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Marriage and Family under Tutelage of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia

Ecumeny and Law 1, 31-47

2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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Keywords: The Greek Catholic Church, tutelage, pastoral centre, marriage, family

1. The Book of Genesis on Marriage

Even the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, speaks about mission of spouses: “Be fertile and multiply, and fill the earth!” (Gen 1:28) “That is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body” (Gen 2:24). Three, very important elements for functioning marriage, can be derived from this divine plan, and so: *to leave*, *to cling*, and *to become one body*. How can we understand it?

When talking about “leaving” one’s mother and father, it does not mean leaving parents to the mercy of fate. Leaving does not mean to put parents aside, as the real leaving is not only an external sign, but primarily, it is something inner that creates positive circumstances for growing of love among parents and children, as well as for growing responsibility of children to take care of their parents.

The second element of the divine plan is “clinging.” To cling to each other by love, of which the guarantee is God himself. This guarantee is passed on in the Sacrament of Marriage. If spouses really live in the sacrament of marriage, nothing and nobody can destroy them.

The confirmation of mutual clinging of a man and a woman means “to become one body.” And this is the third element of the divine plan.

In Hebrew, the word body does not refer only to corporeality, it also refers to the whole man as a person. Hence, to become one body means something more than physical union. It means that two persons share everything they possess, and not only body, material property, but also their thoughts, feelings, pleasures, sufferings, hopes, fears, success and failures. To become one body is not something that a married couple receives immediately; it is a long process which determines their role in their common married life.

2. Apostle Paul on Marriage

Everyday experience teaches us, and figures confirm¹ that even many Christian marriages do not follow the above mentioned elements — “to leave,” “to cling,” “to become one body.” The main reason is egoism, the result of which is “non serviam.” A man, who bears the fruit of the original sin, rather wants to be a king. And this is also reflected in marriage and family.

When reading the fifth chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians, it may seem that a man is supposed to decide, that is, he is thought to be a king: “As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:24). It could be derived that He is the one, who should decide. Is it really so? We are warned against very tendentious understanding of this verse by the previous verse, which says: “[...] Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). That is, women to men, but also men to women. St. Paul the Apostle also protects women, as within the Hellenistic culture a woman was subjugated to a man, according to the principle: “Man, father of family, is woman’s head.” Hence, a woman is supposed to be subordinated to her husband.

But St. Paul the Apostle clearly says: “Be subordinate to each other out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself is the saviour of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:21—24). From his words, it can be seen that man is not woman’s head, as understood by the pagans, but Christ, and hence, the subjugation of a woman to a man arises from her radical subjugation to the only Lord, that is, to Christ.

¹ In Slovakia, every second marriage ends up in divorce nowadays.

Subjugating to a man does not mean doing it by force, by bondage. It does not mean that woman is less worthy than man. It is surrendering to a service, typical of a Christian. Only a man freed from egoism is able to manage this. Christ is the head of the Church as the Saviour. That is, due to his sacrifice on the Cross. Thus, if women are to be subordinated to men, they have the right to expect their real love. Hence St. Paul the Apostle gave instructions to men: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her” (Eph 5:25). These words of St. Paul sounded revolutionary, as according to the pagan tradition, it was a duty of man to rule and not to love.

3. Significance of Marriage and Family According to *Familiaris Consortio*

Close relationship of man and woman, partnership and marriage, is one of the most important interpersonal relationships that do exist — it can be said, that it is perhaps the most important relationship of all interpersonal relations. For as it is said by the Second Vatican Council, “the well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family” (GeS 47). “The future of humanity passes by way of the family” (FC 86).

Marriage and family arising from it form a part of the great divine plan. It is possible to discover and to know the real value and sense of marriage and family only in the light of this divine plan. Marriage and family were conceived in the paradise when God created man and woman and when he blessed them and charged them to take part in his creating love: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). The original sin of our great-grandparents seriously disrupted and harmed this divine institution of marriage and family.² However, with his death on the cross and with his Resurrection, Jesus Christ redeemed them, he even elevated marriage to the level of sacrament. Sacramental marriage is an image of love, with which Christ loves the church. “Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the church of what happened on the cross; they are for each other and for the children witnesses to the salvation in which the sacrament makes them sharers” (FC 13).

² Š. PALOČKO: “Privotný hriech a jeho dôsledky.” In: *Zborník teologických štúdií*, no. 4. Ed. G. PAEA, P. TIRPÁK. Prešov 2008, p. 98.

