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The concept and meaning of the family in the context of the deliberations of Blessed Father Michał Sopoćko

The thematic scope of the article is related to the re-edition of the book by Fr. Michał Sopoćka, entitled – *Family in legislation in the Polish Lands (Ethical and legal study)*, published in Vilnius in 1926. This is the published version of the doctoral dissertation on the basis of which Fr. Michał Sopoćko, received a doctorate in theology on March 1, 1926.

The article does not pretend to be a comprehensive study of the issue contained in the title, it is only an attempt to draw attention to the topicality of the issue of the family raised by Fr. Sopoćko in his doctoral dissertation and the need to continue this issue in the context of legislation and ethics, and Christian morality. The reference to the family theory of Fr. Michał Sopoćko – a zealous priest, theologian, social worker, servant of God, it is all the more justified that in the era of strong ideological, worldview, propaganda and ideological tendencies against the national and Christian culture, the 20th / 21st century family found itself in the face of difficult problems – there is even talk of a family crisis. Formerly hidden are coming to light: violence, harassment on various grounds, psychological torment, and even sexual violence against children, incest and crimes of infanticide. Hence, the reference to the Christian model of a family created on the basis of a humanistic approach to human existence is becoming particularly important today and – perhaps – most needed by people. It allows us to strive for the place and right of existence of the Christian vision of the world, the image of man and the Christian system of values in the public space. The more so because Fr. Michał Sopoćko, as an apostle of the truth and worship of Divine Mercy, recognized the truth about man, marriage and family on the basis of the intellectual tradition of personalism and Christian culture.

Father Michał Sopoćko pointed out that without the family, its concern for education and service to life, there is no development of the nation and the Church.

Key words: Blessed Fr. Michał Sopoćko, family, Christian pedagogy.

Introduction

The range of topics in the article is connected with the reissuing of the book of Father Michał Sopoćko called – *Rodzina w prawodawstwie na Ziemiach Polskich (Studium etyczne-prawne)* [*The family in the legislation on Polish soil (Ethical and legal study)*], published in Vilnius in 1926¹. It is a published version of the doctoral dissertation – *Etyka rodziny w prawodawstwie polskim* [*Family ethics in the Polish legislation*], written under the guidance of Rev. Prof. Franciszek Jehliczka at the Chair of the Moral Theology of the Warsaw University², on the basis of which Father Michał Sopoćko received the degree of the Doctor of Theology on March 1st 1926. However, the article is not supposed to be a comprehensive study of the issue mentioned in the title, it is only an attempt to emphasise the validity of the issue of the family discussed by Father Sopoćko in his doctoral thesis and the need for the further elaboration on the subject within the context of legislation and ethics, and of the Christian morality. Reference to the theory on the family of Father Michał Sopoćko – a zealous priest, theologian, community worker, God’s servant³, was the more reasonable that the family of XX/

¹ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie na ziemiach polskich (Studium etyczne-prawne)* [*The family in the legislation on Polish soil (Ethical and legal study)*] (Wilno: 1926).

² H. Ciereszko, *Działalność naukowa i dydaktyczna księdza Michała Sopoćki*, “*Studia Teologiczne*”, Białystok, Drohiczyń, Łomża 26 (2008): 9.

³ Michał Sopoćko was born on November 1st 1888 in Jusze w szczyzna in the country of Oszmiana in Poland’s Easter Borderlands which at that time remained under the Tsarist Russian partition. In 1910 he entered the seminary in Vilnius. In 1914 he was ordained a priest and for 4 years he was working as a vicar in Taboryszki. In the years 1919-1924 he was a military chaplain in Warsaw and at the same time he was studying at the Faculty of Theology of the Warsaw University and in the Institute of Pedagogy. His education and knowledge as well as his organizational experience and the personal qualities were recognised by the bishop of his diocese Jerzy Matulewicz, the later blessed, who in 1924 invited Father Sopoćko to Vilnius. In Vilnius he still worked as a military chaplain until 1932. Since 1928 he was employed as an assistant of the professor of pastoral theology at the Faculty of Theology of USB. In the years 1927-1932 he was the spiritual father in the Seminary in Vilnius. In 1933 he met Sister Faustyna Kowalska and until her death he was her confessor and spiritual director. She inspired him to get to know the truth of Divine mercy and he spread the cult of Divine mercy until his death. In 1947 he came to Białystok and started to lecture in the Seminary which he did until 1962. He died in Białystok on February 15th 1975. The process of beatification of Father Sopoćko started in 1987 at the diocesan level and it ended in 1993, the case file was sent to The Congregation for the Cause of the Saint in Rome. In 2002 the written litigated file (*Positio super virtutibus*), required for undertaking further stages of the process of beatification at the level of Congregation, was finally completed and in 2004 the decree on

XXI century was facing difficult problems which had not appeared with such an impact earlier. "The law and the current customs allow for the dissolubility of the family in justified cases, and, what is more, this tolerability concerns not only a few cases but dozens or hundreds of married couples"⁴. Apart from that, contemporary families undergo intensive changes which result from fast macrosocial transformations and global societies. According to Dorota Piotrowska, the new values and the goods which are currently offered to the members of families "individualize their attitudes and aspirations. In many cases the family values no longer remain fundamental compared to the personal values and personal aspirations, which some people perceive as evil or selfish, some are even prone to point it out as a pathology"⁵. Adam Podgórecki describes such situations as "the negative category of social phenomena"⁶, because these are the social phenomena which are in conflict with the current moral code.

