

FAMILY RELATIONS IN THE RECENT MAGISTERIUM AND IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

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Current theological research recognizes the family as the foundation of society and often proposes it as a model for expressing theological concepts and human values. This is especially evident in the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and in Franciscan spirituality. Pope Francis insists that we need to strengthen family life to move towards a more fraternal world, “shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility”¹.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing a crisis of the family and a global breakdown of the free, fraternal, and affectionate relationships that characterize it. John Paul II states that “the decline of the culture of marriage is associated with increased poverty and a host of other social ills,” including the crisis of “human ecology”².

The term “family” is often applied not only to the nuclear family, usually based on marriage, but also to the family of believers³, to the universal human family and to the cosmic family⁴. It is also associated with the concept of “fraternity,” which Pope Francis relates to Franciscan spirituality. Concretely, he affirms that “it was the

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¹ Francis, “*Fratelli tutti*”. *Encyclical letter* (Oct. 3, 2020), [FT], LEV: Vatican City 2020, 127. Cf. ID, “*Amoris Laetitia*”. *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation* (Mar. 19, 2016), [AL], AAS 108/4(2016), n. 194.

² Francis, *Address in the international colloquium on the complementarity between man and woman* (Nov. 17, 2014), AAS 106/12(2014), n. 2.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, LEV: Vatican City 2019, n. 854. Cf. John Paul II, “*Familiaris consortio*” *Apostolic exhortation* (Nov. 22, 1981), AAS 74(1982), n. 74.

⁴ On the ecological approach to the family: M.P. Andrews, M.M. Bubolz , B. Paolucci, *An ecological approach to the study of the family*, “*Marriage and family Review*” 3(1980), pp. 29-49.

evangelical witness of St. Francis, with his school of thought, that gave this term the meaning it then preserved over the centuries”⁵.

The first part of this presentation will focus on the importance of the family in the recent Magisterium. The second part will study how the Franciscans have assumed it in their legislation and their way of understanding authority and their own identity. Finally, the third part will present the Franciscan vision of creation as a cosmic family⁶.

1. IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY IN THE RECENT MAGISTERIUM

The Second Vatican Council reevaluates familial and fraternal relations at all levels. The Church, it says, “is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God’s family”⁷. With regard to consecrated persons, the Council encourages a more fraternal lifestyle and asks that legislative texts be interpreted not with a casuistic mentality, but in the light of what the founders lived and wanted to express.

It thus promotes a transition from “common life” to “fraternal life,” that is, a change towards a more familiar and less regulated lifestyle. This is evident when comparing the Code of Canon Law (CIC) of 1917 with that of 1983. The first insisted on “regular observance” and uniformity, which resulted in strict compliance with rules, schedules, and external elements (food, clothing, utensils)⁸. The 1983 CIC, instead, insists on fraternal communion⁹, on the spiritual dimension of relationships and on the bonds of charity: “A religious institute is a society in which members [...] lead a life of brothers or sisters in common” (CIC 607, 2).

Following these indications, the Franciscan Rule ceased to be seen primarily as a normative text and was put in relation to the vital and fraternal dynamism it promotes. Likewise, the current OFM General Constitutions take over again the term “fraternity,” so dear to Saint Francis, to identify the Franciscan Order¹⁰, but which had ceased to be used after the approval of the Later Rule, except for a brief appearance in the Constitutions of Perpignan (in 1331).

⁵ Francis, “*Fraternity as the governing principle of the economic order*”. *Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*» (Apr. 24, 2017), OsRom 99 (29.04.2017), p. 7, n. 1.

⁶ This article develops the content of a lecture given by the author at the 7th International Symposium of Familiology, held on 2.06.2023 in Elbląg (organiser: University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland). It also includes some ideas that he developed extensively in his book: M. Carbaajo-Núñez, *The universal fraternity. Franciscan roots of Fratelli tutti*, TAU publishing: Phoenix (AZ) 2023.

⁷ Second Vatican Council, “*Gaudium et spes*”. *Dogmatic constitution* (Dec. 07, 1965), [GS], AAS 58(1966), n. 40.

