

SUMMARY

Licentiate Sr. Elżbieta Kuczmarska: **Strengthening marital love. A study in family pastoral care in the light of spousal research.**

The aim of this dissertation is to present the Church's teaching on conjugal love and to present the convictions of spouses concerning the care of the bond of love and expectations towards pastoral care, as well as to formulate conclusions and postulates towards pastoral care of families. The work consists of six chapters, an introduction, a list of abbreviations, a conclusion, an appendix bibliography and appendices.

The first chapter presents the teaching of the Church on conjugal love and sacramental marriage, including the anthropological and biblical foundations of conjugal love, the theological understanding of conjugal love, the psychological understanding of love and the conjugal bond, and the socio-cultural conditions of the realisation of love in marriage. The second chapter provides a methodological introduction to the empirical part of the dissertation. The following chapters, from the third to the fifth, present the detailed results of the research on the strengthening of marital love and the expectations of spouses towards pastoral care, which was conducted among spouses in Poland.

A woman and a man as persons are fulfilled in marital and family love, which requires the care of both spouses. The dissertation shows how spouses care for the bond of love in an anthropological dimension. The results obtained showed that the spouses' concern for strengthening marital love in the anthropological dimension is characterised by high rates of spousal commitment (approximately 90%). However, respondents declared some difficulties in the area of sexual intercourse with their spouse. Marriage is also associated with the expectation of satisfying one's own needs within the marriage and building mutual relationships, hence the further part of the research results shows the respondents' concern for the psychological bond within the marriage. Strengthening marital love in the psychological dimension also received similarly high percentages. Some difficulties also relate to the concern for marital love through the building of the sexual bond.

By entering into a sacramental marriage, Christ heals, perfects and divinises marital love, and the grace of the sacrament of marriage works through the cooperation of the couple in building the spiritual bond. This dimension of care for conjugal love is addressed in the next part of the research results presented. Marriages and families today are strongly affected by



various demoralising influences. Bearing in mind that sacramental marriage also carries with it a number of moral requirements for a strong and enduring marital bond and the realisation of the marital-family vocation, the thesis also presents the results of research on the spouses' concern for the bond of love in the ethical-moral dimension, especially in the implementation of the commitments of the marriage vow. The strengthening of marital love in the spiritual and religious dimension is also generally at a very high percentage level (approx. 90%). However, spouses often display difficulties in perceiving God's action in conjugal love. In contrast, the strengthening of marital love in the ethical-moral dimension occurs somewhat less frequently and is more varied. The lowest rates concerned the openness of spouses to accept offspring.

Spouses realise their love in a specific context of social, livelihood and cultural conditions, and for this reason, the dissertation also presents results on spouses' attitudes towards them, as well as their expectations of pastoral care. A very high percentage of respondents (more than 90%) believe that the strengthening of marital love is served by entering into a sacramental marriage, celebrating religious festivals and important anniversaries together, and not succumbing to external cultural influences that undermine the sense of the permanence of marriage.

The pastoral activity of the Church is an expression of concern for the well-being of the faithful and the fulfilment of their vocation. The spouses surveyed express expectations of the pastoral ministry to preach the word of God in order to rebuild their faith and to live it every day, to celebrate the liturgy and to conduct catechesis for spouses on marriage and family issues. They also expect to help those living in irregular situations and abandoned spouses. They urgently expect pastoral workers to bear witness to their vocation and to be better prepared (especially psychologically) to minister to spouses. They also count on the prayers of pastors and other spouses for their intentions, and express the expectation and need to teach them marital prayer.

The dissertation presents marital love and its strengthening in a theological-pastoral perspective and constitutes a study of the issue within the framework of pastoral studies in the academic sub-discipline of family ministry. It seems that the study may serve not only scholars, but also pastoral practitioners, family pastoral workers and Catholic spouses themselves.

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