The need to refer to the work: *Rodzina w prawodawstwie na Ziemiach Polskich (Studium etyczno-prawne) [The family in the legislation on Polish soil (Ethical and legal study)]*, also results from the fact that the contemporary family is undergoing serious transformations concerning its functioning, structure, shape and internal relationships. Some people also call it the crisis of the family. Krystyna Marzec-Holka claims that the previously hidden: violence, harassment of different backgrounds, psychological bullying and even sexual violence against children, incestuous deeds and infanticide, are now made public⁷. Undoubtedly, it is only a marginal model of the married and family life, however, according to Stanisław Kawula, the phenomenon is

the heroic virtues was proclaimed, and in 2007 a miracle through the intercession of Blessed Father Sopoćko was announced. The main celebration of the beatification took place on September 28th 2008 in Białystok in the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy where the relics of the Blessed were deposited. M. Sopoćko, *Dziennik*, preface, study, footnotes H. Ciereszko (Białystok: 2010); H. Ciereszko, *Śługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko*, edition II (Białystok: 1998); H. Ciereszko, *Droga świętości księdza Michała Sopoćki* (Kraków: 2008); S. Strzelecki, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko jakiego znałem i pamiętam* (Warszawa: 2004).

⁴ D. Piotrowska, "Założenia i zasady katolickiej etyki normatywnej w odniesieniu do rodziny", *Studia z Nauk Społecznych* 1996, fascicle 12 (8), *Wybrane problemy z socjologii*: 120.

⁵ Ibidem, 121

⁶ A. Podgórecki, *Patologia życia społecznego* (Warszawa: 1969), 9.

⁷ K. Marzec-Holka, *Dzieciobójstwo: przestępstwo uprzywilejowane czy zbrodnia* (Bydgoszcz: 2004), 46.

increasing⁸. The author adds that the indicators of the crisis include: children who do not know their fathers, the children in orphanages and in other care facilities. According to S. Kawula, an average Pole spends only 15 minutes a day talking to his or her family and the American grandchildren contact their grandparents only 5 times a year⁹. Despite that the family still remains one of the most important social institutions. According to theologians, the family is irreplaceable, and according to psychologists, the family is inalienable in the psycho-physical and social development of the man (especially in the early childhood)¹⁰. At the end of the 20th century Zbigniew Tyszka – a pedagogue, presented the following vision of the family in the contemporary time: “We can say that the family of our time is like a ship which is facing the storm, but it is still sailing despite of the situation – with a broken flagpole and full of water deep inside. And nobody can state with 100 per cent certainty that the ship will reach the port”¹¹, especially when it comes to the wellbeing of the next generations. Thus the reference to the Christian model of the family based on the humanist approach to the human existence has become extremely important nowadays – and probably – most needed by people. It contributes to the defence of the man “against such ideological protection of life which could lead to killing and trampling a human being”¹². It is also another reason to refer to the opinions and reflections on the family of Blessed Father Michał Sopoćko, following the example of the Primate of the Millennium Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, and to strive for “the place and, in general, the right to exist of the Christian vision of the world, the image of the man and the Christian system of values in the public sphere”¹³.

Yet another important reason to refer to the doctoral dissertation of Father Michał Sopoćko is his spirituality which we experience while reading the dissertation. As the apostle of the truth and of the cult of Divine mercy, he is “the model of priestly holiness”¹⁴. According to

⁸ S. Kawula, “Przemiany i przyszłość rodziny współczesnej”, *Państwo i Społeczeństwo* VI (2006) nr 2: 5.

⁹ Ibidem, 6.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 5.

¹¹ Z. Tyszka, *Rodzina we współczesnym świecie* (Poznań: 2002), 184.

¹² J. Tarnowski, “O użyteczności niektórych kategorii personalistycznych dla pedagogiki”, *Kultura i Edukacja* 1993, nr 24: 29.

¹³ E. Sienkiewicz, “Naród według prymasa Wyszyńskiego w kontekście jubileuszu chrztu Polski”, *Studia Paradyskie* vol. 24, (2014): 231-246.

¹⁴ H. Ciereszko, *Sługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko – wzorem świętości kapłańskiej*, <http://digital.fides.org.pl/Content/578/PDF/MSopocko-wzor-swietosci.pdf>

the wise observation of bishop Henryk Ciereszko, he also possesses “certain characteristic features or dimensions proper for him. They result from the individual attributes of Father Sopoćko”¹⁵, which are connected with the deepest religiousness of his family home. His parents genuinely lived by the Christian values and due to that they “transmitted the simple and trustful faith, they implemented religious practice and the principles of moral conduct”¹⁶. “Bestowed and strengthened, he entered life with the need to make a gift of self to the service to God and to people, which would be expressed in his priestly vocation”¹⁷.

The spirituality of Father Michał Sopoćko – in the light of the exploited source material

Already during his lifetime Father Michał Sopoćko drew attention to “himself: the things that he did and he said. Some people were listening to him carefully and tried to follow his example, others criticized his teaching, and some people fought against him. After his death, the interest in him started to change into praise”¹⁸. According to Abp. Edward Ozorowski: he was the object of the cult especially for the nuns from the Congregation of Divine Mercy and for the ladies from the Institute of Divine Mercy – the community the creation of which was inspired by Father Michał Sopoćko. In order to establish the cult of Divine mercy and to honour the contribution of Father Michał Sopoćko, bp Edward Kisiel¹⁹ submitted a petition to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on February 15th 1987 on the basis of the faithful’s requests for the permission to initiate the informative process of Father Michał Sopoćko. After receiving the approval of the Holy See on

(access from August 22nd 2022).

¹⁵ H. Ciereszko, *Sługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko – wzorem świętości kapłańskiej*, 1.

¹⁶ H. Ciereszko, *Sługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko – wzorem świętości kapłańskiej*, 1

¹⁷ H. Ciereszko, *Wprowadzenie*, in: *Dziennik*, preface, study, footnotes H. Ciereszko (Białystok: 2010), 8.

¹⁸ E. Ozorowski, *Fenomen świętości*, in: H. Ciereszko, “Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko profesor, wychowawca i ojciec duchowy uczniów i kapłanów” [Father Michał Sopoćko, professor, educator and spiritual father of alumni and priests], *Studia Seminarii Białostocensis* 3 (Białystok: 2008), 11.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 11.

December 4th 1987, the process of beatification at the diocesan level started. It lasted for 7 years²⁰.