In Christian marriage, human fact of marital love as a permanent state is elevated to the level of sacrament. Christ's love for the church is becoming the model for conjugal love. Christ never betrays his church, but he sacrifices himself. The sacrament is not only a transcendental addition to the natural marriage, as if they were two parallel components of a conjugal life, but it penetrates it throughout and elevates it to a completely new level. New horizons are opened for the whole natural essence of conjugal love, conjugal life. Spouses are not only connected by the sacrament, but also strengthened and not only marked, but also highlighted. Marriage and family, according to the plan of our heavenly Father, have become the tool of his love in the realization of the divine plan to redeem mankind.³ In this plan family was given four basic tasks: "forming a community of persons, serving life, participating in the life and mission of the church, participating in the development of society" (FC 17).

However, it is important to point out value of marriage and family and their influence on physical and spiritual development of a man, a woman and children. The Christian faith has an immensely stabilizing role in marriage and family. The decline in faith weakens marriage stability. The Christian marriage is a sacramental "community in dialogue with God" (cf. FC 55). The main aspect of understanding is the promise of mercy which God gives to a man and to a woman, when baptised in faith they mutually promise a faithful love. God holds and carries, supports and heals fragile "yes" of spouses. Also, it is important to inform present-day world about the immense value of sacramental marriage and family cohabitation.⁴

At present, there is probably no other institution that is the target of so many attacks as marriage and family.⁵ This "little church," as family is referred to in the church documents, faces many pressures, which are breaking the sole basis of family. The Christian family is rightly considered to be a "domestic church." It is a small community of faith, hope and love. The main reason, for which we consider family to be a small church is that Jesus Christ is present and He is at work in family. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). The ecclesiastical nature of the Christian family means that the whole secret of the church is realized there — the secret of God's meeting with a man and that of man with God.⁶

³ K. RAŠLOVÁ, M. KOŠČ: *Psychológia a pastorácia 2*. Bratislava 1992, p. 76.

⁴ M. DUDA: "Wartość rodziny wobec alternatywnych form życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego. Zarys problematyki." In: *Rodina nádej budúcnosti*. Košice 2008, p. 134.

⁵ See KONFERENCIA BISKUPOV SLOVENSKA (CONFERENCE OF SLOVAK BISHOPS): *Pastoračný a evanjelizačný plán katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku 2001—2006* (9—10.5.2001). Bratislava 2001, pp. 58—59.

⁶ P. JANAČ: *Rodina na ceste k Otcovi*. Námestovo 1999, p. 16.

Nowadays, the church is trying to promote pastoral tutelage of marriage and family, in order for family to become what it should be. A family can become the real family only when it fulfils the basic tasks, which were given by God before ages. After all, it has its roots in the sacrament of marriage, from which it draws nourishment (cf. FC 55). All material, moral and spiritual supports which are given to a family at present, should serve as a help to a family to get to such a level on which God wants to have it.

Blessed John Paul II exhorted all people of good will to help families and marriages in current era: “It is therefore indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavour to save and foster the values and requirements of the family. I feel that I must ask for a particular effort in this field from the sons and daughters of the church. Faith gives them full knowledge of God’s wonderful plan: They therefore have an extra reason for caring for the reality that is the family in this time of trial and of grace. They must show the family special love. This is an injunction that calls for concrete action” (FC 86).

4. Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia on Marriage and Family

Continuing the vision of the blessed Pope John Paul II, in regard to protection and support of family, the bishops of the Catholic Church in Slovakia took some action. After the Pastoral and Evangelising plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia 2001—2006, the Conference of Slovak Bishops issued another pastoral plan under entitled *Pastoračný plán Katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku 2007—2013* (The Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia 2007—2013).

Content of this document is divided into six chapters. Apart from the introduction and the conclusions, there are: 1. “Signs of the times,” 2. “Pastoral orientation,” 3. “Family as a pastoral priority group,” 4. “The young as a pastoral group,” 5. “People in need as a pastoral group,” 6. “Ways of realization.” At the end, there is the Letter of Benedict XVI to the Slovak bishops, which was addressed to them during their visit *ad limina* in Vatican, in 2007.⁷

It is worth noticing that only the third chapter, dealing with the pastoral care of families, has the attributive “priority” added in its title.

⁷ See KONFERENCIA BISKUPOV SLOVENSKA (CONFERENCE OF THE SLOVAK BISHOPS): *Pastoračný plán Katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku 2007—2013*. (s. d. s. m. 2007), pp. 3—4.