⁸ “In the common life of each religious [institute] there shall be accurately observed by all those things that pertain to food, dress, and furnishings”. “In quavis religione vita communis accurate ab omnibus servetur etiam in iis quae ad victum, vestitum et ad supellectilem pertinent”: *CIC 1917*, can. 594,1, in *Pontificia Università Gregoriana. Facoltà di Diritto Canonico* [on-line], <https://www.iuscangreg.it/cic1917.php?lang=EN> (access: 21.09.2023).

⁹ *Code of Canon Law*, ed. E Caparrós et al., Wilson & Lafleur: Montréal 1993, c. 602.

¹⁰ “The Order of Friars Minor, founded by St. Francis of Assisi, is a fraternity”: OFM, *General Constitutions*, art. 1, in Id., *The Rule, the General Constitutions, The General Statutes of the Order of Friars Minor*, OFM General Curia, Rome 2016, 21.

1.1. God has in Himself the essence of the family

The post-conciliar Magisterium has frequently used the concept of the family, applying it analogically to God's very essence. John Paul II affirms that God is a family, "since He has in Himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love"¹¹. The Father is the Lover, the Son the Beloved, the Spirit is Love.

The Trinitarian God (tri-unity) is communion in plurality¹². Everything has been created according to this divine model and, therefore, "bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure"¹³.

There is a certain analogy between the Trinitarian communion and the communion that is lived in marriage. "The triune God is a communion of love and the family is its living reflection" (*AL* 11); that is, "the family is the image of God, Who is a communion of persons" (*AL* 71).

"Human fatherhood and motherhood, while remaining biologically similar to that of other living beings in nature, contain in an essential and unique way a «likeness» to God which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love (*communio personarum*). [...] The family, which originates in the love of man and woman, ultimately derives from the mystery of God¹⁴.

This analogy is also found in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, which reveal the Trinity "with the features of a family. Moreover, Christ "raised marriage to the sacramental sign of His love for the Church" (*AL* 71 & 73).

1.2. The human being grows, matures, and learns in the family

Human beings have been created in the image of the Trinitarian God (Gn 1,27) and, therefore, they are intrinsically social beings. Sexual difference and the companionship of male and female are the primary forms of that intrinsic sociability (*GS* 12). By relating, they develop their own identity, making "their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them" (*LS* 240).

In the family, we express and potentiate our intrinsic sociability, since it is there "where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one" (*AL* 276). In this area of primary socia-

¹¹ John Paul II, *Homily - Puebla de los Angeles* (Jan. 28, 1979), in *InsJP2*, II(1979), pp. 180-185, here 182.

¹² 1Jn 4:8. Cf. Augustinus, *De Trinitate*, XV, c. 16, PL 226, 42. This divine unity "is expressed in "the mutual inhabitation or perichoresis" and "the clearer the distinction of the persons, the more evident the whole unity. *Ibid*.

¹³ Francis, "Laudato si'". *Encyclical letter* (May 24, 2015), [*LS*], AAS 107(2015), n. 239; "Creatura mundi est quasi quidem liber, in quo reluctet et representatur el legitur Trinitas fabricatrix": Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, II c. 12, in *Id.*, *Opera omnia*, vol. 10, Typ. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1882-1902 [*Quaracchi*], V 199-291, here V 230a.

¹⁴ John Paul II, "Gratissimam sane". *Letter to Families* (Feb. 2, 1994), AAS 86(1994), nn. 6 and 8.

lization, we also learn to defend ourselves “from so many ‘colonisations,’ like that of money or of the ideologies”¹⁵.

The merciful relationships experience in the family help us to “see God’s loving face”¹⁶ and “the mystery of the Trinitarian ‘we’”¹⁷. These free and disinterested relationships must also be extended to the public sphere, because “charity is at the heart of every healthy and open society”¹⁸.

There is a strong relationship between the parental family and the universal family. “The family itself introduces fraternity into the world” for there we have an “initial experience of fraternity” (*AL* 194).

1.3. Creation is a big family

The Incarnation of the Word shows the ontological goodness of creation and its entity as a space for the encounter between humans and God¹⁹. Indeed, all of creation “is conceived of to create the place of encounter between God and His creature”²⁰.

The entire creation is dialogical, a great family living in the same house²¹, a space of encounter and reciprocity. All beings of the universe “are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family” (*LS* 89). Thus, each creature “must be cherished with love and respect” (*LS* 42). In this common home, God manifests himself and dialogues with us.