Unfortunately, the communist authorities “almost entirely stopped the publication of any work concerning theological and ecclesial issues”²¹. Thus only after the social and political transformation, Blessed Father Michał Sopoćko began to be more commonly known due to the growing number of publications, among others, written by: Father monsinior Stanisław Strzelecki, Bishop Henryk Ciereszko, Bishop Edward Ozorowski, and by Father Adam Skreczko who specializes in the scientific legacy of Father Michał Sopoćko devoted to the widely understood Christian family²². The authorial publications of Father Professor Skreczko connected with the issues of the family constituted a guideline in writing this article.

Father monsinior Stanisław Strzelecki was the author of a number of publications, articles and books devoted mainly to the issue of Divine mercy as well as to the life and work and ministry of Father Sopoćko²³. Father monsinior Stanisław Strzelecki was not only a student, a disciple and a penitent of Father Sopoćko, but also “the eyewitness of his life and an attentive listener of the stories about him”²⁴. He took active part in the process of beatification of Father Michał Sopoćko. Therefore, according to Abp. Edward Ozorkowski, the works written by Father monsinior Stanisław Strzelecki, have a value of the source material and indeed add to the scientific narrative. What is more, Father Henryk Ciereszko considers Father monsinior to be the best expert on the person and works of the blessed priest. He thinks that Father monsinior Stanisław Strzelecki is a priest who is fully devoted to his apostolic mission, who “significantly went down in history of our Archdiocese, in connection with the person of the blessed Michał Sopoćko and the cult of Divine mercy”²⁵.

²⁰ H. Ciereszko, *Sługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko*, edition II (Białystok: 1998), 103-104; M. Kupiński, “Życiorys Abp. Edwarda Kisielea”, *Feniks* 2018, nr 2(58): 4.

²¹ E. Ozorowski, *Fenomen świętości...*, 11.

²² A. Skreczko, “Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w ujęciu księdza Michała Sopoćki”, *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej* vol. 4, 2005: 59-98; A. Skreczko, *Rodzina w nauczaniu ks. Sopoćki*, “Studia Teologiczne” 2008, nr 26: 57-70.

²³ S. Strzelecki, *Wkład księdza Michała Sopoćki w formację duchowieństwa* (Białystok: 1983); S. Strzelecki, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko jakiego znałem i pamiętam* (Warszawa: 2004).

²⁴ E. Ozorowski, *Fenomen świętości...*, 11.

²⁵ H. Ciereszko, “Wspomnienia i refleksje Ksiądz Infułat Stanisław Strzelecki o bł. Michale Sopoćce i Miłosierdziu Bożym”, *Feniks* 2016, nr 1(53): 4.

Abp. Edward Ozorowski emphasises the unique cognitive value of the publication of abp. Henryk Ciereszko, who worked on “positio” in the process of beatification of Father Sopoćko and who carefully examined the life of Father Sopoćko, testimonies of witnesses and his literary legacy²⁶. According to Father Henryk Ciereszko, Father Sopoćko was more active during his priesthood ministry in Vilnius than during the period spent in Białystok. It resulted from the external circumstances and his health condition. According to the analysis of Father Henryk Ciereszko – “After his arrival in Białystok in 1947 Father Michał was forced to stay in very poor living conditions: uncomfortable flat, poor nourishment. This led to the deterioration in his health especially after his accident in Zakopane”²⁷.

The written sources are the main basis of the knowledge of Father Sopoćko’s activity in Vilnius, mainly because the witnesses of his life in Vilnius are already dead. However, the period of his priestly life spent in Białystok is and can still be known on the basis of the accounts of the living witnesses who were in close relationships with the Blessed. We can debate to what extent the testimonies are reliable, especially that the testimony can be subjective and can contain mistakes in detail but as abp. Edward Ozorowski rightly observes, the testimony “complementary with the other [sources – added by E.K.] helps to create the whole picture. It is science which should carefully examine and verify the presented image”²⁸. Apart from that, the accounts of eyewitnesses contribute to broadening the observations with the witnesses’ experience of his “being, contacting, [of] the mutual relationships with people and of the image of the [presented – added by E.K.] world”²⁹.

One of the most precious testimonies from the period of the pastoral ministry of Father Sopoćko in Białystok are the memoirs of his student – abp. Edward Ozorowski. The Archbishop met Father Sopoćko during the entrance Latin exam to the Seminary in 1958 in Białystok³⁰. During his studies he participated in the classes of Father Sopoćko

²⁶ H. Ciereszko, *Droga świętości ks. Michała Sopoćki* (Kraków: 2002); H. Ciereszko, *Życie i działalność księdza Michała Sopoćki (1888-1975). Pełna biografia apostoła Miłosierdzia Bożego* (Kraków: 2006); H. Ciereszko, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko profesor, wychowawca i ojciec duchowy alumnów i kapłanów*, Studia Seminarium Białostocensis 3, (Białystok: 2008), 13.

²⁷ E. Ozorowski, *Fenomen świętości...*, 12.

²⁸ H. Ciereszko, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko profesor...*, 12.

²⁹ R. Nycz, “Wstęp. My świadkowie. Ustanawianie świadka”, *Teksty Drugie* 2018, nr 3: 9.

³⁰ E. Ozorowski, *Fenomen świętości...*, 13.

on catechesis and he learned Russian under his guidance. According to abp. Edward Ozorowski “Those were not grammar lessons. Father Sopoćko presumed that every alumnus knew the basics of the language. He taught (...) the prayer in Russian and he told us to learn Krilov’s fairy tales by heart. He explained to us that we should go to the West and there preach the Gospel. When I went to Saint Petersburg in order to give lectures on ecclesiology and sacramentology in their Seminary, it seemed to me that I was fulfilling the last will of my professor from Białystok”³¹.

