

## Religiousness of spouses as a factor contributing to shaping a successful marriage\*

Religijność małżonków czynnikiem sprzyjającym kształtowaniu udanego małżeństwa

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**Abstract:** The most common vocational path in life is marriage. The need of spouses, their children, but also the society as a whole is for it to be happy and dissoluble. However, a significant number of spouses, including Catholic spouses, lodge divorce proceedings causing family disintegrations. The number of cohabiting couples of people, without getting married, is also growing. Responsibility for vowed love is significant both in the dimension of the earthly and eternal life. The question then arises: what factors are conducive to shaping a successful marriage, and in particular, is religiosity one of them? The article explains the words of the marriage vow spoken by persons entering into the sacramental marriage. It also provides an overview of research into the factors behind a successful marriage and confirms the vital role of mature religiosity in shaping it. It also encourages to have a religious formation that takes into account various forms of piety, which is important not only in relation with God, but also with your spouse, other family members and other people.

**Keywords:** manifestations of religiosity, oath of spouses, marriage success

**Streszczenie:** Najpowszechniejszą z dróg życiowego powołania jest małżeństwo. Potrzebą małżonków, ich dzieci, ale także całego społeczeństwa jest to, by było ono szczę-

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śliwe i trwałe. Znaczna jednak liczba, także katolickich małżonków, wnosi pozwy rozwodowe, powodując rozpady rodzin. Wzrasta również grono osób pozostających we wspólnym pożyciu bez zawarcia małżeństwa. Odpowiedzialność za ślubowaną miłość istotna jest zarówno w wymiarze życia doczesnego, jak i wiecznego. Pojawia się więc pytanie: Jakie czynniki sprzyjają kształtowaniu udanego małżeństwa, a zwłaszcza, czy religijność jest jednym z nich? Artykuł wyjaśnia słowa przysięgi małżeńskiej wypowiedzianej przez osoby zawierające sakramentalny związek małżeński. Zawiera też przegląd badań nad czynnikami udanego małżeństwa i potwierdza istotną rolę dojrzałej religijności w jego kształtowaniu. Zachęca również do formacji religijnej uwzględniającej rozmaite formy pobożności, która ma znaczenie nie tylko w relacji z Bogiem, ale także ze współmałżonkiem, pozostałymi członkami rodziny i innymi ludźmi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przejawy religijności, przysięga małżonków, sukces małżeński

## Introduction

One of the characteristic features of a religious man is the transcendence of the world, shown in the yearning for invisible God, longing for Him and striving for a deep relationship with his Creator. Saint Augustine recalled this when he wrote that God created us to be directed towards himself and our heart is restless until it rests in him (Augustine 2018, I,1). Awareness of leaving Eden and the hope of returning can be a guiding idea in overcoming life's difficulties and realisation of all the things every day (Gen 3:23-24). Discovering the purpose of one's life, which is walking to the Father's house and being in a loving relationship with him, makes fruition of tasks easier on the path of the vocation (Jn 14:1-3). Each of the human paths, both priestly, conventual and marital, as well as solitude in secular life, construed as availability for many and eager use of obtained talents is appropriate when it leads to the final goal through the fulfilment of the commandment of love. Your choice should be accompanied by reflection related to the answer to the fundamental question: on which path will I be able to love God and my neighbour the most, realizing myself in love? However, it happens that a career, power, acquiring material goods, focusing on the transient worldly life, obscure your ultimate goal. Piotr Skarga wrote about it in his Sejm Sermons, commenting on the unfavourable consequences of using only earthly wisdom by some: "They have a mind so much set to get and keep and multiply worldly secular goods. And in the earth all their mind stays, not turning to the eternal and the future life" (Skarga 2021). It is accompanied by the neglect of the love due to one's neighbour, explained by: lack of time, chasing and a multitude of things. The consequence of this is the abandonment of the fundamental vocation of man, which is the vocation to love, and the failure to realize one's own humanity through the gift of yourself

to others (Second Vatican Council 1965, 24). Stopping in the course of life is conducive to logical inference and deepening the awareness that departing from God Who is Love (1 Jn 4:7) results in disturbances in interpersonal relationships. It also seems obvious to see the relationship between mature religiosity and correct relations to others, including the closest people, who, apart from parents and siblings belonging to the family of origin, are also members of the family they founded, such as husband, wife and children. The issue of marriage is one of those that should be considered not only in the above-mentioned earthly categories. It is one of the possible and so far the most common path to eternity. Researchers in such fields as psychology, sociology and theology have repeatedly undertaken empirical investigations into religiosity, marriage, family, marriage satisfaction, marriage success and its determinants<sup>1</sup>. In a situation of a significant number of divorces and an increasing number of cohabitation relations (non-legalized unions of two adults who have intimate contacts and run a common household), (Szukalski 2021) it is worth following these studies and drawing conclusions useful both in religious education and in preparation for marriage<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> F. Adamski, *Rodzina. Wymiar społeczno-kulturowy* [Family. Socio-cultural Dimension] (2002); M. Braun-Gałkowska, *Miłość aktywna* [Active Love] (1980); M. Braun-Gałkowska, *Psychologiczna analiza systemów rodzinnych osób zadowolonych i niezadowolonych z małżeństwa* [Psychological analysis of family systems of people who are satisfied and dissatisfied with their marriage] (1992); S. Bukalski, *Religijność jako kryterium jakości narzeczeństwa i małżeństwa* [Religiosity as a quality criterion for engagement and marriage], 247-262; R. Jaworski, *Psychologiczne badania religijności personalnej* [Psychological research on personal religiosity], 77-88; R. Jaworski, *Religijność personalna – próba syntezy interdyscyplinarnej* [Personal religiosity – an attempt at an interdisciplinary synthesis], 132-134; D. Krok, *Znaczenie religijności w formowaniu jakości życia małżonków* [The Importance of Religiosity in Forming the Quality of Life of Spouses], 55-72; G. Orłowski, *Czynniki warunkujące powodzenie małżeństwa* [Factors Determining the Success of a Marriage], 19-39; D. Masci, *Shared religious beliefs in marriage important to some, but not all married American* <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/27/shared-religious-beliefs-in-marriage-important-to-some-but-not-all-married-americans/>.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical data indicate that there are several dozen thousand divorces per year in Poland. Year 1980 – 39 833 divorces; 1990 – 42 436; 2000 – 42 770; 2010 – 61300; 2018 – 62843; 2019 – 65341. The age group in which divorces are the most numerous in 2019 are people aged 20-24, including women 30,038; men 23844. The most frequently cited cause of the breakdown of marital life is the incompatibility of characters 16386, another reason for the failure to maintain marital fidelity 3864 and alcohol abuse 2110. *Rocznik Demograficzny* [Demographic Yearbook] (2020), 230, 235-236. Statistical analyses show an increase in the number of cohabitation unions (i.e. unmarried couples), from almost 200,000 in 2002 to approx. 320,000 in 2011. The next census (carried out in 2021) will bring new data, but it is worth emphasizing that the group of cohabiting for 10 years was 2.1% of the total population in Poland. Age analysis showed that the most numerous group were twenty-year-old unmarried men and women (95%), while in the group of thirty-year-olds – divorced persons (26%). The analysis of the marital status of people living in cohabitant couples shows that “the dominant part – over 61% of unions – are persons with a legal marital status single / unmarried. The second group consists of divorced persons, constituting nearly 29% of cohabiters, and persons who are (from the legal point of view) married and widowed persons constitute 5% of all partners”.

