

Chapter VI

THE FORMATION OF FAMILY MINISTRY WORKERS

Responding to the spiritual and material needs of today's married couples and families requires, more than ever before, a well-prepared team composed of both clergy and laity. Good preparation means, among other things, a good formation. Family pastoral ministry is carried out mainly by priests formed in the seminaries¹ and through permanent formation. Lay people represent an equally important group of pastoral workers.² Lay family ministry workers are most often formed in diocesan family centers and in university family studies courses. This formation is completed by ongoing courses in the dioceses.

1. Formation in Family Ministry for Seminarians

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Vatican II points to the need for the appropriate and thorough preparation of priests for collaboration with the lay faithful in different forms (cf. AA 25). The Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* indicates that the candidates for the priesthood and priests should "be prepared carefully so that they are ready to foster the vocation and mission of the lay faithful" (ChL 61). It also underlines the need to raise the awareness of Christian spouses and parents that the domestic church has a share in the life and mission of the universal

¹ Cf. FSMF; A. Skreczko, "Przygotowanie przyszłych kapłanów do duszpasterstwa rodzin w warunkach współczesnych," *Studia Teologiczne. Białystok – Drohiczyn – Łomża* 17:1999, 121–34.

² Cf. R. Bieleń, "Duszpasterstwo rodzin," in: J. Stala – E. Osewska (eds.), *Rodzina-bezczenny dar i zadanie*, 268–9.

Church (cf. ChL 40, 62). The Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* notes the importance of family ministry in transmitting the faith and love for the Church as well as promoting vocations. The presence of the threats to the Christian family increases the need for pastoral care of the family (PDV 41).

The need to form future priests to work with adults has also been observed in the field of catechesis. The International Council for Catechesis states that seminarians and deacons need thorough catechetical formation for leading adult catechesis, animating, and working with lay catechists.³ In the religious formation of parents and the catechesis of adults, spouses, and parents, the Church sees the basis of sexual education, of education for love, and of shaping a mature faith in children (WW 63; TMHS 134).

The Church clearly calls for forming seminarians to work in the field of family ministry in the Congregation for Catholic Education's *Directives on Forming Seminarians for Ministry to Marriage and Family*.⁴ The document does not deny that the subject of marriage and family is included in different branches of the formation to the priesthood and states that the preparation of candidates for the priesthood in the field of family ministry has been enriched (FSMF 4, 9). However, it also points out that, in the present situation and in the face of the priest's pastoral tasks today, topics related to family ministry should be put in the center of both theoretical and practical pastoral formation.⁵ The apostolate of families is not the task of only a few specialized priests, but a basic dimension of the Christian apostolate to which all priests are called (FSMF 14).

Sporadic and occasional initiatives of representatives of family ministry are not enough nor is informing educators and seminarians about the work with families. "From these initiatives, we must proceed to the implementation

³ ACCC 83; E. Alberich, *Katecheza dzisiaj. Podręcznik katechetyki fundamentalnej*, transl. by K. Misiaszek et al., Warsaw, 2003, 25, notices the acute problem of adequate formation as well as pastoral and catechetical preparation of priests, seminarians and lay catechists.

⁴ Dated 19 Mar. 1995.

⁵ FSMF 38, 65. The document is based on experience and states that the subject matter of marriage and the family "is not being treated with that accuracy and fullness which is necessary in order to provide the church with pastors who are well prepared for this field of the apostolate; who are capable of 'setting forth without ambiguity the church's teaching on marriage', of enlightening and forming consciences, of promoting a competent and stimulating collaboration with apostolically active families and of providing a new thrust to the profound renewal of the whole field of pastoral care of families" (no. 5). The Congregation for Catholic Education also points out frequent neglect of important tasks in seminary formation, for example, the explanation of the philosophical and biblical foundation that underpins marriage, the thorough study of the natural methods of birth control, comprehensive and thorough presentation of the theological truth about family, and the spirituality of marriage (cf. FSMF 6).

of the systematic and more demanding programs, conceived with due competence and the necessary breadth.”⁶ Pope Francis goes on to point out that “Seminarians should receive a more extensive interdisciplinary, and not merely doctrinal, formation in the areas of engagement and marriage.” He believes that the formation should serve their psyche and emotional development (see AL 203). Such a program should include the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation of seminarians.