Moreover, according to the well-known proverb of Jan Twardowski – “Let’s hurry to love people, they depart so quickly”³² abp. Edward Ozorowski emphasised that it was not unusual that only “after the death of a close person we see better who he or she was” and “we regret that we did not manage to tell the person everything what we wanted, that we can no longer talk to him or her”³³. It happens quite often that “the phenomenon of holiness is revealed in the fact that uniqueness appears in the usual way. Thus we usually do not notice it”³⁴. With this regard, all the biographies which describe the history of life of Blessed Father Sopoćko are very precious, and very useful for the preparation of this particular article. Although the private writings of Father Michał Sopoćko, even more than the scientific works, help “to enter into the inside of a Blessed person”³⁵. “The direct insight into the soul of the writer” and his biography with the possibility “to follow the grace in a certain person’s life”³⁶ are possible thanks to the autobiographical notes which he entitled *Dziennik [Journal]* and *Wspomnienia z przeszłości [Memories from the past]*³⁷. The latter of the two mentioned memoirs, which is a biography, was written later in the author’s life, and “created from the time perspective”, constitutes

³¹ Ibidem, 13.

³² J. Twardowski, *Miłość której nie widać nie zastania sobą* (Częstochowa: 2004), 16.

³³ E. Ozorowski, *Fenomen świętości...*, 13.

³⁴ Ibidem, 13.

³⁵ E. Ozorowski, *Słowo wstępne*, in: *Dziennik*, preface, study, footnotes H. Ciereszko (Białystok: 2010), 5.

³⁶ Ibidem, 5.

³⁷ *Wspomnienia. Błogosławiony Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko*, ed. H. Ciereszko (Białystok: 2018). The dissertation was published on the 10th anniversary of Father Michał Sopoćko’s beatification. It contains his personal memories from the past, rich in contents, events and various descriptions. Moreover, there are his memoirs about S. Faustyna Kowalska and S. Jadwiga – Faustyna Osieńska, the people that his priestly life was most bound with.

a perfect and “a holistic review of the life and achievements of the Author”³⁸.

Apart from the autobiographical notes, the numerous publications of Father Michał Sopoćko³⁹ reveal his mind and make him more well-known. His scientific work was one of his main tasks, he hardly ever neglected it⁴⁰. In his passions he focused on the issues connected with the goodness of Jesus. According to Father Henryk Ciereszko, one of the most well-known publications of Father Michał Sopoćko called *Divine Mercy in His Work*⁴¹ on the need for and the essence of the cult with his reflection on the subject, is the culmination of Father Sopoćko’s teaching on Divine mercy which is revealed “in His work” that is: God’s works in the history of salvation. Due to the significance of this dissertation and its contribution in the apostolate of Divine mercy, it is still necessary to reissue it. What is more, other dissertations of Father Sopoćko will also be republished and widespread.

Definition of the family, its meaning and rights

The family, according to the historical analyses, is a form of community life and a natural relationship of the people related by blood. It is a common definition of the family which has started to arouse interest in various aspects of the family reality through the years. This resulted in creating various types of knowledge about the family, of its tasks and functions. Thus in various fields of science there are different types of definitions of the family. Referring to the in-depth overview of definitions of the family of Father Jarosław Szymczak, the chaplain of

³⁸ H. Ciereszko, *Wprowadzenie*, in: *Dziennik*, preface, study, footnotes H. Ciereszko (Białystok: 2010), 8-9.

³⁹ M. Sopoćko, *Alkoholizm a młodzież szkolna*, in: *Księga Pamiątkowa Kursu Katechetycznego w Krakowie* (since April 9th until April 12th 1929) (Kraków: 1929); M. Sopoćko, “Autorytet w rodzinie a wolność dziecka”, *Ku Szczytom* 3 (1939): 255-261; M. Sopoćko, *O obowiązkach społecznych* (Wilno: 1931); M. Sopoćko, *Pedagogika* (Wilno: 1933, Białystok: 1948); M. Sopoćko, *Przyrodzone i nadprzyrodzone czynniki wychowawcze*, in: *Pamiętnik VIII Zjazdu w Częstochowie 1936* (Kraków: 1937), 274-287; M. Sopoćko, *Cel i przedmiot wychowania duchowego według Mikołaja Łęczyckiego* (Wilno: 1933); M. Sopoćko, *M. Łęczycki o wychowaniu duchowym* (Wilno: 1935); M. Sopoćko, “Mikołaj Łęczycki o wychowaniu duchowym. Studium teologiczno-pedagogiczne”, *Studia Teologiczne* V, 1935.

⁴⁰ M. Sopoćko, *Dziennik*, Zeszyt 2 (Białystok: 2010), 86.

⁴¹ M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego*, Białystok 2008, vol. I-III. The first edition in 3 volumes was published in the years 1959-1962 (vol. I, London: 1959; vol. II, Rome – Paris – London: 1962; vol. III, Rome – Paris – London: 1962). The 4th volume was published 5 years later (Paris: 1967).

the Institute of the Holy Family in Łomianki near Warsaw, we should notice that “At times psychology defines the family as a basic group for an individual “that is the one the members of which maintain a close contact and cooperate”⁴². Taking into account the etymology of the word family in psychology, we notice that the reason which determines being a family is procreation. This definition – according to Father Jarosław Szymczak, does not define the relationship between the family members which means “the family is not identified here in a sufficient way”⁴³.

In pedagogics the family is defined either through enumerating its tasks (functions) or through enumerating the basic bonds between the family members. In case of the family functions we enumerate: satisfying the sexual drive, satisfying the basic life needs, giving birth to and educating children. According to this definition, as was wisely observed by Father Jarosław Szymczak, “the family is used for satisfying the needs of each separate family member (their «basic needs»). The fourth function: «educating children» and fulfilment of the function of a parent”⁴⁴ can also be reduced to satisfying the basic needs. Therefore, if we limit the family only to satisfying certain “needs” of family members without experiencing “the love directed at the good of the other person”, we can get into the conclusion that the family is an institution in a way outside love”⁴⁵.

Sociology usually defines the family as “the basic social community and, therefore, a fundamental and constitutive element of each society” and treats the family as a group which constitutes an element of a bigger entity that is: of the society. Marriage is considered to be the basis of the family but it is defined as a “social, legal, sexual relationship, (...) relatively long-term (...) of a woman and of a man appointed in order to live together, cooperation for the family welfare that is: mainly educating the children”⁴⁶, without indicating any deeper and primary origins of the family.

