

INTRODUCTION

1. The Situation of the Family Today

Pope John Paul II has described our century as "the century of the family". During the course of the Synod of Bishops regarding the family (held in Rome from September 26 to October 25, 1980), Sunday October 12, 1980 was dedicated to families. In the afternoon many families from different countries shared their experiences with the Synodal Fathers, bishops representing many parts of the world. After listening to these various experiences, Pope John Paul II said in part:

Lights and shadows, awaitings and preoccupations, serious problems and solid hopes make part of this portrait. Looking at it, it occurs to me to think that truly scholars in the future will be able to say that ours was the century of the family. In fact, never as in this century has the family been subjected to so many threats, aggressions and erosions. But, at the same time, never as in this century has the family encountered so many helps, both on the ecclesial and civil level. . . .

The family has also never before been studied as much as it is in our time. Historical, sociological and other studies abound. The pastors of the Catholic Church, at various levels, have also recently given the family special attention--not only dedicating the 1980 Synod of Bishops to studying "The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World", but also calling the 1980s "The Decade of the Family". Pope John Paul II himself has discussed marriage and the family in numerous allocutions. On November 22 (the solemnity of Christ the King), 1981, he published the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* ("The Community of the Family"). No doubt, this will serve as a primary document on the family for many years to come.

I do not propose to give a detailed account of the situation of the family in all parts of the world. Indeed, this would be impossible. In our world there exist hundreds of millions of families, and each one is unique. This is because each family is composed of a number of individuals, each of which is very unique, even though he or she shares in our common humanity. Here, I propose only to outline a few worldwide trends regarding the family.² These trends or some of them, however, may change in the future.

The Family

The term "family" in this study will refer primarily to

the natural conjugal family, husband and wife and their children. When the term "family" is used to refer to other kinds of families it will be qualified with other terms such as "single-parent", "extended", "spiritual", etc., unless the meaning is sufficiently clear from the context. It should be noted that there are various kinds of families. For example, we can speak of the conjugal (or nuclear) family, the extended family, single-parent families, and so on. There are also some individuals who, although they had a father and mother, are without a natural family. But, we can also speak of parish, religious or spiritual families, or even the whole Church or the human race as a family.

We should have a comprehensive concept of the family--one that will fit all the categories of people in the world. Pope John Paul II speaks of the family as "a communion of persons".³ This concept fits all the categories of families and of people in the world.

This study of the family, while keeping in mind the various situations in which people in our world find themselves, will center on the conjugal family. A Christian perspective sees marriage as ". . . the foundation of the wider community of the family . . ."⁴ Because of this, special attention will be given in this dissertation to the marital or conjugal relationship among the various relationships within the conjugal family such as spousal, parental, filial and fraternal.

Although this study will center on the conjugal family, it will not treat the conjugal family in isolation, since the conjugal family normally exists within a wider network of relationships. Also, while the central focus of this study on family unity will be the natural conjugal family, much of what will be discussed here could be related to others, for example, to the married couple unable to have children, the single-parent family, or even the religious family. Some specific attention will be given to some irregular types of family situations, such as the single-parent family.

The Contemporary Situation

The modern world is characterized by rapid and profound social, cultural, psychological, technological, moral and religious changes.⁵ Since the family is a basic unit of society, these changes have profound repercussions on family life.

Spreading industrialization generally brings with it a tendency to the smaller conjugal or nuclear family. This is because industrialization, with its demands for competency and efficiency, demands job mobility. Many new couples and families are geographically far away from their close kin. In the past the extended family usually gave many supports to new families.⁶ Today the conjugal family is left mainly to its own resources, or it is left to seek help from agencies of the society or Church, which have been created.

The conjugal family, generally with fewer relationships

but more intense ones, is often marked by tensions or emotional strain. In most places the separation and divorce rates continue to rise. In the United States, for example, two out of five marriages are expected to end in divorce. Although most who divorce eventually remarry, there has been a great increase in the number of single-parent families, mostly headed by women. Single-parent families have also increased in number due to the increase of unwed mothers.