Human Formation in the Student’s Preparation for Family Ministry

Human formation is the basis of the whole formation of tomorrow’s pastors (PDV 43). In order to make the priestly ministry credible and easily acceptable, it is necessary to form the student’s personality in such a way that he may lead others to Christ and not be an obstacle (PDV 43).

The pastor engaged in family ministry should model his behavior on Christ’s human personality and find in him his role model. Consequently, he should be characterized by his understanding, empathy, readiness to offer a word that lifts people’s spirits, that strengthens those who doubt and suffer, and brings the family closer to Christ. The difficulties faced by the family today require adequate assistance from the pastors who are enlightened and know how to deal with its problems, who are able to listen and open their hearts to other people’s needs.⁷

Human maturity is essential both for self-realization and for serving others.⁸ It is necessary to form people with balanced, strong, and free personalities, who can cope with the pastoral responsibility. They need to be able to nurture bonds with others and so build united communities. Therefore, forming candidates for the priesthood to emotional maturity and responsible love is crucial (PDV 43). Emotional maturity makes it possible to accept one’s own sexuality and that of others and to experience it in a personal way,

⁶ FSMF 12. The choice of the subject matters to be included, renewed or more fully developed in the programs depends on the particular pastoral conditions, on the view of the Congregation of Bishops and on the that of the local and diocesan pastoral care of the family (cf. FSMF 19).

⁷ P. Poręba, “Osobowość duszpasterza rodzin,” RTK 19:1972, fasc. 6, 50–1.

⁸ L.M. Rulla enumerates the signs indicating that a priest is humanly immaturity, pointing out the different needs that are contrary to the realization of this vocation in the service of God and men. The man is self-centered, focused himself, and unable to act in accordance with the objective values. These needs may lead him to aggression, sexual relations, the quest for care and support, avoiding physical trauma, ostentation or exhibitionism. K. Trojan, *Potrzeby psychiczne i wartości oraz ich implikacje religijne*, Krakow, 1999, 70–1.

in the context of the love to which every person is called.⁹ Providing spiritual support to families requires living one's own sexuality with maturity and emotional balance¹⁰ as well as a positive appreciation of chastity and the celibate along with the conviction of the holiness of marriage and the family.¹¹ Maturity in this area leads to prudence, renunciation of everything that could threaten healthy relationships, alertness, and self-control as well as respect and reverence in interpersonal relationships with men and women (cf. PDV 44). The formation of a mature attitude in the pastor destined to work with spouses and families should lead to true friendship, modeled on Christ (Jn 11:5). Since, from this point of view, pastoral care is also a form of paternity, seminarians must be prepared for spiritual fatherhood that manifests itself in the responsible direction of one's own life, in all its dimensions, and the lives of the persons entrusted to them.¹²

The maturation of candidates for the priesthood may be hindered by disturbed family relationships, a broken or dysfunctional family, and resulting emotional deficits. If this is the case, when preparing seminarians to work with families, appropriate and delicate educational and psychological accompaniment is necessary to help them to overcome the complications due to their own family backgrounds.¹³ Pope Francis states that "there is a need to ensure that the formation process can enable them to attain the maturity and psychological balance needed for their future ministry" (AL 203). Forming the right attitudes towards marriage and the family is not a matter of goodwill and it does not happen automatically during the seminar; rather it requires creating educational situations that will facilitate emotional growth. With regard to this, *Amoris Laetitia* recommends that the seminarians have pastoral contact with families during the formation process and that women be present in the priestly formation (AL 203). It must be added that an important element of human formation is the individual's personal commitment to growth.¹⁴

During formation of future priests in the seminaries, the attitudes required for family ministry must be formed primarily through living the faith in such a way that the priest's life and ministry confirm what is celebrated in the cult. It is important to have a good relationship with the families that compose the

⁹ RH 10; cf. T. Miłek, "Wychowanie kapłana do służby rodzinie," AK 3-4:1995 fasc. 2, no. 516, 244-5.

¹⁰ FSMF 34; cf. PDV 44, 50; T. Miłek, art. cit., 244; A. Skreczko, art. cit., 127.