Noticing the difficulties of particular sciences in defining the term: the family, Father Jarosław Szymczak expresses the opinion that “these sciences are not capable of such an insight into the man, and

⁴² Rev. J. Szymczak, “Definicje rodziny”, *Studia nad Rodziną* 2002, R. 6, nr 2(11): 153.

⁴³ Ibidem, 153.

⁴⁴ J. Szymczak, *Definicje rodziny...*, 155.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 155.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 156.

that they need to make use of philosophy in order to formulate a proper definition of the family”⁴⁷.

According to Father Mieczysław A. Krąpiec “all philosophical trends acknowledged the family to be the basic form of social life and the fundamental «niche» of development for the man. It was the character of the family which influenced the character of the bigger forms of social life and to such an extent that there were theories [which claimed – added by E.K.] that society is not constituted by “citizens”, but rather by families as the more basic units of the social life”⁴⁸. Giving a more precise definition Father M. Krąpiec indicates two important elements of the family: the essential good which is “to bear and educate children”, and “the structure of personal love”, as the factors constituting this community. This kind of love is not limited to its psychological meaning but it is understood as “the love which is the gift of self for the other person without any reservations”, which requires “«giving up on oneself» and giving the gift of self to the other person”⁴⁹.

Pope John Paul II claimed that spiritual fatherhood and motherhood are the symptoms of the inner maturity of a human being⁵⁰, which “is comprised in the evangelical vocation for perfection”. The man who shaped his inner fatherhood and motherhood “acquires the likeness of God the Creator”⁵¹.

The family as the natural community and coexistence “in the development of the personal love” of the parents and children, constituted the basis of the way Father Michał Sopoćko perceived it. Already in 1930s Father Sopoćko, as the Master of Theology and the Bachelor of Theology as well as the graduate of the Higher Institute of Pedagogy with the competence to provide lectures in Psychology⁵², formed an interdisciplinary definition of the family. The basis for the considerations was the recognition of the truth about the man, about marriage and the family, which grew out of the tradition of the thought of personalism and the Christian culture. According to this tradition, which is presented in the considerations of Father Sopoćko, the family is “the community of people created on the foundation of a monogamous and

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 156-157.

⁴⁸ M. A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne*, edition II (Lublin: 1986), 160-161.

⁴⁹ M. A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne...*, 163; J. Szymczak, *Definicje rodziny...*, 157.

⁵⁰ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (Lublin: 1986), 177.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 177.

⁵² H. Ciereszko, *Sługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko*, edition II (Białystok: 1998), 49.

indissoluble marriage which guarantees the community sustainability and the generational continuation in history”⁵³.

The word “the family”, according to Father Sopoćko, in Latin means – *familia*, which is translated into Russian as семья, while in Slovenian it means ‘the tribe’. Its foundation consists in “the biological difference of the sexes between the people, as it used to be, and comes from the human nature and does not depend on the economic or social conditions”.

Father Sopoćko adds that the word comes from the verb ‘to bear’ and, strictly speaking, means the parents and the children together; in the wider meaning this word comprises all the “people related, of the same surname, and sometimes – all the relatives and in-laws even despite having a different surname”⁵⁴. In the mentioned dissertation – *Rodzina w prawodawstwie na Ziemiach Polskich [Family in the legislation on the Polish soil]*, Father Sopoćko dealt with the family in the primary meaning, the one which consists of parents with children because the family in such an understanding is the primary natural human society the aim of which is “to educate the new generation”⁵⁵. Thus the family comprises the institution of marriage and the institution of the family. Marriage is a contract which is “designated by nature, [it is] of a constant and previously defined content. Marriage by nature should be holy, indissoluble, consisting of one man and one woman. Only such a marriage is capable of proper education of the new generation”⁵⁶. It is a recommendation and its implementation results from the very word “family” which in Polish indicates its basic task (rodzić – to bear, rodzina – the family), its main aim is to transmit the human kind, to educate new members, therefore, we can come to the conclusion that its origins come from the beginning of the mankind, otherwise it would be difficult to naturally explain the existence of the human race”⁵⁷. In order to justify that the family is “the primary natural human society” Father Sopoćko referred to the thought of Aristotle which confirmed that “the man is by nature created to live

⁵³ B. Kiereś, *Filozoficzna myśl Arystotelesa inspiracją realistycznej teorii rodziny*, in: *Rodzina – historia i współczesność*, ed. B. Kiereś, M. Gromek, K. Hryszan (Lublin: 2018), 10.

⁵⁴ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie na Ziemiach Polskich* (Wilno: 1926), 3.

⁵⁵ M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego* (London: 1958), 135.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 135.

⁵⁷ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 6.

in the state⁵⁸” and by nature he possesses the rush to love in a community⁵⁹, in which the family constitutes “the inborn connection for the everyday coexistence”⁶⁰. He also referred to Saint Thomas Aquinas who called the family: inherent to the society, whose main concern regards everything that the man needs in his everyday life⁶¹. He also reminded that a similar definition of the family was mentioned in the Roman Law although it was mentioned in a broader scope which comprised not only people related by blood but also by the bonds of submission under one paternal authority. , The family is a collection of human individuals who are subjected to the same paternal authority “⁶². The family consisted of not only the closest family members related by blood such as the father (*pater familias*) or mother (*mater familias*) and the unmarried daughters or sons. It also comprised the married daughters if they contracted marriage *sine conoentione in manu*, as well as married sons with their wives and children. All of them lived under one roof and were under the authority of *pater familias*⁶³. It must be added that parents, and the paternal authority were considered holy for the ancient Romans⁶⁴. The “broader” meaning of the term *family*, according to Father Sopoćko, “partly originated in the moral theology which considers not only parents and children but also hosts, household members and servants to be parts of the family⁶⁵”, and sometimes the term *family* was meant in a broader sense as the society, the nation and the whole humanity “as they had one heavenly Father and who were redeemed by Christ’s blood”⁶⁶. Therefore, while discussing the fourth commandment: Honour they father and thy mother “, moralists “discuss not only the rights and duties of the spouses, parents and children but also of servants and hosts, workers and employers and, moreover, the duties for the Homeland and for the nation that

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Polityka [Politics]*, transl. L. Piotrowicz, in: Arystoteles, *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. I (Warszawa: 2003), 61.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 6.