2. THE FAMILY’S MODEL IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Francis of Assisi often uses the family’ model to illustrate the kind of relationships that his friars must cultivate with God, with themselves, with others, and with creation. To speak of the spiritual life, he turns to human realities in which God’s love is most purely manifested: the family and motherhood. He affirms that we are spouses, brothers, and mothers of Christ²².

“They are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are

¹⁵ Francis, *General Audience: Catechesis on the family* (Sept. 16, 2015), OsRom 211 (Sept. 17, 2015), p. 8. Among these ideologies, the Pope speaks of gender ideology (*AL* 56), which must be contrasted with good sex education in the family. (*AL* 280-286).

¹⁶ Francis, *Address to the diplomatic corps* (Jan. 11, 2016), p. 4-5.

¹⁷ John Paul II, “*Gratissimam sane*”, n. 8. The family, “domestic church,” demands sacrifice, tolerance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Cf. *FC* 21.

¹⁸ *FT* 184. We have developed this topic in: M. Carbajo-Núñez, *La fraternità nell’enciclica “Fratelli tutti”: Radici francescane*, “*Collectanea Franciscana*” 90(2021), pp. 5-25.

¹⁹ Cf. J.L. Ruiz de la Peña, *Una fe que crea cultura*, Caparrós: Madrid 1997, p. 123.

²⁰ Benedict XVI, *Address at the opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (Oct. 6, 2008), 26.

²¹ S. McFague, *The body of God. An ecological theology*, Fortress: Minneapolis 1993, p. 103-129.

²² F. Uribe, *L’identità francescana. Contenuti fondamentali del carisma di San Francesco d’Assisi*, Ed. Biblioteca Francescana: Milano 2019, p. 318-319.

brothers, moreover, when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity”²³.

Pope Francis also highlights St. Francis’ love for the Virgin Mary, who has brought us our elder brother.

“Saint Francis of Assisi loved her precisely because she was a mother. It has been written of him that «he embraced the mother of the Lord Jesus with an inexpressible love since she made the Lord of Majesty a brother to us» (*LMj* 9,3). Our Lady made God our brother, as a mother she can make the Church and the world more fraternal”²⁴.

Francis identifies his group of friars as a family, which cannot be limited to formal observance and homogeneous life. While the monks enter the physical space of the monastery, the friars are “received” into the theological realm of obedience (*ob-audientia*) to be spiritual brothers who serve and obey one another²⁵; that is, who listen together to the voice of the Spirit. Infidelity would be “to wander outside obedience” (*ER* 2,10; 5,16).

2.1. Family values especially dear to St. Francis

In contrast to that medieval context, St. Francis tries to establish horizontal relationships based on mutual respect²⁶, equality, mercy, gratuitousness, reciprocity, and joy²⁷. He makes no distinction between “wise and simple”²⁸: everyone is invited to participate in the common task on an equal footing. Poverty and minority favour this type of family relations because they liberate the human heart. Having nothing, the real richness will be the brother. James of Vitry testifies that, once a year, all gathered to strengthen family and fraternal ties.

“With great profit, the brothers of this Order assemble once a year in a designated place to rejoice in the Lord and eat together; with the advice of good men they draw up and promulgate holy laws and have them confirmed by the Lord Pope”²⁹.

²³ Francis of Assisi, *Letter to the Faithful (longer version)*, 50-53 (FAED I, 45-51).

²⁴ Francis, *Speech to the teachers and students of the Pontifical Theological Faculty “Marianum”* (Oct. 24, 2020), in *La Santa Sede* [on-line], https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2020/october/documents/papa-francesco_20201024_marianum.html (access: 21.09.2023).

²⁵ Francis of Assisi, *The Later Rule [LR]*, 5,14, (FAED I, 99-106).

²⁶ “Tutti i Fratelli formano un’unità le cui relazioni, pur legate in modo unitario e centrale da un ministro generale, debbono essere l’espressione dell’identità dei singoli fratelli così da restare una fraternità”: P. Maranesi, *Il travaglio di una redazione. Le novità testuali della Regola bollata indizi di un’evoluzione*, “Miscellanea Francescana” 109(2009), p. 364.

