

From the Editor

The phenomenon of sexual minorities, the existence of which no one denies, is subjected to high intensity research, multifaceted analysis, systematization and evaluation. It seems that for a long time relatively less attention was paid to transsexuals. The popular opinions on the phenomenon itself, as well as on those affected by it are clearly simplistic, not to say primitive. It is not surprising that the phenomenon of transsexualism needs an in-depth look, reaching out to its roots so as to see the problem of gender identity, disorder of which results in incompatibility of self-perception with biologically and sexually equipped person.

Trying to summarize the current year from the perspective of interest in transsexualism, you can say that this is an exceptional year. It is enough to point out that from November 2015 until the end of 2016 in the immediate vicinity, ie. in Poland and Germany, there were three important events substantially focused on the problem of transsexualism. First, in the period of 4 months, there were two international scientific conferences devoted to this issue. The first one titled „Gender identity and transsexualism: facts and controversies. Interdisciplinary perspective” was organized in November 2015 in Opole by the Institute of Family Studies (the publisher of the magazine) at the Faculty of Theology of the Opole University in cooperation with the Association of Bioethicists of Central Europe (BCE) and the European Association of Theologians (ESCT). The second one was organized at the University of Frankfurt in February 2016 and was entitled: „Transsexualism. Social challenge in the dialogue between theology and neuroscience. International and interdisciplinary conference” (*Transsexualität. Eine gesellschaftliche Herausforderung im Gespräch zwischen Theologie und Neurowissenschaften. Internationale, interdisziplinäre Konferenz*; <https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/131266/01-02-2016/konferenz-ueber-theologie-und-transsexualitaet-der-uni-frankfurt>). The third event is the dedication of this year's Human Rights Day (December 2016) to the issue of transsexualism. The motto of the day was formulated as follows: „Here is not a man, not a woman. The right to equal treatment regardless of sexual orientation and identity” (*Hier ist*

nicht Mann noch Frau. Recht auf Gleichbehandlung ungeachtet sexueller Orientierung und Identität; <https://www.ekd.de/themen/material/tag-der-menschenrechte-2016/index.html>).

There wouldn't be perhaps in the events anything special, if their (co-)organizers were not faculties of Christian churches, Catholic and evangelical, and in the latter case, the Evangelical Church in Germany. So, it can be concluded that after civilian communities, LGBT associations, departments of the European Union and WHO, also religious communities see the need to scientifically explore problems associated with transsexualism. It seems that honest discussion and standing up for this problem within the Christian churches can significantly help to combat stigma, prejudice and discrimination against transgendered people. And because these attitudes are not incompatible either with respect for the human person and the superior commandment of love in Christianity, it proves necessary to explore the phenomenon in the interdisciplinary way; the phenomenon that triggers such reactions, or at least triggered them in the past.

The task to face the challenge, which in the social and scientific area is transsexualism, has been set to the authors of this volume of "Family Forum", which focuses on the disturbances of gender identity, being contrary to morphological gender. The complexity of the issues of gender identity and its disorders make the texts presented in the volume only fragmentary implement a given research area. We are aware that some collective monographs of these issues have recently been published, and they may pretend to be an integral approach of the issues, such as the latest: *Transsexualität in Theologie und Neurowissenschaften Ergebnisse, Kontroversen, Perspektiven [Transsexuality in Theology and Neuroscience: Discoveries, Controversies, and Perspective]*, G. Schreiber (Hg.), Walter de Gruyter: Berlin/New York 2016. This does not change the fact that the current discussion on the complex issues should be undertaken and documented systematically, which is done in a "forum" of our magazine.

The construction of the content of this volume in its thematic part is simple. The starting point is to set the problem of biomedical and genetic components of gender identity and sexual orientation, then the attention is focused on the phenomenon of transsexualism in all its complexity. This complexity is well illustrated by consecutive articles undertaking the issue from the cultural, ecclesial, legal and generic perspective. Taking up the problem of the meaning and role of psychological gender in the life evaluation as being fulfilled and happy is an interesting complement.