The article will introduce the concept of religiosity and indicate its manifestations, recall the content of the marriage vow and the tasks resulting from entering into marriage. Based on the results of many empirical studies, it will enable reflection on the religiosity of spouses and the success of their marriage. Conducting this type of analysis may prove useful in educating for family life, preparing for marriage, in the formation of spouses and their parents, and in organizing the knowledge of professionals supporting married couples and families in fulfilling their vocation.

## I. Religiousness and its manifestations

The Catechism of the Catholic Church presents man as a religious being (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 28). This is evidenced by the attitudes of people of different cultures, expressed in worship and sacrifices, temples built, statues, sculptures, and painted pictures. Religiousness is also a desire to get to know God, meet him and strive for holiness. In the encyclopaedic definition of religiosity, attention is drawn to two characteristic approaches to this term. On the one hand, the subjective perception of religion is emphasized, the knowledge of which becomes possible thanks to the description of the lived experiences of specific people. On the other hand, religiosity is treated as an attitude of both an individual and specific social groups, which is manifested outwardly through various forms of piet („Religijność” 2021). Czesław Walesa, an outstanding specialist in developmental psychology, writes that “religiosity is a life, personal and positive relationship between a person and God, which is realized and expressed through appropriate forms of awareness, feelings, decisions, ties with the community of believers, practices, morality, experiences and beliefs” (Walesa 1996, 42). In Christian theology, religiosity is defined as a moral virtue, which is expressed by worshiping God through

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J. Stańczak, K. Stelmach, M. Urbanowicz, *Małżeństwa oraz dzietność w Polsce [Marriages and Fertility Rate in Poland]*, 9-11. An interesting indicator is also the number of marriages in Poland, especially since GUS statistics on marital status show that married people are the most numerous social group, accounting for over half of the adult population of this country (approximately 60%). In 2018, the number of marriages was 8 million 898.4 thousand. Since 2011, the number of marriages in Poland has been systematically decreasing and is lower than the number of widows, widowers and divorces. W. Szkwarek, *9 wykresów o ślubach i rozwodach Polaków, które warto zobaczyć* <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/9-wykresow-o-slubach-i-rozwodach-Polakow-7716897>. Despite this, Poland is among the top ten countries with the highest marriage rate; in 2011, it was 4.7 per mille. Among the European Union countries, the most numerous marriage rates are recorded in Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta (from 6.9 to 6.1 per mille), the rarest in Bulgaria, Slovenia and Portugal (3-3.1 per mille), J. Stańczak, K. Stelmach, M. Urbanowicz, *Małżeństwa oraz dzietność w Polsce [Marriages and fertility rate in Poland]*, 3.

external and internal worship manifested in prayer, receiving the sacraments, adoration, asceticism, love and other religious experiences (Mariański 2012, 1415-1416). The religious man has a real and dynamic personal relationship with God, on whom he “feels dependent in existence and in action, and which is the ultimate end which gives meaning to human life” (Zdybicka 1982, 325). When analyzing phenomenological works, Zofia Zdybicka points out that religious acts, like thinking or acts of will, belong to the essence of human consciousness. “A man who is aware of the ontic bond with God, who is the source of life, love and a partner in dialogue, experiences a sense of obligation to bind himself anew through knowledge and love” (Zdybicka 329). The actualization of this relationship in a human way, i.e. consciously and freely, also takes place on the moral level. Religious commitment is associated with adopting certain principles of faith and applying them in your own life. This is the so-called consequence parameter of religiosity. It is subject to empirical research applied in the framework of psychology and sociology of religion, as well as in pastoral theology. The practical dimension of religiosity is related to the attitude towards commandments, dogmas, moral norms and religious customs binding in a given religion. Authentic religiosity is expressed in getting to know these principles, their acceptance and interiorization, and in acting in accordance with them (Zdybicka 329-330).

Human religiosity, like any attitude, should grow, mature and improve. At any stage of human life, religiosity can be described as mature or immature. The immaturity of religiosity may be related to a false, distorted vision of God. According to the theologian and psychologist Father Marek Dziewiecki, “an immature man tries to imagine God in his own image and adapt Him to his own needs, fears or magical expectations” (Dziewiecki 2021). God seen by a man as a policeman or a strict punishing judge evokes fear, the desire to hide and run away. Such fears obscure the true image of God as Love, make it difficult and even impossible to establish contact with Him and accept His mercy. The opposite, but also untrue, image of God is to consider Him a friend who, in his naive kindness, fulfills all human whims, protects him from suffering and the consequences of mistakes. Those who think like that cannot recognize God’s righteousness. Another reason and expression of immature religiosity is the wrong, only negative understanding of the God-created world and other people. The relationship with God established then is a form of escape from people, earthly reality and earthly life. Seeing evil everywhere, a lack of enthusiasm, hope and awareness that everything God created was good complicates the path to holiness and hampers involvement in spreading God’s Kingdom here on earth. Immature religiosity is also expressed in questioning and not fulfilling God’s requirements, the most important of which is to grow in the love described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 13). On the path of reli-

gious development, it is worth realizing that one cannot establish contact with God-Love, or strive for His Kingdom – without loving (Dziewiecki 2021).