²⁷ We have explained these characteristics of the Franciscan fraternity in our book: M. Car-bajo-Núñez, *La fraternidad universal. Raíces franciscana de Fratelli tutti*, Efarantzazu: Vitoria - Gasteiz 2022, p. 28-39 (Id., *The universal fraternity*).

²⁸ Thomas of Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul [2Cel]*, n. 193 (FAED II, 231-393).

²⁹ Jacob of Vitry, *Letter I (1216)* (FAED I 578-580, here 580).

Celano also certifies that they truly loved each other and that “there were chaste embraces, delightful affection, a holy kiss, sweet conversation, modest laughter, joyful looks, a clear eye, a supple spirit”³⁰.

Francis does not want taciturn monks or mute hermits and, therefore, does not prescribe anything about silence. He describes fraternal life using the image of the family: “Let those who wish to stay in hermitages in a religious way be three brothers or, at the most, four; let two of these be the mother.”³¹

His friars’ relationships must be an expression of the gratuitousness and self-giving, because “if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit!”³²

They must also be fraternal to every human being, no matter whether “friend or foe, thief or robber” (*ER* 7,14). Poverty and minority (*Kenosys*) are intended to serve this objective:

“Lord, if we had possessions, we would need arms for our protection. For disputes and lawsuits usually arise out of them, and, because of this, love of God and neighbour are greatly impeded. Therefore, we do not want to possess anything in this world” (*L3C* 35).

2.2. The Franciscan Rule and family relationships

The importance that Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) attributed to family and fraternal relationships was part of the new sensibility that had been created with the communal revolution³³ and with the various lay groups that had arisen inspired by the primitive community of Jerusalem.

There had also been developments of this kind in the consecrated life. The Rule of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (OSST: Trinitarians)³⁴, approved by Pope Innocent III in 1198, calls the members “brothers” and the prelate “minister” (n. 1). The minister will be elected by the “friars” “not according to the dignity of birth, but according to the merit of life and the doctrine of wisdom” (n. 27). Therefore, it cannot be said that Francis was completely original in these aspects, although it is

³⁰ Thomas of Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis* [*ICel*], 38 (FAED I, 171-308). Cf. *The Legend of the Three Companions* [*L3C*], 41-42 (FAED II, 61-110).

³¹ Francis of Assisi, *A Rule for Hermitages* [*RE*], 1 (FAED I 61-62).

³² *LR* 6,8; *ER* 9,11.

³³ The communal revolution arose at the end of the 11th century in central and northern Italy. Faced with the abuses of the feudal lords and the emperor, the city-states strengthened themselves by organizing their own defence and self-government. To this end, they appealed to the collaboration and loyalty of all their inhabitants. To this end, they promoted a more representative system and, in fact, they are considered a forerunner of European constitutionalism and parliamentarism. Cf. M. Ascheri, *Le città-Stato*, Il Mulino: Bologna 2008; T. Scott, *The City-State in Europe, 1000-1600*, Oxford UP: Oxford, 2012.

³⁴ *Regola di San Giovanni de Matha o dell’Ordine della Santissima Trinita’ (Trinitari). Approvata da Papa Innocenzo III nel 1198*, in *Ora, Lege et Labora* [on-line], <https://ora-et-labora.net/trinitariregola.html> (access: 21.09.2023). Cf. O. Schmucki, *La Regola di Giovanni da Matha e la Regola di Francesco d’Assisi: somiglianze e peculiarità, nuovi rapporti con l’Islam*, “Italia Franciscana” 74/3(1999), pp. 11-42.

evident that his position is much more radical in affirming reciprocity and equality among all (clerics and laity).

Francis gives priority to personal relationships. For example, institutional relations with the Church are channelled through the General Minister's personal relationship with the Pope: "Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to our Lord Pope Honorius and his successors [...]. Let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors" (*LR* 1,2). In the person of the Minister, the friars "obey the ecclesiastical authority" and "this same obedience also unites all the brothers among themselves."³⁵ This was a novelty at the time.

He also prefers to bear witness to his own experience, rather than coldly proposing a program of life: "The Most High Himself revealed to me" (*Test* 14). Above all, he wants his friars to assume the evangelical life he had experienced, which goes beyond any juridical text. Thus, he writes at the beginning of the Later Rule: "The life of the lesser brothers begins" (*LR* 1). In fact, the Rule is first and foremost a historical, spiritual document that invites us to "receive this life" (*LR* 2; *Test* 16), that is, to insert oneself into a vital experience together with the other friars. This life is always one and the same: "to observe the holy Gospel" (*LR* 1).

