



THE  
GOSPEL  
OF THE  
FAMILY

GOING BEYOND CARDINAL KASPER'S  
PROPOSAL IN THE DEBATE ON  
MARRIAGE, CIVIL RE-MARRIAGE,  
AND COMMUNION IN THE CHURCH

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*Juan José Pérez-Soba and Stephan Kampowski*  
*Foreword by George Cardinal Pell*



IGNATIUS

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and Communion in the Church

*Foreword by*  
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## FOREWORD

This book is important for many reasons. A courteous, informed, and rigorous discussion, indeed debate, is needed especially for the coming months to defend the Christian and Catholic tradition of monogamous, indissoluble marriage—focusing on the central elements of the challenges facing marriage and the family, rather than being distracted into a counterproductive and futile search for short-term consolations.

The health of an organization can be gauged by observing the amount of time and energy devoted to the discussion of various topics. Healthy communities do not spend most of their energies on peripheral issues, and unfortunately the number of divorced and remarried Catholics who feel they should be allowed to receive Holy Communion is very small indeed.

The pressures for this change are centered mainly in some European churches, where churchgoing is low and an increasing number of divorcees are choosing not to remarry. The issue is seen by both friends and foes of the Catholic tradition as a symbol—a prize in the clash between what remains of Christendom in Europe and an aggressive neo-paganism. Every opponent of Christianity wants the Church to capitulate on this issue.

Both sides in this discussion appeal to Christian criteria, and everyone is dismayed by the amount of suffering

caused to spouses and children by marriage breakups. What help can and should the Catholic Church offer?

Some see the primary task of the Church as providing lifeboats for those who have been shipwrecked by divorce. And lifeboats should be available for all, especially for those tragic innocent parties. But which way should the lifeboats be headed? Toward the rocks or the marshes, or to a safe port, which can only be reached with difficulty? Others see an even more important task for the Church in providing leadership and good maps to diminish the number of shipwrecks. Both tasks are necessary, but how are they best achieved?

The Christian understanding of mercy is central when we are talking about marriage and sexuality, forgiveness and Holy Communion, so not surprisingly, in this excellent volume the essential links between mercy and fidelity, between truth and grace in our Gospel teaching, are spelled out clearly and convincingly.

Mercy is different from most forms of tolerance, which is one of the more praiseworthy aspects of our pluralist societies. Some forms of tolerance define sin out of existence, but adult freedoms and inevitable differences need not be founded on a thoroughgoing relativism.

The indissolubility of marriage is one of the rich truths of divine revelation. It is no coincidence that monogamy and monotheism are found together in Judeo-Christianity. Lifelong marriage is not simply a burden but a jewel, a life-giving institution. When societies recognize this beauty and goodness, they regularly protect it with effective disciplinary measures. They realize that doctrine and pastoral practice cannot be contradictory, and that one cannot maintain the indissolubility of marriage by allowing the

“remarried” to receive Holy Communion. Recognizing their inability to participate fully in the Eucharist is undoubtedly a sacrifice for believers, an imperfect but real form of sacrificial love.

Christianity and especially Catholicism constitute one historical reality, where the apostolic tradition of faith and morals, prayer and worship, is maintained. The doctrines of Christ are our cornerstone.

Interestingly, Jesus’ hard teaching that “what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mt 19:6) follows not long after his insistence to Peter on the necessity of forgiveness (see Mt 18:21–35).

It is true that Jesus did not condemn the adulterous woman who was threatened with death by stoning, but he did not tell her to keep up her good work, to continue unchanged in her ways. He told her to sin no more (see Jn 8:1–11).

One insurmountable barrier for those advocating a new doctrinal and pastoral discipline for the reception of Holy Communion is the almost complete unanimity of two thousand years of Catholic history on this point. It is true that the Orthodox have a long-standing but different tradition, forced on them originally by their Byzantine emperors, but this has never been the Catholic practice.

One might claim that the penitential disciplines in the early centuries before the Council of Nicaea were too fierce as they argued whether those guilty of murder, adultery, or apostasy could be reconciled by the Church to their local communities only once—or not at all. They always acknowledged that God could forgive, even when the Church’s ability to readmit sinners to the community was limited.

Such severity was the norm at a time when the Church was expanding in numbers, despite persecution. It can no more be ignored than the teachings of the Council of Trent or those of Saint John Paul II or Pope Benedict XVI on marriage can be ignored. Were the decisions that followed Henry VIII's divorce totally unnecessary?