It highlights the fact that as far as there would be sound and functioning families, the whole society will be sound and functioning. But as it is not so, family is really a priority group.

This third chapter with its title, “Family as a pastoral priority group,” deals in detail with topics, which are supposed to help in the pastoral care of families. The pastoral plan in this chapter offers instructions for the ways of family renewal in the tone of the new evangelisation; for dialogue with people of good will far from life of the church; for spreading of living Christ to half-hearted families; for guidance of families longing for the spiritual growth; for formation of spouses and others responsible for the family pastoral care, as well as for the way of systematic approach to the renewal of the pastoral care of family.

“Pastoral tutelage of family on the world level is coordinated by the Conference of Slovak Bishops Family and Youth Board which has been set up by the Conference of Slovak Bishops in order to direct operation and pastoral activities in this area.”⁸

“Situation of family in Slovakia, which has changed radically in the last decades, is building up completely new appeals to the family pastoral care and requires the process of a great revival. The tasks, which are necessary to be fulfilled in this process, go far beyond the possibilities of individual parishes or communities. They cannot be fulfilled without the help of diocese or without cooperation on the world level. Hence, it is necessary to work intensively on the fulfilment of the Pastoral and evangelical plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia 2001—2006, that is, to work on its recommendation to build up the diocese family centres with permanent staff and with conditions for their running.⁹ Some dioceses have

⁸ See KONFERENCIA BISKUPOV SLOVENSKA: *Pastoračný plán...*, p. 33.

⁹ “4. 1. 3 Recommendations [...]. On the level of diocese and the level of Slovakia: j) to build up diocesan family centres with permanent staff and to create conditions for their proper running; k) to further develop and support certified dialogical methods for the pastoral care of families. Those are: marriage retreats, family communities which help to solve family problems through the eyes of faith, family meetings with a diocesan bishop, family conferences, congresses about family, courses, seminars, lectures. l) to find possibilities to open various forms of the Parent Academy, focusing on relationships among spouses and bringing up of children; m) within the frame of permanent priests formation, to lead the priests from parishes to openness towards pastoral care of families, to offer seminars relating to a practical pastoral care of family, new pedagogical and psychological knowledge, creative cooperation with the laymen in parishes as well as practical experience; n) to cooperate with governmental and non-governmental organisations, which are engaged in favour of families and family members on the level of diocese, deanery and parish in accordance with the principles of sound ethics.” KONFERENCIA BISKUPOV SLOVENSKA: *Pastoračný a evanjelizačný plán katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku 2001—2006* (9—10.5.2001). Bratislava 2001, pp. 60—61.

already fulfilled this recommendation by launching such a centre [...].”¹⁰ As far as the topic of this contribution here is to approximate the activities of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia, in favour of a more complete development of family, it would not be in vain to briefly introduce this local church to the readers first.

5. The Slovakian Greek Catholic Church

The Slovakian Greek Catholic Church¹¹ is a successor to spiritual heritage and legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The representatives and members of this church stress that they come from a historically ancient cultural area of the Eastern Christianity.¹² The first favour to the Greek Catholics was already shown at the time of their origin. In 869, Pope Hadrian II consecrated liturgical books, which were brought to Rome by saint brothers Cyril and Methodius. By this act, and by the favour of Hadrian II, the Greek Catholic Church had Slovak liturgy in the language of its people 1,100 years earlier than all other nations. In that way, Slavic language became the standard language, the Great-Moravian Slavs (our ancestors) were ranked among culturally developed European nations.

The eparchy of Prešov was established by the papal bull *Relata Semper* by Pius VII, from September 22, 1818.¹³ From the Eparchy of Prešov, two separated units had been separated — the Apostolic Exarchate of Prague (in 1996) and the Apostolic Exarchate of Košice (in 1997). On January 30, 2008, the Holy Father Benedict XVI established Greek Catholic Metropolia in Prešov. Monsignor Ján Babjak was named the first archbishop and metropolitan, previously local bishop in Prešov.

¹⁰ KONFERENCIA BISKUPOV SLOVENSKA: *Pastoračný plán...*, p. 42.

¹¹ The name “Greek Catholic” was fixed during the reign of Maria Theresa. Historical origins expresses basic features: rite, brought by the Greek missionaries, has a byzantine origin, and at the same time, it expresses the Catholic Church, universal and united with Rome, more specific, “not separated” from Rome. It is the Catholic Church of Byzantine-Slovak rite, spread not only in Slovakia, but also in other countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Moravia, Belarus, Romania, USA, Canada), whereas in a relation to Rome, they stand out as separate. See: *Kto sú gréckokatolíci?* Available online: http://www.grkat.nfo.sk/Poprad/kto_su_greckokatolici.htm. Accessed 4.3.2012.