2.3. Authority: mothers who care for life

The family model also applies to the concept of authority. Those who hold it must be like "mothers" who care for the evangelical life of the friars. Francis presents himself as a mother (never as a father). "I am speaking, my son, in this way - as a mother would,"³⁶ he says to Brother Leon. He uses the word "*mater*" twenty-four times in his writings and only calls God "father." He thus rejects the power of the *pater familias* coined by Roman law and which, in some way, was assumed by the monastic abbot.

His friars should not be called priors (*ER* 6,3), but "ministers and servants"³⁷ imitating Christ the Servant, who lowered Himself (*Kenosis*) to be our brother.³⁸ To a minister who wanted to leave office to avoid problems, he asks to welcome his friars mercifully: "even if they lay hands on you" and do not wish "that they be better Christians" (*LtMin* 2 & 7).

Saint Francis turns the pyramid structure of that society upside down by promoting family relations and mutual service. "Let the one to whom obedience has been entrusted and who is considered the greater be the lesser and the servant of the other brothers" (*2LtaF* 42). He must be sympathetic, merciful, patient, and must not become

³⁵ K. Esser, *Melius catholice observemus. Esposizione della Regola Francescana alla luce degli scritti e delle parole di san Francesco*, in *Introduzione alla Regola francescana*, Cammino: Milano 1969, pp. 107-221, here 119 and 179. Cf. A. Boni, *La novitas francescana nel suo essere e nel suo divenire* (cc. 578/631), Antonianum: Roma 1998, p. 223-255.

³⁶ Francis of Assisi, *A Letter to Brother Leo* [*LtL*], n. 2 (FAED I, 122-123).

³⁷ *ER* 4,6; *LR* 10,6-7; *2LtaF* 42. Francis refuses to be called father, master, or superior. Cf. Th. Desbonnets, *De la intuición a la institución, Los franciscanos*, Ed. Franciscanas: Arantzazu 1991, cap. 7.

³⁸ *ER* 4,6; Francis of Assisi, *Admonitions* [*Adm*], 4,2 (FAED I, 128-137).

“angry at the fault of a brother.”³⁹ When the superior has to admonish his brothers, he must do so “humbly and charitably” (*LR* 10,1).

Authority and obedience will always be “charitable,”⁴⁰ familiar, reciprocal. “Let them serve and obey one another” (*ER* 5,14) and “show that they are members of the same family” (*LR* 6,7). The minister will take maternal care of his friars and they will cultivate the personal relationship with him and not break it even when, in conscience, they cannot obey him (*Adm* 3,7).

3. THE COSMIC FAMILY

Francis asks of his friars a reciprocal obedience that extends also to all other creatures. He himself “heard the voice of God, he heard the voice of the poor, he heard the voice of the infirm and he heard the voice of nature” (*FT* 48).

“Holy Obedience confounds every corporal and carnal wish [...] so that it is subject and submissive to everyone in the world, not only to people but to every beast and wild animal as well that they may do whatever they want with it insofar as it has been given to them from above by the Lord (*SalV* 17).

He cares for creatures, but he also needs their help, even to praise God. By joining in their hymn of praise, Francis overcomes his own unworthiness, because “no human is worthy to mention Your name.”⁴¹ Indeed, “all of us, wretches and sinners, are not worthy to pronounce Your name” (*ER* 23,5), whereas “all creatures under heaven serve, know, and obey their Creator, each according to its own nature, better than you” (*Adm* 5,2). Thus, “with” all creatures (*CtC* 3) and “through” them (*CtC* 5-9), Francis praises the Creator. The relationship is reciprocal, indeed “even irrational creatures recognized his feeling of tenderness towards them.” (*ICel* 59).

3.1. Sister creatures

The whole of creation is one big family under the same roof. Francis relates to creatures not as a dominator or a butler, but as a brother. “He felt a natural fraternity, neither pantheistic nor intellectualistic, with every creature.”⁴² He does not flaunt his thaumaturgical power over nature, although his biographers make some references to it.⁴³

³⁹ Francis of Assisi, *The second version of the Letter to the Faithful* [*2LtaF*], 44 (FAED I, 45-51).