President of the Association of Christian Psychologists, Fr. Stanisław Tokarski assumes that mature religiosity is a group of religious behaviours with a high degree of perfection corresponding to the standards in force in a given religion. Psychological and sociological research determines religious maturity, i.e. the degree of implementation of these standards and the influence of religiosity on other spheres of life. Religious maturity is related to the level of maturity of a particular person or group. Maturity is defined as the abilities of a person, which he or she wants to achieve. It is also a development process leading to the achievement of the perfect pattern. Maturity is associated with acquiring the ability to follow the adopted pattern, it is also wisdom and responsibility in managing oneself (Tokarski 2006, 147-149).

American psychologist Gordon Allport mentions in the criteria of human maturity:

- the need to engage in some area of life,
- the attitude of dialogue in contact with each person,
- emotional maturity (visible when: (1) it is not emotions that motivate action, (2) behavior dictated by emotions does not hurt others, (3) the person is able to deal effectively with negative emotions).

When describing religiosity, it is especially worth emphasizing having a mature philosophy of life revealed by a mature and harmonious system of values that integrates around the purpose and meaning of life, as well as having a value considered central (Allport 1988; Płużek 1988). Allport points to the integrative role of religiosity in human personality, and believes that the basic criteria of mature religiosity are:

- heuristic, that is, looking for a relationship with God and making new creative discoveries,
- reflectivity that allows one to become aware of the complexity of understanding God,
- criticism of one's own behavior towards Him,
- compliance with moral principles,
- independence of religious motivations from satisfying other needs, the importance of the role of religion in life,
- the integrity of religious attitudes and their harmonious interaction with other elements of the personality (Allport 1996, 447-457; 1976, 59-83).

Psychologists studying the issue of religiosity, in contrast to the critical statements of Sigmund Freud, (Freud 1967) they state its high value in the fact that it gives meaning to life, creates a system of values, motivates ac-



tions, prompts to search for God, to get to know Him and establish a personal relationship with Him, and helps to improve human being, their striving for holiness and strengthens their ties with God and other people, especially those cooperating in personal formation in the religious community (Allport 1988; Chlewiński 2000, 89-128; Jaworski 1994, 132-134). Religiousness should be manifested in cognitive, emotional and motivational involvement as well as in actions dictated by the implementation of accepted norms and values (Prężyna 1988, 261-275; 1981; 1973, 121-130). Its value lies in the various functions which it performs in individual and social life. The first is a protective function (preventive and prophylactic) against all kinds of disorders and pathologies. The second function is to awaken hope and support in difficult situations. The third is the ordering function by creating a proper hierarchy of values and directing by prioritizing the actions taken and establishing a clear vision of life (Wnuk and Marcinkowski 2012, 239-243). A person of mature religiosity is open to people, sensitive to their problems, empathetic, active, committed, creative, understanding, independent of external influences, contrary to the professed faith and accepted principles of life, it is free and responsible. Putting God first and relating all life issues to Him, a religious man rejects egocentricity and can be altruistic towards others. Religious values are incorporated into his personality, constituting, through interiorization and internalization, a determinant of behaviour that brings satisfaction and life optimism (Jaworski 1989, 54; Opalach 2012, 213; Prężyna 1969, 101).

From the psychological research of Fr. Romuald Jaworski and Fr. Cezary Opalach (Jaworski 1994, 163; Opalach 2012, 216) shows that people with mature religiosity are characterized by: a higher level of adaptation without the will to dominate others, less aggressiveness and less conflict, a better integrated personality without destructive anxiety, self-acceptance and systematic work on oneself, a higher level of self-imposed demands, controlling emotions. These features, along with the previously mentioned altruism and allocentrism, are the proper foundation for appropriate interpersonal relations. They can also be material for building a successful marriage. A deep relationship with God who is Love (1 Jn 4:7) and the awareness of the creation of man in his image and likeness (Gen 1:28) motivates, mobilizes and strengthens realization and development of the capacity for love in one's own life. Religion creates defined obligations, sets requirements, gives orders and instructions for a decent life. It teaches about the need to respect other people. It commands you to love your neighbour as yourself, which results in the need to care for the welfare of close and distant people, friends and strangers, regardless of age, education and possessions. The Catholic religion lists the gifts of the Holy Spirit, works of mercy towards the soul and body, and the commandments of God and of the Church. Psychologist and theologian, Fr. Dariusz Krok emphasizes that

religious people are more faithful than non-religious (Krok 2012, 55-72). Conducting research among married couples and families, Mercedes Arzu Wilson, Teresa Rostowska, Andrzej Kowalczyk emphasize that joint participation in religious practices and living in accordance with moral standards strengthens ties (Wilson 2002, 185-211; Rostowska 2009, 61; Kowalczyk 2020).

Religiosity requires piety, and piety cannot exist without religiosity (Różnica, 2021). The term *piety* comes from the Latin word *pieta* and means *love for the Father*; diligent performance of duties towards Him, and worshipping Him. Piety is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the disposition that makes the Christian docile “to willing obedience to God’s inspirations” (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1831). The manifestations of piety include:

- addressing God as Father (Rom 8:15; Lk 11:1-2; Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1303, 1437),
- being a witness of Christ, using the gifts of the Holy Spirit, spreading the Christian faith,
- recognizing the centrality of the commandment to love God and neighbor (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 575),
- alms, fasting, prayer (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 575, cf. Mt 6:2-18; Mk 12:28-34),
- individual recitation of the breviary, celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, reading the Holy Scriptures, prayer of the heart (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1176-78, 1437)
- service to the Church community through forms of solitary and community life and in various religious families (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 917), practice of the evangelical counsels, and in the case of spouses, engaging in prayer and action, e.g. in communities of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, neocatechumenal groups, domestic and married circles forms of the Movement of Pure Hearts, participation in Marriage Meetings, taking up activity in foundations such as: „Życie i Rodzina” [“Life and Family”], „Misja Służby Rodzinie” [“Family Service Mission”], in Stowarzyszenie Przymierze Rodzin [The Family Covenant Association], Ruch Rodzin Nazaretańskich [The Families of Nazareth Movement], Focolare, Comunione et Liberazione.
- it is essential for all Christians to follow Christ, to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, to spread and defend faith in word and deed (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 917-918, 1303; Second Vatican Council 1964, 43),
- devoutly contemplating and implementing Christ’s Sermon on the Mount in your own life, which is a “great card of Christian life” (Cat-



- echism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1969; Augustine. *De Sermones* 1,1, PL 34, 122-123).
- veneration of relics, visiting sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the Way of the Cross, the Rosary, medals, religious dances, etc. (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1674),
  - prayer for the dead and indulgences for them (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1479).