This work contains some penetrating analyses of the cultural causes of family disintegration in today's pansexual culture. The point is well made that a correct diagnosis is more important than ever in an epidemic!

One claim is that divorce is the most important social revolution in modern times, and, without doubt, the crisis of marriage mirrors the crisis of faith and religious practice. Which is the chicken, and which is the egg?

As well as the long-standing intuition that a weakened faith means fewer children, I think it highly likely that the decision to have no children, or very few, itself results often in a serious weakening of faith. The influences run in both directions.

We are presently in a somewhat new situation, unparalleled since the days of the Second Vatican Council, where an increasing range of moral options are being canvassed publically, even by clerics. This brings benefits as an increased number of the formerly disinterested begin to discuss Christian claims, but pain and wounding are also inevitable.

Believers in the tradition, such as the authors of this volume, should be commended when they state their case calmly and charitably. We still have the best tunes.

We also need to work now to avoid a repetition of the aftermath of *Humanae vitae* in 1968. We should speak clearly, because the sooner the wounded, the lukewarm,

and the outsiders realize that substantial doctrinal and pastoral changes are impossible, the more the hostile disappointment (which must follow the reassertion of doctrine) will be anticipated and dissipated.

George Cardinal Pell  
Archbishop Emeritus of Melbourne and Sydney  
Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy  
May 20, 2014



## ABBREVIATIONS

- DCE* Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, December 25, 2005
- EG* Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, November 24, 2013
- FC* John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, November 22, 1981
- GS* Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, December 7, 1965
- HV* Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae vitae*, July 25, 1968
- LF* Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei*, June 29, 2013
- ST* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*
- VS* John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, August 6, 1993



## INTRODUCTION

As the Church has proclaimed at Vatican II, “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.”<sup>1</sup> This is how the Church understands the divine mission that she must accomplish in the world. In particular, the task of the New Evangelization has made it clear to the ecclesial community, with renewed intensity, that the Christian family is an irreplaceable Christian witness by virtue of the profound reality that it contains.

Fifty years after the Council we can now describe as prophetic the interest that that assembly decided to take in the pastoral care of the family. In the meantime, it has become increasingly evident that this is not about just one of many human issues; rather, it is an essential part of divine revelation, precisely because the family hinges on love. A profound understanding of this is not a question of ideas, but rather it develops in the deeper relevance of the life of every family at the heart of a specific worldly setting.

One splendid light of this revelation is the Song of Solomon (Song of Songs), when the bride exclaims, in what is

<sup>1</sup>Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, December 7, 1965, no. 1 (hereafter cited as *GS*).

the greatest expression of monogamous, faithful marriage: “My beloved is mine and I am his” (Song 2:16). This is the response to a *vocation to love* that springs from the perception of the Bridegroom’s call (cf. Song 2:8), as Benedict XVI summarizes: “It is part of love’s growth towards higher levels and inward purification that it now seeks to become definitive, and it does so in a twofold sense: both in the sense of exclusivity (this particular person alone) and in the sense of being ‘for ever’.”<sup>2</sup>

We can only welcome with great interest this initiative of a Synod on the family convoked by Pope Francis on the theme: “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization”. At the same time, we are completely in agreement with the way in which Walter Cardinal Kasper entitled his address to the Consistory of Cardinals on February 20, 2014: “The Gospel of the Family”.<sup>3</sup> This gospel exists and is a light for the Church and for mankind.

Given Pope Francis’ vigilance in maintaining the hierarchy of truths while transmitting the Gospel message,<sup>4</sup> we can confidently say that, presently, we have a clear awareness of the fact that the truth of the family, as the first and inescapable expression of the vocation of love, is part of its nucleus. The personal *integrity* that the family requires is the testimony that makes this love credible in the world.

<sup>2</sup>Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, December 25, 2005, no. 6 (hereafter cited as *DCE*).

<sup>3</sup>Subsequently, the address was published in booklet form with the same title: Walter Cardinal Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, trans. William Madges (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2014). Hereafter, the booklet will be cited as *Gospel of the Family*.

<sup>4</sup>See Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, November 24, 2013, no. 36 (hereafter cited as *EG*): “All revealed truths derive from the same divine source and are to be believed with the same faith, yet some of them are more important for giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel.”