⁴⁰ Charity is sister to obedience. Francis of Assisi, *A Salutation to Virtues* [*SalV*], 3 (FAED I, 164-165).

⁴¹ Francis of Assisi, *The Canticle of the Creatures* [*CtC*], 2 (FAED I, 113-114).

⁴² P.M. Haffner, *Verso una teologia dell'ambiente. L'eredità ecologica di Papa Giovanni Paolo II*, ART: Roma 2007, p. 105 [Trad.].

⁴³ “Control over nature was crucial to the authority of a saint because it established that individual as an agent of God [...]. It also showed that the saint was able to return nature to a prelapsarian condition, that is, as it had appeared in the Garden Eden”: L.J. Kiser, *Animal Economies. The Lives*

“The relationship that Francis had with animals, both as single ones or as a group, is of such closeness and affection that it surpasses the medieval theological schemes and makes appear pale the references to the millenary Christian tradition of the saint as «new Adam» who talks with wild animals.”⁴⁴

In fact, *1Cel* and *2Cel*, do not underline the aspect of dominion over creatures, proper to the thaumaturge, but rather love, obedience, and contemplation.⁴⁵ The later sources, however, emphasize Francis’ dominion over them and their obedience to him.⁴⁶

He “was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature, and with himself” (*FT* 10). His relationship with creatures is familiar, without falling into anything like biocentrism⁴⁷ or homogenization. He also relates to the inanimate ones, which he often personalizes and attributes moral qualities (cf. *CtC*). He preaches to flowers, crops, vineyards (*1Cel* 81). He also asks to “brother fire”: “Be gracious to me in this hour; be courteous!”⁴⁸

“Poverty is not poverty but Lady Poverty; the virtues are not virtues but Queen Wisdom, her holy sister Pure Simplicity; the lark is not a lark but Sister Lark; similar, Brother Wolf, Lord Brother Sun, Mother and Sister Earth. [...] At the root of it all, there is the religious experience of the universal fatherhood of God. [...] It was a profound emotional experience; it meant a cosmic identification with all the elements.”⁴⁹

Francis uses familiar terms to refer to them, personalizes them and treats them with respect. He surpasses the merely allegorical or metaphorical value that used to be attributed to them.⁵⁰ When he preaches to the birds, he acknowledges that they “had

of St. Francis in their Medieval contexts, “Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment” 11/1(2004), pp. 121-138, here 124.

⁴⁴ A. Marini, *Sorores Alaudae: Francesco d’Assisi, il creato, gli animali*, Porziuncola - Assisi 1989, p. 172-173 [my translation].

⁴⁵ Cf. *1Cel* 81; Bonaventure, *The Major Legend [LMj]*, 8.6 (FAED II, 525-683).

⁴⁶ A. Marini, *Sorores alaudae*, 28-29; F. Cardini, *Francesco d’Assisi e gli animali*, “Studi Franciscani” 78(1981) pp. 7-46.

⁴⁷ “In the name of an idea inspired by egocentrism and biocentrism it is being proposed that the ontological and axiological difference between men and other living beings be eliminated, since the biosphere is considered a biotic unity of undifferentiated value. Thus, man’s superior responsibility can be eliminated in favour of an egalitarian consideration of the «dignity» [Why « and » sign?] of all living beings”: John Paul II, *Address to conference on environment and health* (March 24, 1997), in *InsJP2* XX/1(1997), pp. 520-523, here n. 5.

⁴⁸ *2Cel* 166. On his admiration for fire: *The Assisi Compilation [CAss]*, 86 (FAED II, 111-230).

⁴⁹ L. Boff, *Francis of Assisi: a model for human liberation*, Orbis: Maryknoll NY 2006, p. 32.

⁵⁰ En aquellos tiempos, “el cordero simboliza a la vez la inocencia y a Cristo; la serpiente, a la mentira y al diablo; los pájaros, a la libertad y a la elevación del espíritu hacia las realidades celestes; el puerco, a la voracidad y al hombre dominado por los deseos carnales”: F. Delma-Goyon, *La fraternidad universal de Francisco de Asís*, “Selecciones de Franciscanismo” 143/L(2021), pp. 177-202, here 180.

listened reverently to the Word of God” (*ICel* 58), as if they were human beings.⁵¹ In the *Canticle of the Creatures*, the sun is “sir brother” and the earth “sister mother.”