The memory of the death and eternal life that awaits everyone mobilizes to a dignified life. Participation in the Apostolate of Good Death contributes to this. Each participation in the funeral of a loved one mobilizes to shape the right attitudes towards Christian life and death. “For even dead, we are not at all separated from one another, because we all run the same course and we will find one another again in the same place. We shall never be separated, for we live for Christ, and now we are united with Christ as we go toward him . . . we shall all be together in Christ” (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1690; Simeon of Thessalonica PG 155, 685 B).

Celebration is a special manifestation and way of developing Christian piety and drawing God’s grace. The Code of Canon Law, together with the precepts of the Church, express the Law of the Lord. The words of the Decalogue uttered in the prayers with the recommendation “Remember that you should keep the holy day” are detailed in the book of Exodus and the Book of Deuteronomy (Ex 20:8-11; Dt 5:12-15). For Catholics, the peak of prayer and celebration is the holy mass. In addition to mandatory holidays, such as: Christmas (December 25), Easter, Holy Mother of God (January 1), Epiphany (January 6), Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15), All Saints (November 1), the faithful of the Catholic Church in Poland are obliged to participate in the Holy Mass every Sunday or in the evening of the preceding day (*Code of Canon Law*, 2021, 1246-1248). “Sunday is a time of reflection, silence, reading and meditation that foster the growth of the interior and Christian life” (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 2186). “In Christian piety, Sunday is traditionally devoted to good deeds and humble service to the sick, the disabled and the elderly. Christians should also celebrate Sunday by devoting time and effort to their family and loved ones, which is difficult on the other days of the week” (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 2186). Saint James teaches that “Pure and blameless religiosity before God and the Father is expressed in caring for orphans and widows in their troubles, and in keeping yourself clean from the influences of the world” (Jas 1:27).

The religiosity of a believer in God permeates their entire life and is present at all stages. It is expressed in the sacraments: baptism at the beginning of

the path with Christ; Confirmation that strengthens faith and Christian maturity, bearing the mark of the Holy Spirit and His 7 gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, skill, piety, fear of God; the sin-forgiving sacrament of penance and reconciliation; the Eucharist being Bread, so as not to stop on the way, and Viaticum, strengthening the passage to eternal life and the anointing of the sick. The fulfillment of a matrimonial or priestly vocation also begins with the reception of the sacrament of marriage or the priesthood (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1210-1666; Testa 1998; Znaki, 2018; Krakowiak 2013).

## **2. The oath of the spouses and the tasks arising from the conclusion of the marriage**

The foundation of marriage is described in numerous biblical texts, ranging from the description of the creation of man in the image and likeness of God, pointing to the fundamental and innate vocation to love (Gen 1:27), to the words that reveal the Creator's plan: "So they are no longer two, but one" (Mt 19:6). The creation of people as a mutual gift for oneself is reflected in the constation: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18), and the equality of sexes and mutual closeness are reflected in Adam's statement at the sight of Eve built from his rib, "this is now a bone of my bones and a flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). God's covenant with the people was depicted by the symbolism of "faithful conjugal love" (Hos 1-3; Is 54; 62; Jer 2-3; 31; Ez 16:23), which, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, "Prophets [...] prepared the chosen people for a deeper understanding of the unity and indissolubility of marriage" (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1611). Beauty, romanticism, joy, tenderness, power, power, eroticism, unquenchable heat, the priceless wealth of the bridegroom and bride's love are praised by the Old Testament Song of Songs (Song 1-8). No one has the right to separate a marriage joined together by God (Mt 19:6). The Apostle Paul calls this relationship a great Mystery and applies to Christ and the Church (Eph 5:31-32).

The Code of Canon Law in Canon 1055 informs that "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized." (*Code of Canon Law*, 2021, 1055 § 1). Taking up and carrying out the tasks included in this vocation requires personal maturity and preparation. The faithful are not alone in this great work and can benefit from the help of the Church by receiving support in their preparation for marriage and family life. This support is

implemented as: further, closer and direct (Dyrektorium, 2003). The following are of particular importance in preparation for marriage: the witness of Christian parents and their concern for the religious upbringing of a child, school catechesis, upbringing for family life conducted in a responsible way, media communication of the truth about the marriage path to holiness in line with moral values and norms, and conferences for engaged couples and meetings devoted to responsible parenting at the Catholic Family Life Clinic. A need of great importance is the pre-wedding conversation between the priest and the engaged couples in the parish office. Introduced by the General Decree of the Polish Bishops' Conference and in force from June 1, 2020, additional questions and a more detailed record of answers are to help avoid contracting invalid marriages (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 2019). The files of the Polish Bishops' Conference in the document New regulations on canonical preparation for marriage contain the following recommendation with an accompanying explanation: "The priest who prepares and admits the bride and groom to marry should have moral certainty that it will be celebrated validly and justly. It is required by respect for the sanctity of marriage, which in the case of being contracted by two baptized persons has the sacramental rank" (*Nowe przepisy*, 2020).

The wedding ceremony held in the Church; it takes place in the presence of the priest and witnesses, traditionally referred to as the bridesmaid and best man, who can confirm the marriage, as well as parents and other relatives whose role is to provide prayerful support to future spouses who take the first steps on their journey together in life. This path, through the love of husband and wife, future father and mother, is to lead them to the Kingdom of Love. It prepares for it and introduces the read "Word of God, which is a lamp for human steps and a light on the path", both for individuals and for married couples and families (cf. Ps 119, 105). Unanimous declaration of the engaged, asked on behalf of the Church, that they want to "voluntarily and without any compulsion to enter into a marriage, to remain in this relationship in health and illness, in good and bad for the rest of their lives and with love to accept and educate, in a Catholic manner, the offspring God will give them" leads to the next stage of the liturgy. It is a priestly call to pray the Holy Spirit to sanctify this relationship and give the engaged couples the grace of perseverance, so that their love strengthened by Him may become a sign of the love of Christ and the Church. An expression of this special prayer of the Church community is the invocation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, which takes place before the marriage vow. This is done through the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* – [*Come, Spirit the Creator*] sung while standing. This hymn asks for: grace, strength, light of thought, love, faithfulness, stability, peace, protection from evil, help in resisting temptations courageously, in striving for