¹¹ T. Miłek, art. cit., 243.

¹² *Ibid.*, 244.

¹³ P. Poręba, art. cit., 56-61.

¹⁴ FSMF 33; cf. M. Ozorowski, "Zasady formacji duszpasterzy rodzin," in: J. Jęczeń - M.Z. Stepulak (eds.), *Wartość i dobro rodziny*, Lublin, 2011, 545.

parish, on the basis of the universal and Christian principles as well as the dialogue with laypeople, by means of pastoral contacts, solving their problems, and integrating them into the apostolate. The priest and pastor of the families, he is to perform all his ministry in a spirit of service and unselfish love. The call for seminary formation that shapes in the students an authentically Christian attitude, which will make the pastor credible in the eyes of the lay people and families, is particularly relevant.¹⁵

Spiritual Formation in the Student's Preparation for Family Ministry

Human formation opens the person to spiritual formation and completes it. The Christian spiritual formation, rooted in the Gospel, engages the whole person. It constitutes the foundation of the priest's life and spiritual formation (PDV 45). The priest's human and Christian maturity is the essential basis for his spiritual assistance to the Christian spouses (FSMF 31). A priest who constantly finds Christ in his own life can show Him to others and awaken their desire to seek the Master (PDV 46). Furthermore, the priest's spiritual formation also means seeking Christ in people. "This very meeting with God and with his fatherly love for everyone brings us face to face with the need to meet our neighbor, to give ourselves to others, to serve in a humble and disinterested fashion, following the example which Jesus has proposed to everyone as a program of life when he washed the feet of the apostles: 'I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you' (cf. Jn 13:15)" (PDV 49). The priest must be the man of love for he is called to educate others to love. The source of love is God's Heart (DCE 7). Therefore, the devotion to the Heart of Christ and the spirituality of God's Heart are very important for acquiring the attitude of pastoral love (PDV 49, 57). Virginité and celibacy constitute, alongside marriage, two ways of living the mystery of God's love for His people. The aim of persons consecrated to God is to support spouses in fulfilling their conjugal and parental vocation. Christian spouses have the right to expect people living in celibacy to give a good example and proof of undying their faithfulness to God and neighbor in love and of fidelity to their vocation.¹⁶

The primary aim of the spiritual assistance that a priest provides to a family is to help the spouses to become a "domestic church." This requires the future priest to be the master of prayer, who promotes prayer in the family, sees

¹⁵ T. Milek, art. cit., 246.

¹⁶ Cf. FC 16; PO 16.

to it that they receive the Sacraments, and facilitates their apostolic engagement (cf. FSMF 35). The seminarians, destined to be confessors and spiritual guides, should be the first to use these services steadily and often experience the good that comes from them.¹⁷

It is valuable for the seminarians to know the conjugal and family spirituality so that, in the future as priests, they can teach the faithful to live the Good News of conjugal love with joy and conviction.¹⁸ On their path toward evangelical perfection, spouses seek guides who are experts in pastoral dialogue, experienced, and convey sound doctrine (cf. FSMF 8; 64). In the spiritual formation of the family, it is necessary to emphasize that the family is not only the object but also an active worker of family ministry.¹⁹

The contact of seminarians with groups, movements, and communities of families allows them to include this form of pastoral care in view of their future ministry as priests. Information about how movements and communities of families are created and function is valuable for the future work of formation among married couples and families (FSMF 37).

It is good to connect every aspect of the priests' formation and especially its spiritual dimension with the Virgin Mary, through the development of deep piety, prayer, and frequent imitation (PDV 82). The Holy Family of Nazareth, Mary and Joseph, are the patrons and advocates of family pastoral care.²⁰

Intellectual Formation in the Seminarians' Preparation for Family Ministry

Pastoral motivation should characterize the seminarians' intellectual formation. The study of theology has formative value when it is accompanied by the awareness of theology's pastoral aim (PDV 51, 55). The Congregation of Catholic Education emphasizes that, given the current situation, the seminaries and institutes of priestly formation must ensure that topics concerning marriage and family and the pastoral care of families be the exposed, as foreseen by the *Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, as well as in

¹⁷ FSMF 32; cf. PDV 44.