Traditional attitudes and institutions, including marriage and the family, have been challenged. Cohabitation, the living together of an unmarried man and woman, has greatly increased in some parts of the world. So has promiscuity among teenagers. Various alternative lifestyles are proposed by some, such as the so-called "open marriage".

But the train of broken relationships and uncertainty has led many to despair. Suicide and violence have increased greatly, as has the misuse of alcohol and drugs.⁷

Advances in science and technology have provided many families material goods and comforts undreamed of in the past. Note how the telephone, the radio and the television have affected family life. The media's influence on family attitudes and lifestyles has generally increased enormously. In some of the more advanced industrial nations we are also seeing the advent of home computer systems, etc.

Man's greater control over nature has included the widespread use of artificial contraception. More lenient abortion laws in many places have also made it much easier to abort the unborn fetus. Concern over population growth, sometimes exaggerated, has also contributed to a decline in the birth rate and smaller families in most places. In some places the decline in the birth rate has even caused certain problems due to the low percentage of youth.

Although industrialization and advanced technology have brought material abundance and greater longevity to many people; many other individuals and families in the world suffer poverty, misery and hunger. Advanced technology has also given some people greater powers to oppress and to destroy. Today we all live under the threat of the possible partial or total destruction of the human race in a nuclear war.

In our modern world we see, on the one hand, tendencies toward growing divisions and conflicts in the family, within nations, between some individual nations and between some blocks of nations. But, on the other hand, there also exist tendencies and movements of unification and solidarity, both in society and the Church.

A Christian Perspective of Today's Family Situation

How does or should a Christian see the situation of the family in the world today? In *Familiaris Consortio* Pope John Paul II says that this situation presents positive aspects (a sign of the salvation of Christ operating in the world) and negative aspects (a sign of the refusal that man gives to the

love of God). Concerning the positive aspects he says in part that:

. . . there is a more lively awareness of personal freedom and greater attention to the quality of interpersonal relationships in marriage, to promoting the dignity of women, to responsible procreation, to the education of children. There is also an awareness of the need for the development of interfamily relationships, for reciprocal spiritual and material assistance, the rediscovery of the ecclesial mission proper to the family and its responsibility for the building of a more just society. . . .

On the other hand though, concerning some of the negative aspects of the situation of the family today, Pope John Paul II says in part that:

. . . signs are not lacking of a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values: a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces; the scourge of abortion; the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality. . . .

In Part One of this thesis, "Causes of Division of the Family", we will consider in greater detail and depth the negative aspects of the situation of the family in the world. In Part Two under the heading, "Causes of Unity of the Family", we will consider more fully the positive aspects (and various ways to build on these) of the situation of the family today.

2. The Many Dimensions of Family Life

Although marriage and the family are basic realities of human life, contemporary family life can sometimes seem very complicated to those trying to organize or study it. There are, in fact, many dimensions of married and family life. It seems appropriate to outline some of these in this Introduction, before proceeding to analyze the causes of division and unity of the family.

Various Family Relationships

Within the conjugal or nuclear family itself there are various relationships: conjugal (husband and wife), parental

(paternal and maternal), filial (the child's relationship to its parents), and fraternal (brother and sister), if there is more than one child. Each of these relationships includes many aspects. Moreover, if for example, one of the spouses dies and the other remarries and has more children, the family can include other relationships such as step-mother, half-sister, and so on.

In the larger extended family or kin network, we also see other kinds of relationships as those of grandparents and grandchildren; of uncles and aunts, and nieces and nephews; of cousins; and of in-laws of various kinds.

In any given family (except perhaps in some so-called single-parent families) we find individuals of both sexes. We also find a variety of ages, temperaments and personalities.