God, confessing and glorifying Him. The contracting man and woman become stewards of Christ's grace and "administer the sacrament of marriage to one another by expressing their consent to the Church" (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1623). The provision in the Code of Canon Law emphasizes that mutual consent is an indispensable element in creating a marriage (*Code of Canon Law*, 2021, Can. 1057, § 1). Devotion and acceptance for each other are expressed in the words spoken: "I, N. take you N. as a wife / husband" (Polish Bishops' Conference (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 2009, 31). The word "I" followed by my own name indicates a personal act of will on each side. It also indicates a specific person who makes himself or herself a gift and accepts another person with full awareness of: possessed qualities, advantages and disadvantages, life history, skills and possibilities, and most importantly, readiness to be a wife and husband in a joint marriage. The next word "I vow" means more than: I want, I thirst for, I promise, I pledge. It is close to the "I swear" declaration, all the more important as it has not only psychological, social, but also religious character. It is a commitment expressed before God, a spouse, a priest, witnesses, their own families, the People of God gathered in the Church and the whole society in which the spouses will live, creating a new family. The oath is unconditional and applies to the whole life, without specifying the time, for example, "for a trial", "for a year or two", without being dependent on the assessment of mutual relations and without indicating a deadline, for example, "until the first quarrel".

The first subject of a wedding is love. Clement of Alexandria (1991, c. 150-212), who lived at the turn of the second and third centuries, wrote that love is: a community of life encompassing the intellectual, moral and existential sphere of man. It manifests itself in zeal, friendship, cordiality and rational concern for the needs of others (Wojtczak 1971, 249-251; Clement of Alexandria, 1991. II 41, 2). Belonging to the Church is, according to it, a process consisting in the continuous development of love. The Church is a school of true and full of love agape, and mature love is a value that is acquired under the guidance of the Divine Pedagogue, through intense work on oneself. It consists of three stages: purification, development and improvement (Grzywa-czewski 1996, 16-37).

Love, as modern psychologists and theologians claim (Braun-Gałkowska 1980; Dudziak 2002, Wojaczek 2001), is an attitude and a bond expressed by the desire for good for a spouse and carrying it in concrete actions. It is closeness, empathy and action, care, effort and dedication resulting from love for the person who takes the first place after God in the life of the husband / wife. It is a time spent together, mutually given help, a gift offered, a tender, affectionate touch and loving words full of emotional warmth (See: Chapman 2010, 2004; Dudziak 2013, 58-69). It is deepening the knowledge of each other, no-

ticing the spouse's needs, what makes them happy and sad, what is nice and what is unpleasant for them. It is also a constant strengthening of one's own commitment to relationships with their spouse, cultivating the quality and dignity of life, making it more attractive, accompanying in joy and sorrow, mutual service, care in sickness. Authentic marriage bond means growing understanding, compassion and cooperation for the common good of marriage and family (Szopiński 1980, 93-94; 1980a, 101-109). It is also witnessing with your life to society that true, disinterested, lasting and faithful marital love is possible; that it helps in overcoming the difficulties encountered, overcomes problems, resolves conflicts, prevents evil and heals that such love brings joy, a sense of fulfilment and boundless happiness.

The attribute of true love is marital fidelity, which is another component of the vow. Fidelity based on exclusivity concerns not only the unity of bodies, but also the psychological bond between spouses, words addressed to each other, secrets entrusted to each other, and advice given. It is also the amount of time spent with your spouse, organizing and experiencing moments together. It is also generally understood loyalty. A denial of fidelity is betrayal, both physical and mental, performed with another person and through excessive attachment to professional activities or pleasures placed above the welfare of the husband / wife, marriage / family. When pledging allegiance, one should bear in mind the need for vigilance to allow for the discovery and timely elimination of lurking dangers. The spouses' job is to avoid temptation and to reject anything that might harm the depth of the marital relationship. The fidelity and stability of marital references create a sense of security for the children born in this relationship, foster their development, and through the testimony of life, build society and strengthen other members' faith that such relationships are possible.

Mutual honesty promotes proper marital relations. It is human righteousness, honesty in proceedings, conscientiousness, keeping a given word, truthfulness, compliance with the professed moral principles, respecting the applicable law and social rules, honest admission to the committed acts without blaming others and readiness to compensate for the damage (Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego 2019). Honesty builds mutual trust, is an expression of respect and care for others, protects against the effects of dishonesty, makes people credible, gives them a sense of good fulfillment of their duties and satisfactory moral well-being, is the basis for building a community. An honest man respects someone's property, he does not destroy it, does not steal, does not use another, is not greedy, does not falsify reality, does not pretend to be better, wiser, richer than it is, does not cheat, does not cooperate with evil, does not give justice to wrongdoers, does not spread someone else's secrets, does not slander. He is fair in sharing with others, cares for the good of the other, tells the truth, and when it is painful and difficult, he presents

it in a well-thought-out and prepared manner, delicately and empathetically, empathizing with the recipient's situation. These types of traits and the resulting behaviors are important in marital, family and social life. Integrity-based ties are real and provide a guarantee of proper functioning, the ability to rely on each other, openness, trust and mutual support. Shaping marital honesty is fostered by realizing the fact of being a community and committing to building it throughout their lives. It is the decision to "play for a joint account" and the certainty that it is really one and common, is the creation of a marriage "together" respecting mutual dignity and equality, without unhealthy competition, domination, self-exaltation, the game of appearances and deceptions. It is congruence, authenticity, compatibility between actual thoughts and experiences, and what is spoken, expressed and displayed outside, open and not hidden behaviors, shared plans and actions, mutual counseling. Honesty is loyalty to your spouse, showing each other that "I really care about you, our marriage and family"<sup>3</sup>.