¹⁸ Cf. K. Lubowicki, *Duchowość małżeńska w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, Krakow, 2005, 347.

¹⁹ FSMF 36; cf. FC 72; ChL 40.

²⁰ Cf. FC 86. John Paul II prayed "through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, may the Church in all the world's nations effectively accomplish its mission in and through the families." *Modlitwa Jana Pawła II za rodziny z okazji Synodu Biskupów o Rodzinie, 1980 r.* <http://wdr.diecezjakrakow.pl/rodzina/modlitwa/93-modlitwy-bl-jana-pawla-ii-w-intencji-zycia-i-rodziny> (consulted on 16.02.2018).

the curricula of studies and the educational programs.²¹ In order to assure that, “each seminary must have a specialist in this field formed in an institute of special studies.”²² The expert in the field of the pastoral care of the family, who participates in the seminarians’ formation, works to coordinate of the whole curriculum in such a way that they are prepared to work with families and to organize of exercises and practices in view of the apostolate among families (FSMF 16, 54).

Wherever the candidates for priesthood attend theological faculties, it is necessary to properly coordinate the pastoral formation between these faculties and the seminaries (FSMF 57). Each seminary should request the study of official documents of the Church, especially the guidelines of the Pontifical Council for the Family, Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life and the recommendations of the local Churches (FSMF 62). Furthermore, it should be ensured that there are seminarians who choose subjects related to marriage and the family for their specialization as well as for the second cycle and doctoral studies (FSMF 18). In order to meet the requirements set by the Congregation for Catholic Education, in the course of the seminary studies, theological-pastoral lectures should be given on the pastoral care of families,²³ presenting its basics and tasks. It would also be beneficial to conduct a scientific seminar in view of preparing a master’s thesis.²⁴

The seminarians’ intellectual formation, intended to prepare them for family pastoral care, should promote better recognition of the Christian and supernatural dignity of marriage and the family (FSMF 26). It is essential to teach about the human person’s vocation, including the vocation of marriage. It is also important to provide in-depth anthropological and philosophical knowledge about man, human sexuality, people’s orientation to love, and a detailed discussion on ethical issues concerning life, conjugal love, and bioethics. In the face of today’s crisis of marriage and the family, a philosophical

²¹ FSMF 55. T. Miłek, art. cit., 246–7: “During their seminary studies, students often deal questions concerning marriage and the family. However, the topics care are in many cases introduced as and aside and do not determine the overall vision; this is especially true of the pastoral approach to the matters.”

²² FSMF 56; cf. FC 70. These documents mention the Institute of the Marriage and Family Studies of the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, indicating the opportunities for study there.

²³ Cf. T. Miłek, art. cit., 247.

²⁴ The Congregation for Catholic Education states that pastoral theology should indicate the appropriate curriculum of family ministry and develop a program consistent with the material and formal aspects of the field, distinguishing it from other theological disciplines interested in marriage. FSMF 39–40. The elaboration of this handbook is an attempt to respond the Church’s indications with regard to the preparation for pastoral care for families. It is an instrument for conducting systematic courses on the pastoral care of families.

explanation of contemporary trends of thought, along with the underlying basis of the observed phenomena, is also needed.²⁵

The discussion of moral issues in the context of formation in the seminaries should promote “the truth about freedom and the communion of persons in marriage [so that it may] regain its splendor can” (VS 13). The teaching related to ethics should be solidly based on the doctrine and favor the realization of the civilization of love, by supporting the dignity of marriage and the family as well as the development of the conjugal spirituality (FSMF 20, 27). Contemporary moral problems related to marriage and the family should be explained from the viewpoint of personalistic ethics (FSMF 29). Instructors need to be convinced of the importance of the unity of judgments and principles in assessing the conjugal morality.²⁶ Lectures on canon law explaining the conditions of a valid sacramental marriage should also include knowledge about the marriage annulment processes in the ecclesiastical courts and issues of civil law concerning the family.²⁷

The study of the human sciences – e.g., psychology, sociology, and pedagogy – can be of help for the future pastoral ministry. Knowledge in these areas can make it easier for seminarians to understand contemporary man and to recognize the expectations of spouses and families with their problems as well as learning how to help them.²⁸ However, the Congregation of Catholic Education states that excessively psychologizing and sociologizing tendencies are not rare. These tendencies limit how marriage and family are seen, and, consequently, important pastoral aims set by the Council and the documents of the Church are neglected (FSMF 6, 30).