The Family Cycle

The family itself is not a static reality. As we can speak of the life cycle of an individual from conception to death, normally including various stages as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and aging; so, we can also speak of a "family cycle". The various stages of family life can be quite different. Compare the various situations, for example, of newlyweds expecting their first child, of a family with a couple of teenagers, of grandparents with a few married sons and daughters and half a dozen grandchildren, and of an elderly widow or widower living in a senior citizen's home. The natural family is a very dynamic reality, which grows and declines.

The Family Milieu

The family is located both within time and space. Any given family finds itself in a particular historical epoch with given family heritages. Any given family also needs a home and finds itself in a particular locality, country, and cultural milieu. Many individuals are also either born into or choose to join a particular religious body.

The Family and Society

The conjugal partnership is "the beginning and basis of human society", and the family is "the first and vital cell of society".¹⁰ Every human society has laws or customs concerning marriage and the family, as well as some kind of educational process. As a cell of society, the family is in one way or another related to all aspects of society, including its economic and political policies.

The Christian Family and the Church

The Christian family is also a vital cell of the Church of Christ, a "domestic Church",¹¹ and it is related in one

way or another to all the aspects of the Church's life. The Church's teaching (especially Sacred Scripture), her sacraments (baptism, the Eucharist, matrimony. . .), her authority (disciplinary regulations, etc.), her worship, prayer and fellowship, and so on, all play an important part in the life of a committed Christian family. The family is also called to play a real role or part in the Church's apostolate and mission of evangelization, catechesis, work for social justice, and so on.

Family Life and the Human Person

Family life also includes many dimensions simply because of the many dimensions of the human person. The family is a communion or community of persons. The human person is a unity of "body and soul" (cf. Mt 10:28),¹² of a physical and a spiritual reality intimately joined together. The human person is related to the physical universe and is in touch with it through his (or her) senses. A human being needs food, clothing and shelter. Because a human being's body is animated by a spiritual soul or principle, he or she can feel and think, choose with one's free will, be open to communion with other persons and God, and love and pray, etc. The many dimensions of the human person all play a part in family life.

Division can occur within an individual human being or within a family when the many various dimensions of human or family life are not in harmony. When they are in harmony there is unity. This harmony is brought about by true love--love or ordered caring for all the dimensions of the human person and family life. Family unity thus embraces a rich variety or diversity.

3. Change and Permanence Regarding the Family

Change and the Family

Change means to become something else. It is a transition from one form of existence to another. Every change presupposes a subject which undergoes the change. A change also demands as cause a power which effects the change. Change does not mean the annihilation of one thing and a completely new beginning of something else--there is something common to both the beginning and terminal states of a change, which remains intact. A change can be substantial (when the substance, the essence or nature itself, becomes something else) or accidental (when an accidental determination becomes something else). An accidental change can be quantitative, qualitative or local--a change of quantity, quality or place of something.¹³

God alone is absolutely unchangeable. God is infinite

and eternal. He has no beginning or end (cf. Is 48:12). Sacred Scripture, Mal 3:6, says: ". . . I, Yahweh, do not change . . ." Since God is the fullness of being and possesses every perfection, he is incapable of becoming.

The being of all other things, on the contrary, is too poor and too weak to realize simultaneously everything they are capable of being. For every one of them there is really open a vast range of possibilities, of which they can never realize more than a few, and that by changing.¹⁴

We can consider change or changes regarding the family in light of the above principles of change. The family is subject to certain changes such as of the quantity of the number of individuals that comprise it, the quality of its relationships and life, and its place. This is because the family is a finite or limited reality existing in this world of space and time.

Permanence and the Family

There are certain things about the family, however, which are common to families of every epoch and society. Certain aspects of the reality of the family remain the same. For example, every family is a "community of persons". We can thus also speak of a certain "permanence" regarding the family. Here we can refer to the Second Vatican Council, which states that:

. . . the power and strength of the institution of marriage and family can also be seen in the fact that time and again, despite the difficulties produced, the profound changes in modern society reveal the true character of this institution in one way or another.¹⁵

We can also consider in this regard certain biological traits of human beings which seem to be most important for shaping human family roles and social structures:

1. A long period of helplessness in the child.
2. Lack of innate preconditioned instinctual patterns.
3. A complex brain that creates symbols and abstractions.
4. Sexual characteristics (heterosexuality and the high sexual level of human beings).
5. Sex differences (for example; menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation in females; and, greater strength and aggressiveness of males.).¹⁶

Permanence regarding the family, in the Catholic view,

is ultimately due to the family's relationship to God, who does not change. This view holds that God created the universe, including man, male and female, out of love. It affirms that the institution of the family is of divine origin--that the family is an idea of God or part of his plan. It is because of this that the basic nature or essence of the family as a "community of persons" has not changed.

4. The Organization of this Study

This study is arranged in two main parts, each of which contains two chapters. Part One treats the causes of division of the family and is divided into two chapters: "Some Concrete or Immediate Factors of Division in Today's Families" (Chapter I) and "Some Sources of Family Divisions Considered From A Theological Perspective" (Chapter II). Part Two treats the causes of unity of the family and also includes two chapters: "Some Sources of Family Unity Considered From A Theological Perspective" (Chapter III) and "Some Concrete or Immediate Ways of Building Family Unity" (Chapter IV).

By "cause" is meant basically "anything responsible for change, motion or action."¹⁷ A cause produces an effect, it gives rise to something. For example, changes with respect to a given family do not just happen--they are always caused by someone or something.

By "concrete" or "immediate" factors are meant those factors or causes which belong to people's concrete or immediate experience. For example, a given death may be "concretely" or "immediately" caused by shock, resulting from a shortage of oxygen to the brain following a heart attack. But, from a Christian theological perspective, we can also consider original sin as the cause or source of bodily death (cf. Rm 5:12).¹⁸

In this dissertation the concrete or immediate factors of division in today's family, or the concrete or immediate ways of building family unity, are those factors, causes or ways, which are (or can be) part of the daily experience of people. They are factors, causes or ways that a social scientist or a pastoral theologian might consider.

On the other hand, the sources of family divisions, or the sources of family unity, considered from a theological perspective, refer to deeper sources or causes. These sources or causes are not all empirically verifiable. Nevertheless, from an integral Christian faith perspective, they are considered to be very relevant or significant.

In Part One of this treatise we will consider some concrete or immediate factors of family divisions (Ch.I) before we consider some sources of family divisions from a deeper theological perspective (Ch.II). This order seems appropriate--to begin with the concrete, with what one, even a non-believer, can relate to on the level of immediate experience; and then, to look more deeply at the sources or

causes of family divisions from a Christian theological perspective.

In Part Two, however, we will consider some sources of family unity from a theological perspective (Ch.III) before looking at some concrete or immediate ways of building family unity (Ch.IV). This order, too, seems appropriate--to begin by establishing a solid foundation for family unity, from a theological perspective; and then, to build on this foundation.

5. Division and Unity Regarding the Family

There are many kinds and levels of division and unity. Basically, "division" in this treatise with regard to the family, means discord, dissension, a lack of proper order, harmony, communion and unity that should be there. "Unity" (from the Latin *unitas* meaning "unity", "oneness") in this treatise basically means oneness, accord, harmony, solidarity, communion and integrity. There is unity when the parts of a whole (as the members of a family) are in proper harmony with each other. According to a philosophical perspective:

Levels of unity are given right along with the levels of existence In the case of the ascent from the inorganic world, through plant and animal life to man himself, one can see clearly how inner concentration and external separation (therefore unity) increase¹⁹

With regard to the family we can observe various bonds and levels of unity. We can speak of the "bond of blood", "emotional bonds", the "civil contract", and the "sacramental bond", etc. There are also certain false bonds as those created by possessiveness and voluptuousness.²⁰

Concerning the family we can speak of physical unity (such as the union of bodies in the marital embrace, or the proximity of the individual members), of psychological unity (union of minds, hearts and will; sympathy, comradeship, and friendships²¹), and spiritual union (the union or communion of persons and the unity of charity in grace). We can also speak of union with God by grace. God himself, the source of all unity, is one--a union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in perfect love. The union of the three divine Persons in the Trinity is a "unity of identity of nature"²² since they each share the divine nature.