This acknowledgment is the result of a profound renewal of our perception of the value of the revelation of spousal love in the Bible. This is what Benedict XVI highlights in *Deus caritas est*,<sup>5</sup> a concept repeated by Pope Francis in *Lumen fidei*, which presents spousal love in profound unity with the faith as something valuable for the common good of society.<sup>6</sup> Therefore we must say that we are addressing here one of the cardinal points of the faith. The specific characteristics of this conjugal love, including indissolubility, therefore, must be seen in light of the principal truths of Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of marriage as a reality inscribed in the truth of creation, taken up by God to manifest his historical covenant with man, and definitively consecrated as a sacrament in the New Covenant of Christ, makes it uniquely valuable for understanding the human being as the “image” and “likeness” of God (see Gen 1:26) as well as the sacramental value of his love and his corporeality. This is what Saint John Paul II, the “pope of the family”,<sup>8</sup> called an “adequate anthropology”—one capable of demonstrating its value as a fundamental dimension for the New Evangelization.<sup>9</sup> In our book we will follow in

<sup>5</sup>See *DCE* 5–11.

<sup>6</sup>See Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei*, June 29, 2013, no. 52 (hereafter cited as *LF*).

<sup>7</sup>With this statement we address the following issue raised by Cardinal Kasper: “One must understand the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage from [i.e., in terms of] the internal connection of the mysteries of faith” (*Gospel of the Family*, p. 44). Our argumentation will follow this line precisely.

<sup>8</sup>“Holy Mass and Rite of Canonization of Blesseds John XXIII and John Paul II: Homily of Pope Francis”, April 27, 2014.

<sup>9</sup>The expression comes from John Paul II, Catechesis 13.2 (January 2, 1980), in his *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), p. 178; see also Catechesis 23.3 (April 2, 1980), in *ibid.*, p. 220.

particular the teaching of the new saint, along the lines indicated by Pope Francis.

From this teaching we can deduce the intrinsic interrelatedness of creation, sin, and redemption that structures the Church's mission and, consequently, her pastoral ministry. This is how Cardinal Kasper intended to articulate his presentation of the theme, which can be summed up in the following psalm verse: "Mercy and faithfulness will meet" (Ps 85:10).

"Mercy and faithfulness" (or in some English translations, "truth") is in God an indissoluble binomial, so much so that it can be considered as the true revelation of him. The following verses of the psalm show us that the Lord is the one who makes it possible for these two things to meet on our earth, as seeds of salvation. This will be the principal light that will guide the reflections in this book.

Attempting to respond to the theme of the Synod in terms of the place where "mercy and truth meet" means, therefore, finding the light of a *truth of love* that we must examine more closely. We do this for the purpose of contributing to the open debate occasioned by the convocation of the Synod—a debate that we had better not try to cut short because of prejudices of any kind.

Therefore, let us take as our point of reference for this issue the booklet by Walter Cardinal Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family*, which contains important reflections, but, in our opinion, also contains significant inaccuracies. The goal of our contribution is to be able to develop the positive points, help clarify the ambiguous ones, and express the reasons why some statements seem to us seriously erroneous. But, above all, we intend to go beyond Cardinal Kasper's contribution to show in a simple, accessible way

the extent to which it did not succeed in putting the gospel of the family at the center of its reflections, because it was focused on one point, which is important, certainly, but excessively narrow if made into an absolute.

The climate of dialogue that inspires our book therefore has something to do with the need to examine the questions in greater depth in a balanced way, starting with the dogmatic questions that cannot be taken for granted, which however, in recent years, have been the object of numerous studies. Consequently, although we will seek to clarify the terms of the question about reception of Holy Communion for the divorced and remarried, we will not concentrate exclusively on this aspect.<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, we were surprised to find in the German Cardinal's booklet a number of elements that are truly foreign to a healthy ecclesial debate—such as an expression that plainly sounds like a censure for those who adopt a certain position. It is incoherent with a text that is meant to open up a dialogue to use a type of argumentation that is alarming and excluding.<sup>11</sup> We hope that the Cardinal himself will qualify the import of his words, so that

<sup>10</sup>It is surprising that, even though Cardinal Kasper says that this is not the principal theme, 30 percent of his booklet deals directly with this topic. Practically no other pastoral directives appear, since he hardly mentions any of them in passing. Why neglect them when, in focusing on these questions, he ought to refer to a greater number of topics? Cf. *Gospel of the Family*, pp. 49–50: “Questions of marriage and family, under which the question of the divorced and remarried is indeed only one question—even though a pressing question—belong in the larger context of the question of how people can find happiness and fulfillment in their lives.” Why does he not take up again the questions that appear in the introduction (pp. 1–5), or go further in his discussion about the domestic church (i.e., the family)? (pp. 20–25).