After the vow of honesty, the following words of the future spouses: "I will not leave you until death" are confirmed by the awareness and willingness to preserve the fact that the marriage bond is "perpetual and exclusive" (*Code of Canon Law*, 2021, 1134). The marriage covenant, by God's will, creates a lasting institution also in relation to society (Second Vatican Council 1965, 48). "The marriage knot was thus established by God Himself so that the contracted and completed marriage of baptised persons can never be dissolved" (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1640). This is an irrevocable reality, a covenant guaranteed by God's fidelity. The vows made and their implementation by the spouses are accompanied by God's grace, for which the newlyweds are asking by saying the following words: "So help us, Lord God, Triune Almighty and all the Saints" (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski 2009, 31). The administered sacrament sanctifies and strengthens the spouses to fulfill "the obligations of their state and dignity" (*Code of Canon Law*, 2021, 1134). Sacramental

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<sup>3</sup> Education to values that constitute a kind of moral compass throughout life, also those vowed by spouses and realized in marriage, should begin in early childhood. This is done by providing role models for their parents and grandparents, other educational authorities, national heroes, characters from fairy tales, as well as by presenting various events and making a moral assessment of the behaviour of people taking part in them. Examples of books constituting material for axiological interactions, stimulating empathy, the ability to analyze and evaluate, and the readiness to imitate good practices are: I. Koźmińska, E. Olszewska, *Z dzieckiem w świat wartości* [*With the Child into the World of Values*] (2007); Z. Struzik, *Wychowanie do wartości. Szkoła Podstawowa* [*Education to values. Primary School*] (2020); K. Ostrowska, *W poszukiwaniu wartości* [*In Search of Values*] (2014); *Aksjologiczne aspekty relacji interpersonalnych w edukacji* [*Axiological Aspects of Interpersonal Relationships in Education*], edited by U. Ostrowska (2002); *Encyklopedia aksjologii pedagogicznej* [*Encyclopedia of Pedagogical Axiology*] edited by K. Chałas, A. Maj (2016); K. Ostrowska, *Aksjologiczne podstawy wychowania* [*Axiological Foundations of Education*] (2006), 391-415.



grace enables spouses to carry out the tasks entrusted to them, supports them in expressing and perfecting love, in strengthening the indissoluble bond, in fidelity, mutual help, forgiveness, in welcoming and catholic education to children, in instilling in them Christian teachings and evangelical virtues (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1641; Second Vatican Council 1964, 11). The difficult task of spouses-parents, which is to instil commands, rules, laws and love towards God in their children (Dt 6:1-7); it is also accompanied by support from above. "Christ is the source of this grace" (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1642). The Pastoral Constitution *O Kościele w świecie współczesnym* [*On the Church in the Modern World*] explains it as follows: "For as God once came to meet His people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Saviour of people and the Bridegroom of the Church comes to meet Christian spouses through the sacrament of marriage" (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 48). The Word of God, the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the blessing are essential strengthening in fulfilling the tasks of the vocation to marriage. Unity, indissolubility, fidelity, love and fertility purified and strengthened by the sacrament of marriage become an expression of truly Christian values (John Paul II 1981, 13). The personal community of spouses is deepened by the professed faith and living it every day, and the unity of marriage concluded in the Catholic Church by one woman and one man indicates the equal dignity of both sexes, their complementarity and unique and exclusive love. The Church teaches that genuine love cannot be *temporary* (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1646). Sacramental conjugal love obliges us to live in faithfulness in imitation of God's covenant with the people and Christ with the Church. The task of the spouses is to bear witness to such love and faithfulness, to remain in the covenant made before God, to improve the community they both constitute. Such union and devotion to each other has a deep religious meaning, it is useful for both spouses, for the sense of security and for the proper development of their children (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1646-1647). Authentic conjugal love is to be realized not only in the physical, mental and social dimensions, but also in the spiritual. It is the proclamation of the Good News about God's love for man, a permanent and irrevocable love in which the spouses have their share. In the special task of spouses, which is the service of life, both the physical conception and birth of a human being and his spiritual birth are essential. It is done through education to love and respect for moral standards. Such education does not stop at earthly life, but leads to eternal life with God who is Love. The awareness of marital and family obligations and their fulfilment can contribute to the formation of mature and successful relationships. Catholic married couples characterized by personal religiosity form a family home recognized as a home church (Longosz 2009, 281-312), the first school of Christian life (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993,

1657) and a school of richer humanity Second Vatican Council 1965, 52). The personality traits shaped in families, such as diligence, perseverance, brotherly love, generosity, dedication, the ability to forgive, and religiosity – can contribute to building positive relationships with others, creating the foundations for a successful marriage. Religious people who are in a close relationship with God and worship Him in prayer may be characterized by deep motivation, mobilization and commitment to the implementation of God's commandments, assigned tasks, including the undertaken vocation.

### **3. The relationship of religiosity and the success of marriage**

The professed religion gives man useful life signposts that organize temporal matters, direct them to the House of God the Father and enable them to experience closeness with Him. They are, first of all, the commandments of the Decalogue, the words of the marriage vow, essential for spouses, and moral norms of individual and social significance, especially those protecting marriage and family life. Meeting religious people proves that it is possible to live in truth, love, faithfulness and honesty. It is also a motivation, mobilization and support to a similar life. The Church offers the faithful supernatural means of obtaining the grace that supports marriage. It strengthens spouses through the Word of God, sacraments, community prayers, retreats, indulgences, blessing, and spiritual direction. It serves fiancées and spouses through: counselling at Catholic Family Life Clinics, broadcasts of Catholic media, films, publications, school catechesis, conferences and lectures at Catholic universities.

Research conducted with the use of various questionnaires shows a positive relationship between religiosity and marriage satisfaction, and the quality of mutual bonds. Annette Mahoney and the co-authors of her publication were researchers on this issue in the United States (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeswar and Swank 2001, 595-596). They analysed 94 reports of research on the relationship between religiosity and the marriage bond within a ten-year period. On this basis, they showed that greater religiosity reduces the risk of divorce and facilitates the functioning of marriage. People with greater religious commitment, who consider religion important, and who attend the Church more often, have greater satisfaction with marriage. The measurement of the correlating factors was made by means of direct questions aimed at assessing the level of their own satisfaction with the marriage by the respondent, and indirectly taking into account the answers concerning various aspects of married life. The analysis of the level of religiosity took into account the personal experiences and religious experiences of the respondents as well as the frequency of prayer and Bible reading (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeswar and Swank 2001, 595-596).

In a chapter of the book *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* Annette Mahoney and Nalini Tarakeswar analysed the empirical findings of researchers over a period of 25 years. On this basis, they presented the role of religion in the spouses' everyday life, and then presented theoretical constructions of the influence of religion on solving crises, which they developed by (Mahoney and Tarakeswar 2005, 177-195) The authors stated that mature religiosity expressed through community practice fosters and increases satisfaction in marriage. It also indicates greater commitment and fidelity of spouses with a higher degree of religiosity. The relationships of the human psyche and spirituality as well as individual personal and social references have been confirmed (Mahoney and Tarakeswar 2005, 178-179). In a publication published five years later, A. Mahoney writes that a distorted understanding of religiosity as well as divergences between spouses and religious conflicts are not conducive to the marital bond. On the other hand, genuine and mature religiosity contributes to reducing conflicts through prevention, resolution, forgiveness and reconciliation. Common goals, values, virtues, moral guidelines, awareness of the indissolubility of marriage and other marriage obligations are also of significant importance. They are a valuable material for building relationships between spouses and improving the relationship that is to last until death (Mahoney 2010, 805-807).

