

## From the Editor

Discussion on the understanding of the family has been in recent years a permanent element of the social and ideological landscape, and sometimes its vital feature is the extreme polarization of the stands. Both proponents of understanding the family as an inseparable relationship between a man and a woman, and those who opt for models of unions alternative to the traditional family, present strong arguments, in their opinion, in support of their position. The discussion itself could be observed indifferently, analyzing only its dynamics, if it were not for the fact that it leaves its imprint on legal regulations concerning marriage and family, and consequently changes even the meaning of the concepts related to the reality. Although in the initial stage of planning the volume, it seemed more important to show the dissimilarity of marriage from the partnerships, the development of the events happening before our eyes significantly shifted the focus of the research.

When we determined the topic of the current issue of the journal, we did not expect it to become so up-to-date. This was influenced not so much by an event in far-away Australia, where same-sex unions were recognized as marriages, or by the Haitian Senate adoption of a law prohibiting same-sex marriages with legal sanctions for violating this ban, as by many legal steps in nearby German-speaking countries. The decision of the German Bundestag of 30 July 2017, introducing the right to marry persons of the same sex, ended the long debate on the so-called marriages for all (Ehe für alle), accepting this position. In turn, in Austria, a new juridical situation was created by the judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of 4 December 2017, according to which from January 1, 2019, same-sex couples will be able to legalize their relationship as a „marriage”. Since one of the leading texts of the issue is devoted to the argumentation of this side of the scene, I just want to draw attention to the most important argument returning in the justification. It is about the „prohibition of discrimination based on the principle of equality”. Simplifying, the point is that since marriage has been recognized as a „fundamental human right”, every unlimited person has the right to it.

In the recent past, steps were also taken to strengthen the other option, namely the exclusive right to speak about „marriage” as the relationship of people of different sexes, that is women and men. A referendum on the constitutional definition of marriage as a male and female union was carried out, among others, in Croatia and Slovakia, and the public debate on the subject continues in Romania. In some cases, it was about preserving the record defining marriage in the Basic Law, in others about introducing such a new constitutional entry. In the case of supporters of this understanding of marriage/family, the special nature of marriage is emphasized as a relationship between a man and a woman who are suitable for giving birth and raising children, thus ensuring the renewal of generations. If the special legal status of a marriage, based on a gender difference, is erased, the entire society is detrimental, depreciating de facto the importance of marriage. Since the full argumentation for this position is not included in this volume of the journal, please, refer to the article by American authors (S. Girgis, RT Anderson, and George, *What is Marriage?*, in: *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 2010, vol. 34, no. 1, 245–287).

Without developing further threads raised in the discussion on the shape of marriage and family, it is worth noting that a few fundamental questions need to be answered in order to deliberately take a stand in it. First of all, it is about determining what lies behind the refusal to recognize same-sex relationships as a marriage. Is it a refusal because of “biology” or a different anthropological concept that sees the place and role of both sexes in marriage differently. Secondly, we must face the argument raised on the legal ground, that is the “prohibition of discrimination”, the form of which would be to deny the “right to marry”. Concerned about the adequacy of the debate, it is worth looking at the problem both from the perspective of individual and social ethics, considering the important “for” and “against” of each of the solutions. It is also essential to realize that it is not enough to derive conclusions of a normative or juridical character from statistical data, but that compelling arguments are necessary. Hence, the thematic texts of this volume were conceived as those presenting important arguments from various options and points of view, still being aware of the fragmentary nature of such a venture. There is no doubt that this subject will be coming back more than once in the journal, because it affects the essence of the examined reality. Therefore, as the editors, we do not exclude returning to the issue of understanding marriage and its legal and ethical interpretation in subsequent years.

As for other texts in this volume, I am pleased with the continuation of the subject of the previous issue of transsexualism and the first trailer of the topic

which is planned for 2019, namely the problem of domestic violence. I hope that the good tradition of the magazine will be to “add” new threads and put new emphasis on the issues that have appeared on our pages. Next year, we want to devote the next issue of “Family Forum” especially to the problems of the oldest generation, taking up the issue of aging and the presence of seniors in society and in the family.

A graphic layout of the journal cover, as every year, becomes the thematic trailer of the volume which is included in the changing square. From the first volume of “Family Forum” this concise factual message is transmitted by a system of intertwined strings of different colors, which is defined as an illustration of the reality of the family and the problems it has to face. The symbolic illustration of the current issue refers to the fundamental belief in European culture that until recently it seemed unquestionable that marriage is the basis for starting a family. Marriage, and thus entering into a formal relationship between a man and a woman, is symbolized by wedding rings. This conscious step on the path of two people is a social expression of the interpersonal relationship, that is marriage bonds at first, and then, in the further development family ties, consistently built by the engaged and then married couples. In the left part of the square the strings, which are arranged vertically in a harmonious way, pass through the wedding rings. Next to them there are two other strings, which go across, as if they were against the established and strict order in our culture and society. They indicate people living in informal (partner) relationships, looking for their relational identity. It is also significant that they are located away from the wedding rings, which signals the choice of a different path than the marriage, understood as the formal relationship of the married: a woman and a man.

As usual, many people participated in the creation of the journal, to whom we convey the words of gratitude on behalf of the Editorial Board of “Family Forum”, the Institute of Family Sciences - the institution that publishes the journal, and on behalf of the Readers of the volume. I express my thanks both to all Authors presenting their articles and to reliable and competent Reviewers and Thematic Editors, to reliable and skilled Translators, Proofreaders and Technical Editor. The quality of the journal is also affirmed by the Scientific Council of “Family Forum”, which is attended by eminent scientists from various scientific disciplines and from different European countries, and whom I would like to thank for cooperation.

On behalf of the Scientific Council and Editorial Board of “Family Forum”, I would like to invite all the interested to discuss the problems of the old-

er generation in the family and other important issues in the area of family sciences. We wish all readers a fruitful and engaging reading.

Piotr Morciniec  
The chief editor of “Family Forum”