⁶⁰ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 7.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 7.

⁶² Ibidem, 7.

⁶³ A. Nowak, “Pojęcie władzy ojcowskiej w rzymskim prawie klasycznym”, *Studia Prawnoustrojowe* 2002, nr 1: 36.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 36.

⁶⁵ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 7.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, 28.

constitute one big family as well”⁶⁷. However, according to Father Michał, the family described like that “will not be a natural society but only its complementation”⁶⁸.

The family, apart from its “proper aim that is bearing and educating, shall be given priority in educating before any other environment”⁶⁹. The right to educate: in the natural order it also the duty of the state and in the supernatural order it is the duty of the Church. According to Father Adam Skreczko, the educational functions of these three communities are bestowed on them “from a different reason as they have different sources of origin”⁷⁰. Only God can be called the real educator because only He is capable to form a full-value personality. He calls the man into existence. In the analogical meaning, the parents have the primary right to educate their children as “they gave their offspring the basis for the creative power of the Almighty”⁷¹.

According to Father Michał Sopoćko, the family also “takes into account the maintenance of the material and the spiritual legacy of people; the family is a school of life and an incentive for the economic, spiritual and cultural progress”⁷². And the concern for the needs of the family “stimulates its members for diligence, for saving and for preserving the goods for the next generations”⁷³. Moreover, according to Father Sopoćko, the family preserves the spiritual legacy. Thanks to that, religion, morality, patriotism and customs do not disappear with the death of the parents but they are transmitted to the children, who grow up and live among them, “in order to further spread these values among the next generations. The family preserves the teaching and the information most important for life, which are derived from the experience of ancestors”⁷⁴. In this context the family is “a conservative institution in its strictest sense. Despite its conservative nature, the family is the incentive for the progress. A real progress consists in the implementation of the high ideals of justice, love, equality and

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 28.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 7.

⁶⁹ A. Skreczko, “Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w ujęciu ks. Michała Sopoćki”, *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej* 2005, vol. IV: 73.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, 73.

⁷¹ Ibidem, 73.

⁷² M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 7.

⁷³ Ibidem, 7.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, 8.

brotherhood”⁷⁵. At the same time, Father Michał emphasises that the pinnacle of progress will be reached only when all people become “one big family educated on the basis of justice, love, brotherhood and equality”⁷⁶.

Legislation in the family life in Christian societies

Father Michał Sopoćko, who was aware that the family constitutes a social reality and that it is a legal institution as well, made great efforts to provide the family with the rights from the society to regulate behaviours of its members and to take measures which would ensure its proper functioning as a whole accordingly to the Christian ethics. It was an extremely difficult task – it required determination “to what extent the civil legislation which had existed so far on Polish soil was consistent with the principles of the Christian ethics”⁷⁷. During the period of formation of the Polish statehood, after 123 years of partitions on the Polish soil, there were various legal systems of the former partitioning states⁷⁸ and not every civil code supported the family ethics “which was in accordance to the regulations of Christian ethics which is still present in the Catholic tradition of the nation and which expects to be legally consolidated into a unified Polish law”⁷⁹. Thus there was an urgent need to unify the legal system, including the family legislation in the whole Republic of Poland⁸⁰. However, this brought the doubts whether the Codification Commission which was responsible for the unification of the Polish legislation in the newly-created regulations – would preserve the Polish and Christian traditions. These doubts were the more justified that the works of the Codification Commission on the Polish personal legislation were about to be finished and would soon be the object of the Sejm’s debate, while “The press continuously spread the alarming news about deleting the Polish tradition in the

⁷⁵ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 8.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 8.

⁷⁷ H. Ciereszko, “Działalność naukowa i dydaktyczna księdza Michała Sopoćki”, *Studia Teologiczne, Białystok, Drohiczyń, Łomża* 26 (2008): 9.

⁷⁸ W. Makowski, *Rozważania prawnicze. Dziedziny prawa publicznego, z dziedziny prawa karnego – mowy autora* (Warszawa” 1928), 176.

⁷⁹ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 154.

⁸⁰ M.J. Kryński, “Normatywne i doktrynalne podstawy kształtowania się idei odrodzonego postępowania ze skazanymi uzależnionymi od alkoholu w Polsce w latach 1918-1969”, *Civitas et Lex* 2021, nr 2(30): 15-37.

project of the new legislation”⁸¹, despite the fact that around 75 % of the citizen of the Republic of Poland were of the Catholic denomination⁸². This high rate of the Catholic believers was another reason to justify the need to introduce compliance in the civil law accordingly to the natural and the revealed law in the matter of the family ethics⁸³. According to Father Sopoćko the word “ethics” comes from Greek and it means a custom, a tradition and the same as morality because in Latin – *mos*, also means a custom and tradition. The word “ethics” can also be understood as – “either good manners and it means the study of morality, tradition and virtues; or a collection of regulations on the duties and virtues”⁸⁴.

In this context, with ethics understood in such a way, Father Michał claimed that the state could and should provide regulations in the family life matters but these regulations in Christian societies cannot be contrary to the Christian ethics⁸⁵. Apart from that, the regulations provided by the state could regulate the civil relations of family members in either a detailed or a general way, however, “not interfering with the range of conscience and imposing sanctions on the laws of nature which are included in the regulations of the Christian ethics”⁸⁶. Civil law cannot cover all the details of family life as “they are so versatile that only the conscience can resolve them” as Father Sopoćko stated. However, the conscience is not only stable and it is sometimes very hesitant in the choice of the action. Thus the need to introduce moral theology”⁸⁷, which is based on the Holy Scripture, on the decisions of Popes and Vatican Councils, as well as on the writings of the Fathers of the Church, of serious moralists and on the ecclesial practice. Thanks to that “moral theology resolves any doubts of conscience, corrects errors and thus it helps to reconcile the arrangements of family ethics with the laws of nature”⁸⁸.