The main moral principles governing marriage and family life are: chastity (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 2350, 2390), fidelity (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 2365, 2380-2381), indissolubility (Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 1141, 2385) and responsible parenthood (Paul VI 1968, 12, 16; Catechism of The Catholic Church 1993, 2399). Respecting them is conducive to the successful functioning of marriages and families, which is confirmed by scientific research. A review of publications in the field of psychology of religion on the quality of life of spouses, made by Fr. Dariusz Krok (2012, 63), allows to note the relationship between attending the Church and having strong religious beliefs with a smaller number of betrayals described by the team of authors: Amy M. Burdette, Christopher G. Ellison, Darren E. Sherkat, Kurt A. Gore in the article: *Are there religious variations in marital infidelity?* (2007, 1578-1579). According to Anne L. Geyer and Roy F. Baumeister, a greater recognition of ethical values and moral norms contributes to this (2005, 413). By respecting marital fidelity, one of the most common causes of divorce, sexual intercourse outside marriage, can be eliminated. A study comparing religiosity with the number of divorces, conducted by M. Argyle, shows that the divorce rate among Catholics was 27%, among liberal Protestants 31%, and among non-believing spouses 45% (Argyle 2000, 147). The religious nature of the marriage and the conviction that it constitutes a community concluded for life obliges and motivates to making efforts for

the good and durability of this relationship. Referring to the analyzes carried out by Annette Mahoney, Kenneth I. Pargament, Nalini Tarakeswar, Aaron B. Swank contained in the work *Religion in the Home in the 1980s and 90s: Meta-analyses and conceptual analyses of links between religion, marriage and parenting* (2001), psychologist and theologian Fr. Dariusz Krok states that the participation of both spouses in religious practices “strengthens their bonds and provides social support, as well as creates additional opportunities to build harmony and understanding” (2012, 64). After reading another publication by Annette Mahoney, Kenneth I. Pargament, Tracey Jewell, Aaron B. Swank, Eric Scott, Erin Emery, Marc Rye *Marriage and the spiritual real: The role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning* (1999, 321-338) Krok adds that “religious perceptions of marriage as a reality sanctified by God is a factor that reduces potential misunderstandings and conflicts” (2012, 69). Religion, which is the foundation of common goals and aspirations, favours the prevention of conflicts by bringing into the life of marriage higher values, such as selfless love. It also gives concrete help in overcoming misunderstandings and searching for common solutions. They are, as Nathaniel M. Lambert, avid C. Dollahite, indications contained in the holy books, family prayer and participation in services (Lambert and Dollahite 2006, 441).

On the Pew Research Center website presenting publications, readings, methods, tools and resources of experts analyzing the subject of family, marriage and divorce, David Masci published a study showing that for Americans “shared religious beliefs are an important component of marital success” (Masci 2016). Obviously, there are more people who say so in marriages in which the husband and wife are followers of the same religion (64%), fewer among husbands / wives with a spouse related to another religion (24%), the least in marriages of religious people with no religion (17%). However, “nearly half of all married adults (47%) say that sharing religious beliefs with your spouse is «very important» to a successful marriage” (Masci 2016). Spouses sharing the same religious affiliation found shared religious beliefs to be a more critical factor for a successful marriage than: satisfying sex life (63%), sharing household chores (55%), having children (51%), adequate income (43%), political views (17%). More often than every third person with a spouse professing the same faith claimed that it was a very important element in choosing a marriage (36%) and more often than every fourth person considered this factor important (26%) (Masci 2016).

The transmission of life is inscribed in the conjugal vocation. According to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, responsible parenthood is expressed in conscious, free, competent decision-making about the family’s fertility and the intervals between conceptions. This requires knowledge about the fertility rhythm and respect for biological processes in the body of a woman and

a man, mastering the drives and responsible management of sexual behaviour, prudence and generosity, and taking into account moral principles in decisions about arousing offspring (Paul VI 1968, 8). Religious spouses know these principles, apply them in their own lives and pass them on to others, especially to their own children, as part of educational influence and shaping sexual and reproductive responsibility in their adult life.

Research shows that there are dependencies between the marriage bond and the choice of family planning methods, which are divided into morally acceptable and unacceptable. The book by Andrzej Pryba, *planning the family and the marriage bond*, confirms the existence of a positive relationship between the use of morally approved natural family planning and the marriage bond examined in the group of respondents (Pryba 2002, 96, 109-111). The spouses who use fertility recognition methods differ from couples who use contraception in many factors that are important for their mutual relationship. People who use natural family planning more than contraceptives: they feel that their spouse loves them and shows it to them (51.8% – 35.9%); declare satisfaction of the need for love (64.9% – 52.2%), closeness (74.4% – 54.3%), tenderness (61.3% – 45.7%), trust (76.8% – 53.3%), bonds (68.5% – 58.7%), contact (47.6% – 43.5%), acceptance (47% – 37%), understanding (35.7% – 30.4%) Satisfying sexual needs is declared to a similar extent (53.6% – 53.3%). (Pryba 2002, 109-111). Due to the fact that respecting moral norms is a consequential parameter of religiosity, it can be argued that the implementation of the postulated principles in the sexual and procreative spheres is conducive to building a bond between spouses.

This was also confirmed by the results of the research published in the doctoral dissertation of Fr. Andrzej Kowalczyk, who pointed to significant correlations of the marriage bond, among others, with such factors as: compliance of professed moral principles (Rho Spearman coefficient = 0.500;  $p < 0.001$ ) and joint application of the principles of natural family planning with the spouse (Rho = 0.697;  $p < 0.001$ ) (Kowalczyk 2020, 287). The performed statistical analysis of the research carried out among spouses in Switzerland and Poland showed “the existence of a statistically significant positive correlation between the religiosity of the spouses and the bond formed in their sacramental relationship (Pearson’s  $R = 0.230$ ;  $p = 0.001$  and Spearman’s  $Rho = 0.184$ ;  $p = 0.008$ )” (Kowalczyk 2020, 324). The joint prayer of the spouses turned out to be a factor particularly related to the positive results in the Scale of Marriage Bond (SWM). There were no low scores in SWM in those who prayed together. Correlations confirming the relationship between joint prayer and a positive assessment of the relationship between the spouses turned out to be statistically significant and amounted to  $R = 0.366$ ;  $p = 0.001$  and  $Rho = 0.288$ ;  $p = 0.001$  (Kowalczyk 2020, 330). The obtained research results, confirmed by

statistical analyzes, prove that the daily prayer of the spouses is a factor that significantly supports the formation of the marriage bond. This conclusion is important both for married couples and people who provide professional support in education for family life and preparation for marriage: teachers, educators, catechists, priests and family life counsellors.