¹² See J. HIRKA: “Svätý Otec v Prešove.” In: *Prešov sídlo gréckokatolíckeho biskupstva na Slovensku*. Prešov 1995, p. 4.

¹³ F. ČITBAJ: “Pápeži a gréckokatolíci.” In: *Prešov sídlo gréckokatolíckeho biskupstva na Slovensku*. Prešov 1995, p. 8.

At the same time, the Apostolic Exarchate of Košice was erected to the Eparchy of Košice. Monsignor Milan Catur, CSsR, was named a residential bishop, previously the Apostolic Exarchate of Košice.

The Eparchy of Bratislava, with the seat in Bratislava, was established by separation from the Eparchy of Prešov, by the Holy Father Benedict XVI. Monsignor Petra Rusnák was named the first Greek Catholic Bishop in Bratislava. Thus, with this new canonical organization of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia, the Holy Father Benedict XVI completed 190-year-old history of the Eparchy of Prešov. Besides, it is also a confirmation of almost 1,150-year-old history of the Greek Catholics on the territory of present-day Slovakia, which has been dated since the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Slavic apostles.¹⁴

On April 28, 1950, the Greek Catholic Church, then in Czechoslovakia, was outlawed by the totalitarian regime and was not allowed to operate publicly. Its bishops, priests, and also many laypersons were imprisoned, persecuted and driven into an exile. Many of them died during those years, but they remained faithful to God, to the Catholic Church and to their conscience. After 18 years, the Greek Catholic Church was re-established by the government act on June 13, 1968.¹⁵ Suffering of this church was also reflected in decimated number of believers, which, by the mercy of God and noble pastoral service of many priests, has been growing since then. Even more important is the fact that this church is preserving its identity in the way expressed by the encyclical letter *Ut unum sint*: “With regard to the Eastern Catholic Churches [...] this entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in their various traditions, belongs to the full Catholic and apostolic character of the Church.”¹⁶

Ancient tradition by which the Catholics of eastern rite in Slovakia were an integral part of the whole nation even at the times of Great Moravia and by which Christianity was adopted and developed with

¹⁴ The Catholic Bishops in their Pastoral Letter on the First Advent Sunday 2010, instituted spiritual preparation for the year of 2013, when we will be celebrating 1150th anniversary of Saints Cyril and Methodius arrival to our territory. “The period of a two-year preparation for the year 2013 and the jubilee year itself, will be accompanied by many activities, already started in the Year of Christian Culture 2010, as for example, journey of Saint Cyril, Constantine relics through the diocese of Slovakia, several religious and cultural events, and we also hope in arrival of the highest shepherd — the Holy Father.” KONFERENCIA BISKUPOV SLOVENSKA: *Pastiersky list katolíckych biskupov Slovenska na Prvú adventnú nedeľu 2010* (28.11.2010). Available online: <http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1290928923>. Accessed 25.2.2012.

¹⁵ Institutionally, the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia started its activity on July 17, 1968 with the establishment of episcopal seat, temporarily in Košice.

¹⁶ JÁN PAVOL II.: *Encyklika “Ut Unum Sint”* (22.5.1995) [further: UUS]. Available online: <http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117283791>. Accessed 12.2.2012.

the help of saint brothers Cyril and Methodius, has survived till the present days.¹⁷

The Greek Catholic Church is a part of the Catholic Church. United with the Catholic Church in the Holy Spirit, this local church has its own hierarchy, liturgy, discipline, with the same faith and sacraments. It preserves its own rite and cultural heritage, which is manifested in the way of life, in art, and in specific spirituality.¹⁸

6. Family Centre — *Sigord*

At present, there are three such centres, operating under the Greek Catholic Archdiocese: the Greek Catholic Pastoral Centre for the Young in Prešov; Bárka the Greek Catholic Centre for the Young in Jusková Vôľa; Gypsy centre in Čičava and Family Centre — *Sigord*.

In this chapter, I shall introduce the activity of Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia, performed for the protection and development of family through agility of the Family Centre — *Sigord* (further as “FC-S”).