Father Marian Biskup claims that this biblical nature, which was noticed by Father Michał Sopoćko, is the first specific trait of Christian morality. The connection between morality and faith is equally

⁸¹ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 5.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 4.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 4-5.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 10.

important, and even so important that Christian morality is also called the morality of faith. Without faith there would be no Christian morality⁸⁹. Therefore, Christian ethics includes the principles which come from the Christian faith. This, among others, is indicated in the fact that at the moment of introducing Christianity in Poland (in 966) the monogamous family became the norm. According to Father Michał Sopoćko, the family regulations were mainly introduced – “to a higher degree” by the ecclesial authorities. For example, the councils in Cracow (1189) and in Paris (1197) decided that “celebratory wedding ceremonies would take place in church accompanied by witnesses”. In 1309 the council of Pest (authorised by Pope Clement VI in 1346 for Poland and Hungary) “confirmed this order and threatened with excommunication and with the refusal to bury in the Christian rites to those who would not comply with it”⁹⁰. The Church recognises seven sacraments, including marriage, as was strongly emphasised by Father Michał Sopoćko⁹¹.

According to Father Wincenty Granat such a morality sets the Christian morality as an ethical system which proclaims certain rules of conduct, in particular the ones concerning the family. The family should provide the effective support of the Church in religious education⁹².

“As an apostle of the cult of Divine mercy”⁹³ Father Sopoćko claimed that the law of nature is the “eternal Divine law which appears in the animal world as an instinct, and among humans as the mind or reason, which guides us in our conduct and states what to do and what to avoid”⁹⁴. However, not everybody is capable to “draw further conclusions from the general laws of nature”. Thus in case of the customs and morality of the family, according to Father Sopoćko, the decision-making should be entrusted to the Church as it had already been bestowed to Her by God and as She “would be supported in that by God’s Revelation which, apart from the reason, becomes the new source of cognition”⁹⁵. Divine Mercy Revelation can also be found in the sacrament of marriage in which the merciful love of God flows on

⁸⁹ M. Biskup, “Swoistość moralności chrześcijańskiej”, *Saeculum Christianum* 3 (1996) nr 2: 150.

⁹⁰ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 13.

⁹¹ Ibidem, 13.

⁹² Z. Tyszka, *Socjologia rodziny* (Warszawa: 1976), 114.

⁹³ J. Zabielski, “Błogosławiony ksiądz Michał Sopoćko – Apostoł Bożego Miłosierdzia”, *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne* 52,2 (2019): 312.

⁹⁴ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 13.

⁹⁵ Ibidem, 10.

the spouses and on the whole human society which is based on the family⁹⁶.

What is more, in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, devoted to the issues of morality, John Paul II stated that: morality is “The rational ordering of the human act to the good in its truth and the voluntary pursuit of that good, known by reason, constitute morality”⁹⁷. No man – according to John Paul II – can overrule the basic questions: *What should I do? How to distinguish right from wrong?* The answer can only be found in the light of the truth⁹⁸.

Sacrament of marriage – implementation of Divine mercy

According to Saint Paul, the Catholic marriage is the symbol of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The unity of Christ with His Church is supernatural, therefore, the sacramental marriage is also supernatural. Thus, as Father Sopoćko wrote, the Saviour “raised the natural relationship of a man and a woman to the dignity of a sacrament, bestowing the spouses with special grace to help them fulfil the great task of educating a new generation (...) through that he presented the greatest Divine mercy to the humanity”⁹⁹.

Father Sopoćko reminded that God is the Creator and Lawgiver for marriage, therefore, he confirmed in his teaching with his infallible gravity that it is not people but God Who unites the spouses and he reserves the special right for this relationship. „Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate”. (Math. XIX, 3-6)¹⁰⁰. (https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_PVS.HTM)

⁹⁶ M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego*, vol. 3, (Rome – Paris – London: 1962), 239-240.

⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Encyklika Veritatis Splendor. Do wszystkich biskupów Kościoła katolickiego o niektórych podstawowych problemach nauczania moralnego Kościoła* (Kraków: 2017), 72.

⁹⁸ John Paul II, *Encyklika Veritatis Splendor, Do wszystkich biskupów Kościoła katolickiego o niektórych podstawowych problemach nauczania moralnego Kościoła* (Kraków: 2017), 2.

⁹⁹ M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego*, vol. 3, (Rome – Paris – London: 1962), 258.

¹⁰⁰ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 31-32.

According to Father Sopoćko, the decisive factor of the conclusion of marriage and of its condition is, by nature, love: “love awakes to the new life the unknown desires and emotions and in its pure full bloom it stimulates to seek not only oneself but the good of the beloved person to bestow him or her with the gift of self”¹⁰¹. As the virtue of love covers not only “the love of God but also the love of neighbour”¹⁰². Thus the love of the neighbour is, according to Sopoćko, the theological love. In our neighbour we are supposed to see God Who reveals Himself through the natural and supernatural gifts. It is because the virtue of love is supernatural¹⁰³.

Therefore, true love does not know the boundaries of space and time and it possesses the quality of eternity. Apart from the feeling which comes from the soul, a sensual instinct appears, and “under the authority of the will, it becomes the ally of love, and without which it would only be a destructive and demoralizing power. Therefore, here is where the body and the soul cooperate, and the latter raises, ennobles and regulates the sensual feeling, bestowing it with the feature of permanence.”¹⁰⁴.

According to Father Sopoćko, marriage is an institution: Divine and human: Divine because its beginning, its aim, its rights and goods come from God; human as it is done by people who make a gift of self for the other spouses for the lifetime¹⁰⁵.

Thus the sacrament of marriage provides proper grace for “courageous treading (...) on the thorny paths ...) Through multiplication of sanctifying grace, the sacrament improves the love of the spouses¹⁰⁶: the Apostle indicates its qualities:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”(1 Cor, 13, 1-7) (<https://>

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, 34.

¹⁰² M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego...*, 112.

¹⁰³ Ibidem, 112.

¹⁰⁴ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 35.

¹⁰⁵ M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego*, vol. 3 (Rome – Paris – London: 1962), 259.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, 260-261.

www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_PVS.HTM), and therefore, love facilitates the life together¹⁰⁷.