Other types of unity include "substantial unity" (as that of the body and soul), "moral unity" (the unity of a "moral" body as a corporation or a natural family), and "mystical unity" (as that of the members of the "Mystical Body of Christ", the Church).²³

In this study of the family, many kinds of division and unity will be considered. The particular kind of division or

unity that we are considering in a certain section should be clear from the context.

We shall analyze first the causes of division of the family, negative aspects with regard to family life. The greater part of this study, however, is dedicated to positive aspects with regard to family life, the causes of unity of the family. Special attention will be given to ways of building a fuller, more mature family unity in whatever situation one finds oneself--preparing for marriage, celibate or separated, in an unhappy or already good family situation, and so on.

Concerning those who would believe in him, Jesus prayed, "May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me." (Jn 17:21). In light of this prayer, the basic position of this study is that the members of a family will grow in true and lasting unity with each other, as they each grow closer and more united to God, the source of all unity. Their growing unity as a family will also manifest more and more to others the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Introduction Notes:

1. *L'Osservatore Romano* (Vatican City), Italian weekly Thursday edition, 1/I/1981, p.3. This translation from the Italian is mine, as are following citations from this edition.

2. Concerning "The Situation of the Family Today" much has been written. Of the numerous studies three significant ones are: 1) *Marriage and the Family*, Phase One, Working Paper by the Pastoral Team of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (Ottawa: Publications Service, CCCB, June 1980). See Part I. Sociological Considerations.; 2) William J. Goode, *The Family*, second ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982). This sociological study of the family is part of the "Prentice-Hall Foundations of Modern Sociology Series".; and 3) Summaries of the various interventions during the Synod of Bishops concerning the Family, held in Rome September 26 to October 25, 1980 (inserts from *L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian weekly Thurs. ed., October 9, 16 and 23, and November 13, 1980). These inserts together form a type of book, which in following notes I will refer to as simply *The Family Synod*.

3. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (English translation, Ottawa: CCCB, 1981), 15.

4. *Ibid.*, 14.

5. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" *Gaudium et Spes*, 4ff. All

references to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council in this thesis, unless otherwise specified, are from *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. (general) by Walter M. Abbott, S.J.; and Msgr. Joseph Gallagher, trans. ed. (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1966).

6. In some parts of the world, however, such as in India, the larger family network continues to give much support to new families (See Goode, *The Family*, 2nd ed., pp.99-101).

7. Cf. Chiara Lubich, "Message" at the 1981 Family Fest, *Living City* (Jamaica, New York 11415: Published by the Focolare Movement), July 1981, p.5.

8. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 6.

9. Ibid.

10. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.

11. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church", *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

12. Cf. The Fourth Lateran Council (DS 800); The First Vatican Council (DS 3002); and The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 14.

13. Cf. Walter Brugger and Kenneth Baker, eds., *Philosophical Dictionary* (Spokane, Washington 99202; Gonzago University Press, 2nd Printing 1974), p.59.

14. Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979 ed.), p.187.

15. The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 47.

16. Cf. William J. Goode, *The Family* (2nd edition), Ch.2.

17. Dagobert D. Runes, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy* (Paterson, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1963).

18. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 18.

19. *Philosophical Dictionary*, ed. by Brugger and Baker, pp.433-4.

20. Karol Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II) in *Love and Responsibility*, translated from the revised Polish edition by H. T. Willetts, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p.87, says that ". . . mere pleasure, mere sensual

enjoyment is not a good which binds and unites people for long, as Aristotle has most justly observed."

21. With regard to sympathy, comradeship and friendship concerning marriage see, for example, *Love and Responsibility*, pp.88-95, by Karol Wojtyla.

22. Cf. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215), Ch.2 (DS 806), TCT, p.133.

23. Cf. Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (1943), 60-63, *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958* (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 49-50.