<sup>11</sup>The reader can judge for himself; see *Gospel of the Family*, p. 47: “In this matter, there are great expectations in the Church. Beyond a doubt, we cannot fulfill all expectations. But it would cause a terrible disappointment if we would only repeat the answers that supposedly have always been given. As

everyone can express himself with complete freedom in the next Synod.

All this compels us to make sure that in all these questions we bring to light especially those things which do not appear in Cardinal Kasper's book but which can be the source of a more open and fruitful dialogue with a view to the Synod, without reducing our discussion to a single question.

We will begin therefore by addressing the cultural challenge as the fundamental key to understanding the role of the family in the dialogue between the Church and the world; this is a pivotal point if we are to avoid the many misunderstandings of the gospel of the family. Next, we will identify the centrality of the family in the Christian proclamation, adopting the perspective of a God who reveals himself as mercy, an approach that we will complete in the third chapter with a brief review of some patristic texts that teach the way in which the primitive Church experienced the question. Then we will go on to analyze the matter from the more contemporary moral perspective, considering therefore the construction of the moral subject by means of his actions, and we will conclude by outlining what could be "adequate pastoral care", given the challenges of our time.<sup>12</sup>

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witnesses of hope, we [must] not allow ourselves to be led by a hermeneutic of fear. Some courage and above all biblical candor (*parthesia*) are necessary. If we don't want that, then we should not hold a synod on this topic, because then the situation would be worse afterwards than before."

<sup>12</sup>We shared the work throughout, and in its entirety the book should be considered as the work of both authors. In any case, the composition of the first and fourth chapters was entrusted to Prof. Stephan Kampowski, while the second, third, and fifth chapters were composed by Prof. Juan José Pérez-Soba.

We hope that the simple statement of the themes and the sequence thereof may bring the reader to appreciate this perspective of a logic of love, which ought to imbue all the actions of the Church.



## Announcing the Gospel of the Family in a Sex-Saturated Culture

### 1.1. The Beauty of the Gospel of the Family: Love and Human Sexuality

“We may not limit the discussion [of the gospel of the family] to the situation of the divorced and remarried or to many other difficult pastoral situations that have not been mentioned in this context. We must begin positively, discovering and proclaiming again the gospel of the family in its total beauty. Truth persuades by means of its beauty.”<sup>1</sup> These indeed profound words by Walter Cardinal Kasper are in complete consonance with Pope Francis’ desire—expressed before the Extraordinary Consistory that was to be addressed by the Cardinal—to avoid “falling into ‘casuistry’”, but rather to “acknowledge how beautiful, true and good it is to start a family, to be a family today; and how indispensable the family is for the life of the world and for the future of humanity”.<sup>2</sup> In this present chapter, we will seek to follow this approach, examining where it is that the compelling and convincing beauty of the gospel of the family can be found. We will also examine the

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel of the Family*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>2</sup> “Extraordinary Consistory: Address of Pope Francis”, February 20, 2014.

obstacles that a proclamation of this good news encounters in today's cultural context and consider possible ways of confronting and overcoming them.

Where is, then, the beauty of the Christian vision of the family? What is *good* and what is *new* about the good news that Christ and his Church have proclaimed about marriage and the family? When the Gospel "hit" the ancient Greco-Roman world, it brought with it a true novelty, profoundly challenging that culture in ways that are analogous to our own contemporary situation.<sup>3</sup> To see the novelty of the Gospel, let us have a look at the advice the ancient Roman writer Lucretius gave to young men in love:

Though she thou lovest now be far away,  
 Yet idol-images of her are near  
 And the sweet name is floating in thy ear.  
 But it behooves to flee those images;  
 And scare afar whatever feeds thy love;  
 And turn elsewhere thy mind; and vent the sperm,  
 Within thee gathered, into sundry bodies,  
 Nor, with thy thoughts still busied with one love,  
 Keep it for one delight, and so store up  
 Care for thyself and pain inevitable.

.....  
 For the delights of Venus, verily,  
 Are more unmixed for mortals sane-of-soul  
 Than for those sick-at-heart with love-pining.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *Gospel of the Family*, pp. 2–3: "The current situation of the Church is not unique. Even the church of the first centuries was confronted with concepts and models of marriage and family that were different from that which Jesus preached, which was quite new, both for Jews as well as for the Greeks and Romans."