Even greater mercy is expressed in the sacrament for the children that the spouses are to bear, to educate, to feed and to teach the moral life principles in order to ensure their earthly and eternal life¹⁰⁸.

The sacrament of marriage, as Father Sopoćko demonstrates, is also Divine mercy for societies, for the state and for all humanity “Society and the state base their existence on the family as they need healthy and brave citizens whose proper education is possible only under the condition that marriage will remain united and indissoluble”¹⁰⁹.

Therefore, the Catholic Church, as the lawkeeper of the natural and positive law, despite any threats and persecution from the authorities or despite any internal obstacles, “has always defended the indissolubility of marriage and even agreed to lose some of Her members than allowed for any compromise in this area”¹¹⁰.

Apart from the indissolubility, there is also another feature of the Christian marriage, which is the result of the natural law, that is: unity. It consists in the fact that marriage can only be contracted by “one man with one woman, therefore, any relationship polyandrous or polygamous will be forbidden”¹¹¹.

Father Michał Sopoćko emphasised that marriage is an interpersonal relationship of a moral nature and – “Therefore, marriage begins in the human will. The woman and the man usually need to grow up to this gift”¹¹², because it results in the strength of the relationship. In order to oppose to the weakening of the importance of marriage and its value, Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti connubii* on Christian marriage (December 31st 1930), recommended the preparation of young people for marriage as the interpersonal community, constituted through “the mutual gift of self of two free parties”¹¹³. He condemned the opinions and actions which degrading marriage and he indicated the means of marriage renewal such as: submission to God’s will, piety and religious practice remembering about the sacramental nature of

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem, 261.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, 261.

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, 261-262.

¹¹⁰ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...* p. 37.

¹¹¹ Ibidem, 39.

¹¹² K. Krajewski, *Etyka rodzinna*, in: *U źródeł tożsamości kultury europejskiej*, ed. T. Rakowski (Lublin: 1994), 182.

¹¹³ K. Krajewski, *Etyka rodzinna...*, 183.

marriage. Father Sopoćko, while referring to the encyclical – motivated to follow the path which led to the Creator, and encouraged to be submissive to God’s will as well as to live in piety and be an active practicing Catholic.

Protecting the integrity of the marriage act, Father Michał Sopoćko published a dissertation on the preparation for marriage, which referred to the encyclical *Casti connubii*. He indicated the trust into Divine mercy as the essence of the preparation¹¹⁴ which is reflected in the words addressed to the future mother included in “the Pre-marriage course” –

while being pregnant the future mother must avoid hard work, nervous shocks, sadness, anger, arguments and all kinds of sins – instead she should train herself in patience and gentleness and zealously pray for herself and for the baby, and before the puerperium she should go to confession, receive the Holy Communion because she will experience a serious ordeal which is sometimes dangerous for her life. Despite that, the woman should follow towards her termination with bravery, like a soldier goes bravely and courageously to defend his Homeland, because motherhood – is the woman’s military service and a woman who is giving birth – is a soldier in the precinct. She gives her Homeland a new citizen and a new member for the Church, therefore, she should trust Divine mercy and love the Creator and her country which usually makes the childbirth easier and brings the happy termination¹¹⁵.

As Kazimierz Krajewski wisely observes, the family ethics involves not only moral dilemmas of marriage and the family but also the “family-related” ones, among others, concerning pre-marital chastity¹¹⁶. Thus Father Michał Sopoćko combined the pastoral activity which concerned the family and its religious duties connected with educating children, with maintaining chastity and morality of the Christian family with the preparation for marriage¹¹⁷.

Summary

Bishop Henryk Ciereszko recalls Father Michał Sopoćko who remained in the memory of “the clergy and the faithful of the archdiocese as a role model of a priest who was totally devoted to the service for

¹¹⁴ S. Wiśniewski, “Błogosławiony ks. Michał Sopoćko. Kapłan o miłosiernym obliczu”, *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne* 24 (2015) 4: 113.

¹¹⁵ M. Sopoćko, *Nauka przedślubna* (Wrocław: 1948), 34.

¹¹⁶ K. Krajewski, *Etyka rodzinna...*, 182.

¹¹⁷ M. Sopoćko, *Rodzina w prawodawstwie...*, 46.

God”¹¹⁸. He was a zealous priest, theologian, pedagogue, social worker, the apostle of the truth, God’s servant, whose life was reflecting the process of growing to the Christian ideals and holiness of a priest. He recognised the truth about the man, about marriage and the family on the basis of the tradition of the thought of personalism and the Christian culture. He proved that raising marriage to the dignity of a sacrament “Jesus proved his great mercy for the spouses and for the whole human community”¹¹⁹.

In the time of the strong philosophical views, propaganda and ideologies which were opposing the national culture and the Christian culture as well as the nature of marriage and the family, it is necessary to read the work of Father Michał Sopoćko, devoted to the family as a Divine and human institution called: *Rodzina w prawodawstwie na Ziemiach Polskich (Studium etyczne-prawne)*. [*Family in the legislation on the Polish soil*]

Father Michał Sopoćko indicated that without the family, without its concern for education and service for life, there is no development of the Church or of the nation. He not only saw the threats but he also warned in a detailed way on how to overcome various difficulties and crises in the spirit of faith but also what educational tasks should be implemented while facing the difficulties. He advised that any departures, vices or failures in the family should be treated as a result of secondary considerations, and not as the results of the nature of marriage. The nature of marriage indicates its monogamous nature and indissolubility. Therefore, the monogamous nature of marriage and its dissolubility and thus the permanence of the family and its essential establishment should be supported as, according to Father Michał Sopoćko, they directly influence the welfare of the society and of the people which, in the contemporary times of violent transformations in every sphere of life, are particularly desired.

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¹¹⁸ H. Ciereszko, *Sługa Boży ksiądz Michał Sopoćko*, edition II (Białystok: 1998), 101.

¹¹⁹ M. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boga w dziełach Jego*, vol. III (Białystok: 2008), 260.

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