Syria): *Rola i zadania Kościoła na rzecz rodziny na obszarach konfliktów zbrojnych na przykładzie wojny w Syrii i w Ukrainie* [The Role and Duties of the Church Towards the Family in Areas of Armed Conflict: the Example of Syria and Ukraine]; Assistant Prof. Ausra Vasiliauskaite (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania): *Basic Principles of Implementation of Ecological Spirituality for Family Life*; Dr Tanja Valenta (Franciscan Family Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia): *The Mechanism of Intergenerational Transmission of Alcohol Misuse and Relation Family Therapy*; Prof. Christian Gostecnik (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia): *Building Healthy and Sustainable Family Life: Relational Family Therapy with Families in Distress*; Prof. Barbara Simonič (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia): *The Legacy of Family Relationships: Adult Children of Alcoholics in Search of New Prosperities*; Fr Prof. Dr Andrius Narbekovas (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania): *Surrogacy – Modern Slavery*; Assistant Prof. Drago Jerebic (University of Ljubljana and Family Institute Bližina, Celje, Slovenia): *Attitude Towards Mother and Attitude Towards Father in Individuals Addicted to Alcohol*; Assistant Prof. Dr Sara Jerebic (University of Ljubljana and Family Institute Bližina, Celje, Slovenia): *Impact of Trauma and Addiction within the Family and Recovery in Relational Family Therapy*; teaching assistant Ana Šeremet (Catholic University of Croatia, Zagreb, Croatia): *Emotional Regulation and Partner Attachment among Alcohol Addicts*; Assistant prof. Angelina and Milan Gaspar (University of Split, Croatia): *Parents as Knowledge Transmitters in the Pandemic Context*; Katarzyna Kosakowska, Witold Solski (Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy Samozatrudnionych WBREW, Poland): *Praca w rodzinie* [Work in the Family]; Prof. Elżbieta Osewska (University of Applied Sciences in Tarnow, Poland; Polskie Stowarzyszenie Familiologiczne, Poland): *The Educational Dimension of Family Life: Chances and Challenges*; Fr Prof. Józef Stala (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland): *Catechesis in the Family*. A discussion followed, together with a summary of the second day and the entire conference.

The participants of the conference have agreed that in the face of threats posed to the dignity of man, the environment in which man can feel safe, live

and mature is of particular significance. Hence, despite its dysfunctions, it is the contemporary family which is still the prime milieu for our growth and education. It is the family that, to a large extent, shapes our condition, choices of values, norms, personal and religious integrity. Because of strong and manifold bonds between members of the family and, above all, their disinterested service toward one another, the family is a community in which a person is unconditionally accepted and loved. In the Christian perspective, the family is endowed with dignity and responsibility. Besides, it takes up the calling to become what it is by nature – a community of life and love that is built on the foundation of the sacrament of matrimony, and leads to sanctity.

Active members of the conference emphasized the significance of the topics discussed; the flawless organization; the opportunity to establish contacts with other academics and undertake joint activities (including publishing papers and organizing projects). The high standard of the conference translated into the participants' enthusiasm to organize another academic symposium, with the outcome that the chief organizers (known for their diligence and commitment) have already announced the preparation of two post-conference academic publications: in Polish and in English.