Much is said about marriage, the family and the pastoral care of the family in the Encyclicals, Apostolic Exhortations, the letters of the Popes, and the documents of the Holy See published in recent decades. This doctrinal and pastoral matter should be deepened from the viewpoint of different disciplines so that the theology of the domestic church may be enriched, and that

²⁵ FSMF 20-23. The criterion for the priest’s education so that he may serve the family well is fidelity to the Revelation, that allows him to proclaim the truth about marriage and the family (T. Mišek, art. cit., 248).

²⁶ FSMF 59. The Congregation notices that criticism against the Church’s magisterium on marriage and conjugal life is not rare. FSMF 6.

²⁷ FSMF 28; cf. SCa 27-29; Benedict XVI, Avoid pseudo-pastoral solutions in the examination of the validity of marriages. Address to the members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (29 Jan. 2010), id., The judicial decisions must reflect the truth about marriage. Address to the members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (22 Jan. 2011).

²⁸ T. Mišek, art. cit., 247.

answers may be found to the current problems surrounding human life, the institution of marriage, and the vocation of the spouses to holiness.²⁹

Pastoral Formation in the Seminarians' Preparation for Family Ministry

The seminarians' pastoral formation must be consistent with the norms and programs of pastoral action. A realistic vision of the pastoral care of the family should, on the one hand, take into account the positive proclamation of God's plan for marriage and the family to contemporary man and support people in its realization (cf. AL 35, 200-201). On the other hand, the crisis' causes, including, among other things, religious ignorance, deficiencies in education, the breakup of the education system, moral disorientation, the strong influence of the media, the increasing number of free unions, the separation from traditional forms of life and the creation of new models, and material poverty must be attentively considered (FSMF 41). "Future priests must be familiar with the pastoral implications of these realities so that they can help the faithful to form themselves and make their choices" (FSMF 42).

The seminary formation about marriage and the family should be practical.³⁰ Future priests must be prepared to accomplish the tasks of family pastoral ministry³¹ and especially to prepare the young and engaged couples for marriage.³² Today's cultural context has led the Church to "devote maximum pastoral attention to training couples preparing for marriage."³³ Future priests should be taught to use different forms of pastoral accompaniment with spouses: catechesis for spouses and parents (see FSMS 50), spiritual guidance, pastoral conversation, and discernment in difficult situations. These skills will help the priest to respond to the needs and expectations of many engaged couples and spouses.

The Congregation of Catholic Education draws attention to the formation of the pastoral attitude for dealing with the problem of responsible

²⁹ FSMF 25; cf. SCa 27-29.

³⁰ M. Ozorowski, "Zasady formacji duszpasterzy rodzin," 550.

³¹ Cf. R. Bieleń, "Kapłani i diakoni w posłudze współczesnemu małżeństwu i rodzinie w świetle najnowszych wskazań Kościoła," *Seminare* vol. 18, 2002, 153-60.

³² FSMF 50. Formation in the seminary gives the students the opportunity to prepare catechetical material on the premarital and pre-wedding preparation in a team, to preach under the guidance of teachers, and to elaborate devotional material for engaged and married couples. T. Miłek, art. cit., 249.

³³ SCa 29. Pope Benedict XVI says that "careful preparation and verification, an effective pastoral action can be developed which seeks to prevent the nullity of marriage." Judgments must reflect the truth about marriage. Address to members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (22 Jan. 2011).

parenthood, the use of natural methods of birth regulation, and family counseling. It is essential for future priests to have information about family counseling centers and to be able to work with them, while opposing contraceptive practices and abortion, and searching for appropriate remedies.³⁴

Future priests should be able to help families in the practice of common prayer and so gradually instill in the children the spirit of prayer, participation in Holy Mass, and the reception of the Sacraments (FSMF 44). This can be done effectively by introducing spouses into movements and communities of families and through systematic formation entrusted to a priest.³⁵ The contact of seminarians with various groups and movements of families, under the direction of the superiors responsible for this, is beneficial in the preparation for their future ministry to families (FSMF 36, 54).