6.1. From Its History

After the secondary school of forestry had been moved to Prešov, its premises were left unused. Monsignor Ján Babjak, archbishop and metropolitan, responded to the possibility of use and offered premises with an aim of launching a family regeneration centre (it is 15 km from Prešov). This initiative arose as a concrete step towards practical fulfilment of the Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia 2007—2013, which is a fundamental directive for pastoral activity of the Catholic Church in Slovakia. There, the pastoral care of family is labelled as the priority task. Newly opened FC-S and its chapel were consecrated after necessary reconstruction of former secondary school of forestry, on November 14, 2008 by Monsignor Ján Babjak the founder of FC-S.¹⁹ He also named three

¹⁷ *Nové kánonické usporiadanie Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku*. Available online: <http://www.grkatpo.sk/spravy/?zobrazit=text&id=931>. Accessed 6.3.2012.

¹⁸ Cf. J. HIRKA: “Svätý Otec v Prešove.” In: *Prešov sídlo gréckokatolíckeho biskupstva na Slovensku*. Prešov 1995, p. 5.

¹⁹ See *História*: <http://www.centrumsigord.sk/historia/>. Accessed 12.2.2012.

direct members of staff of the FC-S. ThLic. Peter Jakub, the Greek Catholic priest, was named the director of the FC-S. Mgr. František Sochovič, another Greek Catholic priest, was named its spiritual administrator and Mgr. Ľuboš Kohút cooperates with FC-S, at that time a parish priest in Abranovce. In this day and age, when the basic values of family are often denied, the FC-S has emerged as a indispensable facility of the Greek Catholic Church.²⁰

6.2. The Role

The goal of the FC-S is: “Family renewed by God.” The way it tries to achieve it is intensified evangelical and pastoral activity. At the time of numerous societal, social, financial or spiritual pressures on family, the FC-S has been trying to offer the space for a possibility to leave routine of marriage and family relationships as well as relationship with God, to re-evaluate them and to draw a new strength and inspiration for family life. It feels with family, tries to recognize and meet its needs, especially spiritual ones. At the same time, it avoids only shallow solutions of problems. On the contrary, it encourages family to principles which are built on God. Mainly, FC-S’s aim is renewal and recovery of a family — basic cell of the Church and society.

FC-S tries to: bring into society awareness of family values; contribute to the renewal of family life and its traditions; help families to go through problems and difficulties they face; support families and develop family life, organise and provide educational and charity activity aimed at families; provide medical, legal, social and psychological help to childless couples.

Part of FC-S’s role is to help effectively in pastoral activity of the Church on the territory of the Archeparchy of Prešov in such a way that priests and families participating in family pastoral care would find new sources for inspiration and possibilities for their service in individual parishes.²¹

²⁰ Besides Family Centre — *Sigord*, there are also other centres with the same role in Slovakia. These are: Diocesan Pastoral Family Centre in the diocese of Banská Bystrica, Family Centre Nitra, Family Centre Pezinok, Family Centre in Žilina, Help Centre for Family in Trnava, Family Centre — Poprad, Family Institute Košice.

²¹ See *Poslanie*: <http://www.centrumsigord.sk/poslanie/>. Accessed 12.2.2012.

7. Activities of Family Centre — *Sigord*

Praying SMS — link — The Word of God encourages: “Carry each other’s burdens; that is how to keep the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2), as well as: “and pray for one another” (Jam 5:16).

In the FC-S, there is a prayer support, established for those who are going through difficulties, crises, or they have various noble desires and needs in their families. In fact, individuals or families can turn to this service in the form of SMS message (+421 (0)904 738 649), in which they describe their prayer intention. Then, a priests, while celebrating mass at least once a week, add them to their prayers. A volunteer prays in that intention an hour a day.

Family liturgy — Regularly, once a month this liturgy is celebrated in the chapel of FC-S. It is unusual because: the whole family has possibility to participate in the atmosphere and conditions accommodated to children (children songs and activities); homily focusing on formation and encouragement in a family life area; after a liturgy, prayer for children’s blessing and it is also possible to pray for adults, after a liturgy there is also a possibility to make use of the centre and the environment of Slanske vrchy for family recreation. The dates of the closest family liturgies are always published on the CPR-S web pages.

Courses for Spouses Organised in Cooperation with the Evangelical School of St. Nicholas and with the Evangelical School of St. Mark from Poland

The Ruth Course — Marriage preparation is the only source of understanding God’s plan for marriage for many Christian marriages. However, it was prior to the marriage itself. For building up of a strong lifelong marital relationship, there is a need to look for God’s plan and to recognize it even during marriage. At the time when conflicts, difficulties or duties arrive, it is possible to discover beauty, and greatness of this sacrament. The Ruth Course offers possibility to experience a weekend of searching for God’s plan for marriage, and to experience happiness from a marital relationship. It is an evangelical course for spouses, which aims to strengthen, revive and heal marital relationship by the means of perception and turning towards God’s plan for a Christian marriage. It is a marriage course; hence married couples are participating in it without children.