#### **4. Conclusion and pastoral proposals**

Christian religiosity is about keeping the commandments. This is confirmed by the words of Jesus written by Saint John: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). The greatest of these, which summarizes the entire law, is the commandment of love. This follows from the Gospel account of the dialogue in which the scholar asked Jesus:

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He replied to him: You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is similar to it: You will love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:36-40).

The Christian commitment to love and to keep the commandments was explained in the Letter to the Romans by the Apostle of the Nations:

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except continuing debt to love one another. For He who loves his fellowship has fulfilled the Law. For the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandments there may be, are summed up in this one rule: Love your neighbour as yourself! Love does not harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the Law" (Rom 13:8-10).

The love of the spouses, vowed during the liturgy of the marriage sacrament, means more than the love of the neighbour. More than any other kind of love, it involves the body of a woman and a man, it is associated with the transmission of life to offspring and with taking the educational responsibility towards them, which also flows from love and teaches love by its own example. Closeness to God who is Love (1 Jn 4:8b) strengthens the human capacity for love and the readiness to express it. This justifies the empirically proven relationship between marriage success, expression of love, religiosity and the piety of spouses.

Marriage is a place of mutual giving (Wojaczek 2001) and being together in joy and effort. It is compassion, understanding and cooperation (Szopiński 1980a, 102-104) as well as mutual support in the problems experienced by The unity of marriage, body and spirit, needs constant care, constant efforts, commitment and care. Expressing love, transmitting life, bringing up children and striving for holiness are tasks that require maturity, responsibility, constant



vigilance and permanent development. An accurate statement by the Polish poet Jerzy Liebert: “Having made a choice for centuries, I must choose at every moment” (1930, 50), it makes us aware of the need to constantly work on myself and cultivate a bond: with God, my spouse and other people.

A successful marriage will be fostered by religious formation, in which it is worth encouraging the reading of Church documents devoted to the family. It is also worth reflecting on the teaching left by the author of the book *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* [Love and Responsibility], (Wojtyła 1980) the pope of the family and responsible parenthood. An example of reflection on such teaching is the analysis of papal speeches delivered during the speeches to Poland (1979-2002). Due to the fact that not all of them are translated from Polish, the article “Pastoral Support for Married Couples and Families during the Pilgrimages of John Paul II to Poland” may be useful for people from the English language area (Dudziak 2022).

Reading guides written by committed Christians can help you build a successful marriage. Particularly popular authors include: Marek Dziewiecki, Jacek Pulikowski, Piotr Pawlukiewicz, Włodzimierz Fijałkowski, Wanda Półtawska, Mariola i Piotr Wołochowiczowie, Josh McDowell, Gary Chapman, Tim and Beverly LaHaye, Bruno Ferrero. In addition to the publications of the above authors, books such as: *Przygotowanie do małżeństwa* [Preparation for Marriage] (Półtawska 2002), *Wychowanie do miłości* [Education for Love] (Dudziak 2002), *Sacred Marriage* (Thomas 2015), *Misterium ludzkiego życia od poczęcia do umierania* [Mystery of Human Life from Conception to Dying] (Dudziak 2021), *Małżeńskie drogowskazy* [Marital Signposts] (Grzybowski 2002), *Nowe rodziny* [New Families] (1982 edited by Klimaszewski). Due to the fact that in the marriage vocation, in addition to love and striving for holiness, parenthood is included, it is worth getting acquainted with the work: *Protection of life – moral norms and their implementation* (Dudziak, Guzdek and Smykowski 2021).

In shaping the marriage bond, personal and conjugal spiritual formation and meetings with other religious spouses in the movements of the renewal of the Church are useful. In addition to prayer, joint participation in the Eucharist, retreats, pilgrimages, reflections on the Holy Scriptures and other readings made by the spouses, there are also: mutual sharing of life experience, testimony of faith, conversation in pairs and larger marriage groups, supporting in specific needs and problems, mutual motivation for spiritual development and growth in love.

The love of God and neighbor, as well as the responsible fulfillment of the vocation taken, are the main tasks on the way of salvation. Awareness of this should be conducive to the use of all the proposals that may support the increase in religiousness of the spouses and building their relationships. It will be

a material of the civilization of love, useful both for them and their children, as well as for their close and distant families, society, the Church and the world.

## Conclusions

In summing up the reflection on spouses' religiousness and shaping a successful marriage, you may ask: Why is it worth being religious for spouses? A clear answer, taking into account numerous aspects of the life of Christian spouses and parents, is facilitated by the following list.

It is worth, for the spouses, being religious, because genuine and mature human religiosity:

- is in accordance with the God's Will,
- brings people closer to God-Love,
- helps them to fulfil God's Commandments,
- builds love relationships between people,
- is a testimony to others,
- supports spouses in raising their children,
- motivates to live according to moral standards,
- helps to lift up from sin,
- strengthens in the fight against temptations,
- gives strength to work on oneself, to overcome weaknesses and to shape character traits useful for a decent life and coexistence with other people,
- helps to meet the requirements of love in everyday life,
- it fosters following the path of salvation towards eternal life in the Father's House.

Religiousness, piety and morality are important factors in the relationship with God and people. Respecting and implementing the principles of proper conduct resulting from the above mentioned protects marriage and family against trivialization, humiliation, harm, corruption and decay. Weakening religious practices (their irregularity, superficiality or abandonment), as well as weakening the consequential parameter of religiosity visible in the abandonment of moral norms (which is reflected, for example, by: sexual promiscuity, cohabitant relationships, divorce, acting against conception and the birth of an already conceived child), they should mobilize for more zealous pastoral, catechetical, preventive and educational work. The content of this article may be useful in this work. They can also help in further improvement as: pupil, student, employee, fiance, spouse, parent.

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