The person in charge of the seminarians' pastoral formation should direct them to areas where they can best develop the skills necessary for serving married couples and families (FSMF 54). Alongside contacts with movements and associations of families, they should also visit diocesan courts, counseling centers, and other places where the family receives pastoral care. Seminaries should invite family ministry workers³⁶ and married couples involved in the apostolate to tell about their experience. "Common reflection on various pastorally significant cases and their analysis in the light of the documents of the Holy See and of the local churches" is necessary (FSMF 54). The contact of seminarians with the sick and with the children in orphanages, the engagement in the spastoral care of sobriety, and organizing holidays for the children from threatened families are beneficial for the preparation for the service of the family.³⁷

The tasks of pastors in family ministry should also include, for example, the care for mixed marriages, the divorced, and people in non-sacramental relationships,³⁸ as well as care for families in difficult situations, for those who are addicted, for the elderly and lonely spouses, for the childless or for those abandoned by their children.³⁹ Today, the need for attention to all of these situations is emphasized. Alongside general pastoral knowledge, the prepa-

³⁴ Cf. FSMF 49; A. Dzióba, *Narzeczeni wobec ludzkiej płodności. Studium pastoralne*, Rzeszów, 2009, 250–4.

³⁵ See J. Mikulski, *Rola kapłana w domowym Kościele – gałęzi rodzinnej Ruchu Światło-Życie*, Kraków, 2007, 21–36.

³⁶ It is good to invite the national director of family ministry, priests from the dioceses and deaneries, as well as family counseling workers. T. Miłek, art. cit., 250.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 249–50.

³⁸ FSMF 51–52; cf. SCa 29; AL 247, 291–312.

³⁹ FSMF 53; cf. FC 71.

ration for helping these people requires knowledge in the fields of health and pastoral psychology.⁴⁰

The practical formation cannot be limited to merely teaching pastoral techniques. It should rather initiate a process of forming pastoral sensitivity and arouse readiness and responsibility for accompanying married couples and families. The aim is to teach seminarians how to use their theoretical knowledge and spiritual formation in practice while reducing the sense of helplessness felt by priests when facing serious problems of spouses and families.⁴¹

Pastors should prudently bring people with different specialties together around the activities carried out for the family. This makes it possible to provide different types of assistance to families, especially to those experiencing economic and social difficulties. This coordination requires a generous spirit and special preparation that combines the teaching of pastoral theology and the Church's social doctrine (FSMF 47-48). The seminarians should be taught how to use the media with discernment and responsibly. This will help them to support the moral well-being of families in the future (FSMF 46).

The dimensions of the seminarians' formation for the pastoral care of the family discussed above form an integral whole. The human formation shapes the priest's mature personality and enables him to cooperate with spouses and families. The spiritual formation helps students to discover their vocation in the context of faith and the love of God, who also calls spouses and parents to live love in accordance with their vocation. It gives future priests an incentive to work in the apostolate among married couples and families. The intellectual formation equips them with the knowledge necessary for Catholic family ministry, while the pastoral formation prepares them to accomplish the tasks of the pastoral care of the family and to serve marriage and the family concretely.

2. Ongoing Formation in Family Ministry for Priests

MIECZYŚLAW POLAK

Ongoing formation is necessary because of its significance for the life of a priest. Its ultimate meaning is manifested in the fact that "ongoing formation

⁴⁰ FSMF 53; cf. M. Blasberg-Kuhnke, "Altenpastoral als gerontologisch verantwortete," in: I. Baumgartner (ed.), *Handbuch der Pastoralpsychologie*, Regensburg, Verlag Friederich Pustet, 1990, 409-23; J. Schwermer, "Seelsorge an den Lebenswenden. Gespräche bei Heirat, Geburt und Tod," in: *op. cit.*, 425-42; A. Heller, "Seelsorge in der Krise der Krankheit – Krankenhaus-seelsorge," in: *op. cit.*, 443-61.

⁴¹ Cf. PDV 58; T. Miłek, art. cit., 248.