The Samuel Course — The Bible tells the story of the Old Testament rabbi Eli, who was fostering a boy named Samuel, who, under his influence, became a great God’s man. Eli had his own sons, who are described

in the Bible as outrageous sinners, despised by all people and even Eli himself was ashamed of them (cf. 1 Sam 1—3). Certainly, bringing up of children is difficult and God, who gave us children, is the best instructor. Bringing up children then lies in responsible passing on of faith to one's own children.²² The aim is not to spoil the intentions God himself has towards children. FC-S offers support and encouragement in the area of children's upbringing in the Samuel Course (only the previous participants of the Ruth Course are enrolled).

Zachariah and Elizabeth Course — the course is based on the story of the biblical couple Zachariah and Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1). They are the people who teach how to create unity in marital life and how to renew dialogue, since spouses would like not only to listen but also to understand again.

Elkanah and Anna Course — the course is based on the story of a married couple who lived during the “dark times” of religious and social life. Their marriage was constantly influenced by pressure of judging, humiliation and inner disappointment and grief because they could not have children. In spite of this, they did not stop to love each other. Therefore, God had chosen them as a tool for a great renewal of spiritual and social life (cf. 1 Sam 1). How is it possible to revive love and to fall in love once again? How can even a long-time marriage become a model and encouragement for the younger? The answer is offered in Elkanah and Anna Course.

Jacob and Rachel Course — At the moment of receiving the sacrament of marriage, God puts spouses on the common road leading to Him. This course enables spouses to look at a gift of this way from quite a different angle. It teaches them a new manner of how to win every-day difficulties and how, in a similar way like Jacob and Rachel (cf. Gen 29—31, 33, 35, 46, 48), in love and patience to wait for blessing, which God has for each marriage.

New Life Course — This course invites anybody who wants to be reborn in the Holy Spirit, and to renew his relationship with Jesus and with the Church. During the weekend course, one can find answers to questions: Who loves me all the time? Who does not hurt me? Who is the only solver of my problems? Who can teach me more? Who is waiting for me in the Church?

David Course — David Course is an ideological equivalent to the New Life Course, however, it is adjusted to young participants. Its goal is to pass on to our descendants, in young age, message about life with God and to lead children towards openness for accepting Jesus as the Lord of

²² L. PETRÍK: “Výchova detí v kresťanskej rodine.” In: *Slovo. Časopis gréckokatolíckej cirkvi*. Prešov 2003, roč. 35, č. 5, p. 26.

their lives, and towards openness for an active integration in the Church. Usually it takes place at the same time as the New Life Course, which enables the basic message of the Gospel to be received by the parents and children at the same time, but in a different way, appropriated and comprehensible to them.

The “Bible and Money” Course — “Leave God alone, we are talking about business!” How many times have we heard similar statements? It is not easy to build a bridge between the Word of God and the financial life, even for many Christians. In the Bible, there are two times more verses on money than verses about faith and prayer together. There are more associations between the Word of God and finances than we think. God will not tell us how much we have to invest into our saving account and into stock market, but he gives us divine principles, which will direct our finance management, including short-term, medium-term and long-term investments.

7.1. Spiritual Exercises

Spiritual Exercises for the Greek Catholic priests and their wives — Time of spiritual exercises is the time for active spiritual formation, but it is also the time of mutual sharing and enrichment for each person. Spiritual exercises for the priests and their wives is an opportunity for renewing priestly and marital vocations, for personal reflection and for a joint prayer. They are like an oasis full of refreshment and with a possibility to recover physically and mentally, too.

Spiritual exercises for the divorced and then married non-religiously — No man is outside the God’s interest. Even though the connecting channel and its intensity differ. People not married religiously also share God’s care. They are not excommunicated; they still belong to the Church, although they suffer from being separated from the sacrament of reconciliation and from the Eucharist. There is a difference between those who enchanted by sin turned away from God and left their partner, abandoned faithfulness and their basic responsibility towards their children, and those, who alone and humiliated found close person after a long time and live together in non-religious marriage. Jesus Christ is not coming to gather the right, but the sinners. We are all ill in spirit and we need God’s help. Nevertheless, the sin of the divorced is obvious, which marks them painfully. Hence, those who do not stop longing for God, do experience Jesus’ merciful look more, as His love is healing (cf. Jn 4).