<sup>4</sup>Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, Book IV.

What does Lucretius say here on the nature of human love? In beautiful, truly poetic words, he quite prosaically says that a man should sleep with many different women and not get attached to one, lest he suffer from his affection for her. Besides, he suggests that the pleasure of intercourse is purer when one is not distracted by being in love. It thus seems that for him, sexual relations have little or nothing to do with love.

A very similar separation of sexuality from love can be found at the root of the so-called sexual revolution, a term that has usually come to be associated with the events of the 1960s, but which has one of its ideological roots in the highly influential book *The Sexual Revolution* written by the Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (first published in German in 1936 under the title *Sexualität im Kulturkampf: Zur sozialistischen Umstrukturierung des Menschen* [*Sexuality in the Culture War: Toward the Socialistic Restructuring of Man*]).<sup>5</sup> According to Reich, “medical experience with sexuality teaches us that sexual repression causes disease, perversions, or lasciviousness.”<sup>6</sup> For him, “abstinence is dangerous and absolutely deleterious to health”,<sup>7</sup> while sexual practice serves as therapy; sexual pleasure leads to health and happiness: “Sexual energy is the biological energy which, in the psyche, determines the character of human feeling and thinking.”<sup>8</sup> Then he proceeds, “The

<sup>5</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution*, trans. Therese Pol (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974). First published in English in 1945 by the Orgone Institute Press in New York. The original German edition was first published as *Sexualität im Kulturkampf: Zur sozialistischen Umstrukturierung des Menschen* (Kopenhagen: Sexpol-Verlag, 1936).

<sup>6</sup> Reich, *Sexual Revolution*, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii.

core of happiness in life is sexual happiness.”<sup>9</sup> As modern as this approach purports to be, it cannot be denied that it strongly resembles Lucretius’ rather ancient view: what matters for sexuality is not love but the sexual pleasure or the “sexual energy”.

Both for Lucretius in ancient Rome and for Reich in the modern West, the other is only of secondary importance when it comes to sexual relations. In both cases sexual activity is completely severed from love. For Reich in particular, this is so because human persons must necessarily be sexually active. If they abstain, they become sick. The need to have sex would then be similar to the need to have food. One can go without it only for so long. If this were so, then sexual activity would be removed from the realm of the person’s freedom and responsibility. If we must of necessity engage in sexual encounters—whether it is a necessity of impulse or a requirement of mental or physical health—a sexual act could hardly be called an encounter of love. If in the field of human sexuality self-control and abstinence were not possible, sexual acts could scarcely make the claim to be expressions of love, since love by nature is something that is entrusted to our freedom.

What is proper to love is the logic of the gift: it has to be freely given and freely received. What would a wife think of her husband who wakes her up at three o’clock in the morning and asks her for relations because he suddenly feels a strong sexual urge? How could such a sexual act be an act of love? How would a sexual encounter then be different from the much more mundane and trivial ways in which all human beings have to relieve themselves several

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., xxvi.

times each day? Exclusivity and permanence in a relation between a man and a woman would be impossible. If one of the partners were to go on a business trip, neither could expect of the other to abstain from sexual relations during the time of absence, any more than they could expect each other to abstain from eating and drinking all those days. If, as Reich has it, persons really had to satisfy every urge that befalls them so as not to develop serious mental conditions, then exclusive and lasting relationships would indeed be serious health hazards, as he himself concluded.

We may wonder, however, whether this perspective is beautiful. It would seem that it is part of erotic love's very nature to desire exclusivity and durability. Love seems to want to say, "You are my one and only: I am all yours and you are all mine. I give you all of myself—exclusively and for the rest of my life." It is here that the Gospel brought in a true novelty in the ancient world, and it does so again today; the field of human sexuality, that is, the realm that touches on our sexual differentiation, can be redeemed and raised up—it no longer needs to be the battlefield of mutual exploitation, domination, and seduction. Jesus offers us a new power: sexuality can have something to do with love. Before the author of Ephesians exhorts the wives to be "subject to" their "husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22), he tells husbands and wives to be "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21) and then continues to call on the husbands to love their wives "as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).

This, now, is truly a beautiful love and is only possible as such if the "forever" is possible. The indissolubility of marriage together with sexual exclusivity is not an additional