Taking up the topic of complexity of the phenomenon of disturbed gender identity, it is worth noting the article which examines six important perspec-

tives of transsexualism: the prospect of a transsexual, medical and psychiatric perspective, conceptual one, that of gender/queer study, different concepts of gender identity, as well as the Catholic theological perspective, reasonably highlighting their need for an inclusive approach. Work on volume VI of “Family Forum” showed that even such a degree of complexity does not yet describe the whole spectrum of the problem. It turns out that the perspective of the immediate environment of a transsexual, that is their family environment should be added. The importance of this perspective came to the fore during the talks with transsexual people, who among the greatest fears and anxieties mentioned reactions coming from and relations with people loved. The discussion has also been joined by representatives of transsexuals’ families, who emphasized, among others, the fact that the debate lacks family and social context of the problem. According to them, it is easier to emphasize only the need for acceptance of a transsexual, his/her partner, or to appreciate the emphatic environment. It is much harder to show parents’ and siblings’ suffering and dilemmas, obstacles and wounds of the immediate surroundings of transgender people, who in the name of love towards the nearest and dearest unconditionally accept the actions related to gender reassignment. In an even greater extent this applies to children in these families, who from one day to the next are supposed to “accept” their aunt as their uncle, also at the verbal level. Quoting one of these statements, we ask with the author: “... how far can you go in meeting your deepest identity desires? [...] I am still facing the emotions that are difficult to control. There are so many threads that arouse the guilty conscience, both at the level of diagnosis and assessment of the disorder and moral evaluation of acts associated with the disorder, and on the pastoral level – contrary to popular opinion – responding positively to such actions. [...] Rarely do people try to understand us, usually me and my loved ones experience (pastoral) reprimand for resistance we feel in relation to the whole thing.” Letting them articulate their problems, at the same time I would like to dedicate this plane of scientific reflection, in which they seem to be absent.

Since the study firmly focused on the theological dimension of the problem last year, we should also recall the statement of a person confronted with transsexualism, who raises different than usual (and politically incorrect) point of view on the issue: “For me the situation with transsexualism in the Church is an example of something much more important, and perhaps more painful – we, that is people of the Church, do not believe that we have the Truth, which can brighten and help us endure even such difficult fate and great suffering as a sense of sexual identity disorder. It is easier for Catholics to feel embarrassed about the ‘absolute’ letter of ‘inhumane’ ecclesiastical law

than to show a blind alley in the light of the doctrine of human dignity, in which people wade just because they see their life in a very short term and do not know their true value?"

The cited source texts are held by the editor, and they are published with the consent of the Authors because such difficult issues require ongoing dialogue, exchanging views, identifying various emotions and seeking solutions that respect the dignity of all people confronted with the problem of disturbed gender identity. I expressed my position on the issue in an interview published in the current year (P. Morciniec, Critical situation [transsexualism], an interview: R. Bielecki, „W Drodze” 2016, No. 6, 48–61), and therefore I do not develop this substantive thought.

A graphic layout of the journal each time indicates the substance of the volume in its colored square. This vivid factual message is transmitted by a system of intertwined strings in different colors, which is defined as a symbolic illustration of not only the family, but also problems which they must face searching for their identity. The graphic announcement of the volume VI accompanied invariably by strings, this time four of them, presents them in a specific constellation. Two of them are located within a square with a question mark placed next to them. The picture announces that the determination of any identity is always associated with posing the key questions: who I am, where I come from, where I am going, and only making the effort to answer them allows to properly configure statically located strings. The other two strings for the first time go beyond the area of the square, referring to the etymology of the word “transsexual” (from the Latin: *transire*, which means “move, exceed the boundaries, formulas, links” etc.). The strings going beyond the square, which at the same time belong to it to some extent, refer to the complex and difficult to be explicitly solved problem of the location of transsexualism, the dominant theme of the volume. At the same time, the question mark, central in its graphic meaningful position, is dedicated to the placement of transsexualism in the context of the family and its dynamics.

The creation of this volume of the journal is, as always, the fruit of a collective reflection on a given topic of research, in which participated both recognized scientists from Poland and abroad and young researchers. Their scientific research has produced an interdisciplinary picture of the particular problems. The quality of the presented texts is watched with great commitment by professional Reviewers whose intellectual effort I would like, on behalf of the Editorial Board, to recognize and appreciate. I would like to express my gratitude on behalf of the volume Readers, Editors of “Family Forum” and the Institute of Family Sciences both to all Authors presenting their articles, representing

various research centers in Poland and abroad, and to Thematic Editors of the magazine and also to the Scientists belonging to the Editorial Board of “Family Forum”. The high substantive quality of the journal is also the merit of its Translators, Proofreaders, Technical Editor and the Publishing Editorial of the Faculty of Theology whom, on behalf of the Editorial Board, I express my thanks. The words of gratitude are also sent to the Author of the covers of the subsequent volumes of the magazine for the inspirational artistic design.

On behalf of the Scientific Council and Editorial Board of “Family Forum” I would like to invite all the interested to the debate on further current problems on the family topic. I would like to inform that the seventh volume of the journal will address issues related to the fundamental problems of the family and civil partnerships in the European environment. We wish everyone a fruitful and inspiring reading.

Piotr Morciniec

The chief editor of “Family Forum”