7.2. Courses and Trainings

Marriage Preparation Course — The course lays down, besides many human requirements (dress, hall, music, etc.), one more criterion — quality preparation. It is realised in three forms: the evening, the daylong and the weekend. All meetings consist of nine thematic units. They are divided into presentation (lecture) and the communicative part (reserved for activities in pairs and discussions). Besides the topics, there is a space for joint dining, free time, liturgy, confession, and conversation.

Marriage Evenings — How to build a healthy marriage that lasts forever? Marriage Evenings course is aimed at all married couples who want to build strong and lasting bond, they want to improve their marriage, or they are overcoming troublesome period. It is good investment into marriage, which is exposed to numerous attacks of the present era. The course is aimed at married couples who decided not only to get through it, but to live it to the full. The course is based on an eight-meeting cycle, taking place once a week, during evening hours. Each meeting starts with a dinner in a nice environment, which is followed by a lecture. During the lecture (or after the lecture), couples have a possibility to talk together about the evening topic, as well as about important questions, which are not possible to discuss during an ordinary day. Everything takes place in an intimate and friendly atmosphere. The privacy of each couple is respected and a group discussion, or group divisions are not parts of the course. A couple is not required to tell anybody about their relationship. The course is based on Christian principles and is beneficial to all married couples. The topics of evenings are: building up the solid foundations, art of communication, problem solving, power of forgiveness, family, parents and parents-in-law, good sex, love in action, ceremonial dinner.²³

Besides above mentioned activities, FC-S further offers: family parish trip, spiritual exercise for various states, spiritual renewal, summer and winter family camps (picnics, tourist trips, sledge, skiing, etc.), weekend visits for families with children, holiday weeks (two times during summer and once in winter) and also program for families during Easter and Christmas.

²³ See *Aktivita Centra pre rodinu — Sigord*: <http://www.centrumsigord.sk/aktivita-centra-pre-rodinu-sigord/>. Accessed 14.2.2012.

8. Conclusions

In spite of many adversities, family has a significant place and role in society and the Church. It is confirmed by the words of the Second Vatican Council: “Knowing that marriage and the family constitute one of the most precious of human values, the Church wishes to speak and offer it help to those who are already aware of the value of marriage and the family and seek to live it faithfully, to those who are uncertain and anxious and searching for the truth, and to those who are unjustly impeded from living freely their family lives” (FC 1).

The words of the Second Vatican Council are valid also today. After all, it was not by accident that the Holy Father Benedict XVI entrusted a married couple Danilo and Anna Maria Zanzucchi with preparation of texts for 2012's Stations of the Cross in Colosseum, which took place on April 6, 2012. Fourteen stations were dealing with the issue of family, and so at the time, when a lot of attention of the Church in the various levels and all over the world is devoted to it. The Zanzucchis claim: “Family does realise that it is the Church and that it has greater responsibility for the society: let us mention children alone.”²⁴

We must not forget about the activities of blessed John Paul II, who right after being elected a Pope, set up the Papal Council for Family. He got involved in recognition and contribution of family in the Church and in society. Apart from this, at the same time, he summoned the synod to deal with the family issues. The result of this synod is well-known exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, which is the most significant and the most complex interpretation, aimed at families, and which has inspired the work of all who are interested in family, Benedict XVI continued the work for family started by John Paul II.

Also *Pastoračný plan Katolickej cirkvi na Slovensku 2007—2013* (Pastoral Plan of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia 2007—2013) considers family a priority pastoral group. The Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia is interested in family and its good functioning. This is manifested in the way it offers its FC-S to families so as to change those unfunctional into functional, and to strengthen the functional ones in their mission even more and to be sanctified. All this is manifested by hundreds of couples who have made use of offers and services of the FC-S so far. All this happens in the unity with teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage and family.

²⁴ See *Križová cesta 2012: V centre je rodina*: <http://www.focolare.sk/node/227>. Accessed 7.4.2012.

