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"Beziehung leben zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit", W. Krieger, B. Sieberer, Linz 2010 : [recenzja]

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Beziehung leben zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit

Eds. W. Krieger, B. Sieberer

Edition Kirchen — Zeit — Geschichte. Linz 2010, 198 pp.

The human is a family being, and his/her vocation is to live within the family, the way to which is through marriage. However, as we read in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church *Gaudium et spes*: “Marriage [...] is not instituted solely for procreation; rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of the children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that it grow and ripen” (GS, n. 50). For it is a value, which decides about the inner construction of marriage and allows it to become an “intimate partnership of married life and love” (GS, n. 48).

The love of a husband and a wife, the source of proper relations which enrich their mutual bond, gives then a beginning to a family life. It makes two people who are joined in an unbreakable bond of matrimony seek their complement in each other and a child. Owing to it, a marital community exists. For it, the “us” is more important than “me” or “you.” In the light of this community, a mutual wellbeing and giving oneself as a gift to the spouse also is of a particular value. This gift is of an utmost value when it becomes a matter of mature will, and not only a matter of emotions; it reveals itself as a desire for mutual affiliation and service to a chosen person. For he chooses her for herself, to give her everything, not only for sexual values or a play on emotions. The personal matrimonial love can be solid only when it is not subordinate to changeable sensuality or emotionality, even though it creates a possibility of revealing a whole depth of their wealth, which is available between two human beings who desire their mutual good.

We might look with anxiety at the increase, especially in Western Europe, of unfavourable social-cultural processes, the alarming consequence of which is the matrimonial love degradation that destroys social relations both within marriage and family, and what is more, leads to the plague of divorces and stabilizing of a mentality in opposition to the conception of new life.

These issues are also addressed by the reviewed monograph (*Beziehung leben zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit*), fruit of another German-speaking country pastoral scholarly conference (Österreichische Pastoraltagung), which under the same title, took place in the formation house of St. Virgil in Salzburg, from 7th to 9th January 2010. Apart from many famous pastors, teachers and psychologists from Austria and Germany, the conference gathered many participants from other European countries (e.g. Belgium and Poland), who from different viewpoints dealt with the organizer-proposed issues. According to a great many of speakers, the significance of the Church's pastoral service to marriage and family, should nowadays result not only from the subject matter connected reasons, but also from many existential circumstances, carrying threats to rightly shaping of matrimonial and family relations. These threats lie in a specific shape of culture and in this way created tradition cutting family life off its proper spiritual and moral sources. Nowadays, we witness some ongoing, increasingly popular discussions surrounding these matters. All over Europe, especially Western Europe, constantly developing civilization-shaping processes, acting in the direction of reducing love and spiritual life of a family to the level of hedonistic utilitarianism, are observed. The brightest manifestation of this trend are attempts at granting the same rights to cohabitation or homosexual relationships as to marriage and family. All of this leads to putting marital love in danger and, as a consequence, a breakup of marriage bonds, which results in divorces.

In the analysed publication, the development of the mentioned phenomenon in contemporary Austria, is a subject of close study and scrutiny. The issue is taken into consideration mainly from the viewpoint of pastoral-theological contemplation, both in practical and theoretical terms.

Current circumstances for family life in Austria are presented in the first group of articles. Their authors show that in a consumption-oriented societies, among which Austria can be counted, the value of unbreakable marriage is nowadays, more and more, ignored (Johannes Ulz: "Kirchliche Vorstellungen von Ehe und Familie"). Legal acknowledgment of new "relationships forms" and shared life, which *in fact* have nothing in common with a traditional family image, is being demanded with growing peskiness. Efforts are also being made in order to legalize homosexual

relationships. According to some speakers, decisive role in such transformations has, first and foremost, the liberal politics of the Austrian government and increasing privatization of life, which destroys the real marriage-family bond (cf. Martina Beham-Rabaner: "Paar- und Familienbeziehungen heute: Balanceakt zwischen Anforderungen und Überforderungen"; Johannes Ulz: "Kirchliche Vorstellungen...").

Analyses of this situation, presented in the second part of the publication, are equally interesting. The authors of these articles point out, among others, that transformations, taking place in the Austrian society on the level of marriage and family, are very troubling, since they not only, in a different manner, strike the truth about dignity of the human being, but also distort the very idea of a family as a place of common life and intimate relations between a man and a wife (cf. Alfons Vansteenwegen: "Liebe, ein Tätigkeitswort..."). We should also look into some authors' contemplations, who turn our attention not only to many increasing dangers for the marital-family life, but also focus on how to help the sacramental relationships which have to resist destructive influence, devastating the traditional model of marriage and promoting promiscuity in intimate marital relations (cf. Alfons Vansteenwegen: "Liebe, ein Tätigkeitswort..."; Franz Harant: "Leitlinien zum Umgang mit Menschen in Beziehungen «außer der Norm»").

Finally, beside the analysis of the current Austrian family situation and contemplation of the actions supporting them in view of psychoanalysis and theology (cf. Erich Lehner: "Beziehungen gestalten und vertiefen. Perspektiven aus der Geschlechterforschung. Psychoanalyse und Theologie"), the reviewed publication devotes, in its third part, more attention to issues which focus on elaborating practical solutions that aim at supporting Austrian married couples in building their authentic matrimonial and family community, based on the unbreakable sacrament (cf. Susanne Savel-Damm: "Wenn Beziehungsideale und Lebenswirklichkeit in Konflikt geraten... Erfahrungen aus der Ehe- und Familienberatung"; Thomas Knieps, Port Le Roi: "Beziehung und Spiritualität in Ehe und Familie") serving each marriage and family with specialist guidance. Married couples, which are under a threat of breakup of their mutual bonds and these which want to change or correct something in their lives, are also taken into consideration (cf. Susanne Heine: "Brüche — Scheitern — Neuanfang. Biblische Inspirationen"). Authors also point out that the communities and ecclesiastical organizations that exist in every Austrian diocese are today an important preventive support for families, as well as, divorced people or rejoined relationships (Walter Schmolly: "Beziehungs-Pastoral: Prioritäten und aktuelle Herausforderungen"; Klaus Küng: "Beziehung leben zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit: Wir sind auf dem Weg").

It is worth pointing out that the reviewed publication can have crucial significance for deepening the pastoral-theological contemplation on very important subject matter, connected with the family ministry. Moreover, language clarity and communicativeness of the book are also praiseworthy.

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