MAREK PETRO

Opieka duszpasterska małżeństw i rodzin w Kościele greckokatolickim na Słowacji

Streszczenie

Małżeństwo i rodzina należą do planu Bożego, co potwierdza już Księga Rodzaju, pierwsza księga Pisma Świętego. Grzech pierworodny poważnie naruszył te Boże instytucje. Jezus Chrystus swoją śmiercią na krzyżu oraz zmartwychwstaniem dokonał również ich odkupienia. Ponadto małżeństwo podniósł do rangi sakramentu. Apostoł Paweł w Liście do Efezjan wskazuje na właściwe rozumienie relacji małżeńskich. „Nowy apostoł” Jan Paweł II potwierdza znaczenie małżeństwa i rodziny w adhortacji *Familiaris Consortio*. Dziś niestety instytucja ta w porównaniu z innymi instytucjami jest narażona na liczne i zmasowane ataki. Kościół w świecie współczesnym stara się położyć większy nacisk na duszpasterstwo małżeństw i rodzin. Plan pastoralny Kościoła katolickiego na Słowacji 2007—2013 traktuje rodzinę jako pierwszorzędną grupę, którą należy otoczyć szczególną troską duszpasterską. Częścią składową tego planu jest ustanawianie oraz działalność diecezjalnych ośrodków dla rodzin, spośród których na uwagę zasługuje działalność greckokatolickiego ośrodka dla rodzin. W ten sposób Kościół lokalny proponuje liczne formy wsparcia rodziny w celu jej głębszego oraz bardziej integralnego rozwoju.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół greckokatolicki, opieka, ośrodki duszpasterskie, małżeństwo, rodzina

MAREK PETRO

L'assistance pastorale envers les mariages et les familles orthodoxes de l'Église orthodoxe grecque en Slovaquie

Résumé

Le mariage et la famille appartiennent au plan Divin, ce qui est approuvé déjà dans la Génèse, le premier livre de la Sainte Écriture. Le péché originel a sérieusement dérogé à ces institutions de Dieu. Jésus Christ, par sa mort sur la croix et sa résurrection a racheté, et bien plus encore il a exalté le mariage en lui donnant le statut du sacrement. L'apôtre Paul dans son Épître aux Ephésiens explique une bonne compréhension des relations conjugales. Le « nouvel apôtre », Jean Paul II, confirme la signification du mariage dans son exhortation *Familiaris consortio*. Aujourd'hui, malheureusement, cette institution, en comparaison avec les autres, est exposée aux nombreuses attaques massives. L'Église dans le monde moderne cherche à promouvoir le pastorat et protège de manière particulière le mariage et la famille. Le plan pastoral de l'Église catholique en Slovaquie 2007—2013 traite la famille comme le groupe de premier ordre, qui doit être entouré d'une sollicitude pastorale exceptionnelle. Une partie composante de ce plan est la création et le fonctionnement des centres diocésains pour familles, où l'attention est portée spécialement sur le fonctionnement du centre orthodoxe pour familles. Ainsi l'Église locale propose des formes diverses du soutien pour les familles visant son développement plus profond et plus intégral.

Mots-clés: Église Orthodoxe, soin, centre pastoral, mariage, famille

MAREK PETRO

L'assistenza pastorale del matrimonio e della famiglia nella Chiesa greco-cattolica slovacca

Sommario

Il matrimonio e la famiglia fanno parte del piano di Dio, il che viene confermato già nel Libro della Genesi, il primo libro della Bibbia. Il peccato originale ha gravemente compromesso anche queste istituzioni divine. Tuttavia, Gesù Cristo, con la sua morte in croce e con la risurrezione le ha redente, nonché ha elevato il matrimonio alla dignità di sacramento. L'apostolo Paolo nella Lettera agli Efesini indica una corretta comprensione delle relazioni matrimoniali. "Il Nuovo Apostolo" Giovanni Paolo II conferma il significato del matrimonio e della famiglia nella sua esortazione apostolica "Familiaris consortio". Purtroppo oggi quest' istituzione rispetto ad altre istituzioni si trova di fronte a numerosi e massicci attacchi, per cui nel mondo contemporaneo la Chiesa cerca di promuovere maggiormente l'assistenzapastorale del matrimonio e della famiglia. Il piano pastorale della Chiesa cattolica in Slovacchia per gli anni 2007—2013 considera la famiglia come l'istituzione che va circondata da una particolare cura pastorale. Tra gli elementi del piano troviamo la creazione e l'attività dei centri diocesani per la pastorale familiare, tra cui merita particolare attenzione l'attività del centro greco-cattolico. In questa maniera la Chiesa locale offre numerose forme di sostegno per uno sviluppo più profondo e integrato della famiglia.

Parole chiave: Chiesa greco-cattolica, assistenza, centro pastorale, matrimonio, famiglia