The Earth is a mother that “sustains and governs us” but it is also a sister, a creature like us⁵². Drawing inspiration from Francis, the encyclical *LS* states that the earth “is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (*LS* 1).

3.2. The parental family is the first school of integral ecology

The parental family is the first school of integral ecology because it “teaches how to overcome a certain individualistic mind-set which has worked its way into our societies.”⁵³ There, we learn the logic of gratuitousness and develop the capacity to relate serenely, building communion and community.

“The family is the principal agent of an integral ecology, because it is the primary social subject which contains within it the two fundamental principles of human civilization on earth: the principle of communion and the principle of fruitfulness” (*AL* 277).

A well-structured family places being over having. “The mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities.”⁵⁴

“In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. In the family we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity. [...] These simple gestures of heartfelt courtesy help to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings” (*LS* 213).

⁵¹ “No saint before Francis, it appears, had addressed birds as creatures in the sustained homiletic manner he did. [...] Francis calls the birds «noble» [Why « and » sign?] and compliments them. This does not occur at all in the Sermon’s Biblical parallels, and only rarely in pre-Franciscan Christian literature, but it is a common element in the saint’s later sayings.” R.G. Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and nature. Tradition and innovation in Western Christian attitudes toward the environment*, Oxford UP: New York 1988, p. 64 and 66. Cf. D. Alexander, *Saints and animals in the Middle Ages*, Boydell: Woodbridbe 2008, p. 169-179.

⁵² Francis of Assisi, *The Canticle of the Creatures* [*CtC*], 9 (FAED I, 113-114).

⁵³ Francis, *Message to participants in the 47th Social Week of Italian Catholics* (Sept. 11, 2013), in *InsJP2* 1/2 (2013), pp. 231-234, here 234.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, “*Centesimus annus*”. *Encyclical letter* (May 1, 1991), [*CA*], AAS 83(1991), n. 39. In the family “man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness and learns what it means to love and to be loved. [...] It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the sanctuary of life. The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life - the gift of God - can be properly welcomed and protected.” *Ibid*.

The family has the primary right to education⁵⁵ and “is the first and most important school of social relations”⁵⁶ and mercy.⁵⁷ In it, we learn human values (*AL* 274) and “social virtues, such as respect for persons, gratuitousness, trust, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation.”⁵⁸

“The bond of fraternity that forms in the family between children, if consolidated by an educational atmosphere of openness to others, is a great school of freedom and peace. In the family, we learn how to live as one.”⁵⁹

The Church and other social entities must “support and assist families” in this educational task.⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

The family is very present in recent the Magisterium and in Franciscan spirituality. At a theological level, it is used to refer to the essence of the Trinitarian God and to the Church, which is the family of God’s children. At the anthropological level, it is affirmed that we are familial and social beings.

The Franciscan spirituality has widely used the family as a model. Francis of Assisi wants his friars to be a fraternity, where familial and horizontal relations prevail over formal observance and homogeneous life. This fraternal way of life contrasts with the monastic “*communitas*” of the time.

Francis also asserts that the universal fraternity is inseparable from the cosmic fraternity; that is, “he shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace” (*LS* 10).

Following his insights, the Franciscan tradition has affirmed that the Trinitarian God is present in all creation. Bonaventure affirms that every creature is a sacrament of divine life, a work of art⁶¹ that must be respected and admired. Its beauty, says Alexander of Hales, reflects divine beauty and leads to it.⁶²

⁵⁵ Francis, *Address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See* (Jan. 9, 2020), *OsRom* 6 (Jan. 10, 2020), pp. 4-5, here 4.

⁵⁶ The family is the “first school of social relations”: John Paul II, *Angelus* (Jan. 30, 1994), n.1, p. 231.

⁵⁷ Francis, *Address to members of the diplomatic corps* (Jan. 11, 2016), p. 4. Mercy “is the very foundation of the Church’s life” (*AL* 310).

⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, *Homily at the 7th World Meeting of Families* (June 3, 2012), in *InsB16*, VIII/1(2012), pp. 693-697, here 695. The family is the primary setting for socialization, since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one” (*AL* 276).

⁵⁹ *AL* 194. “Children do need to be patiently taught to treat one another as brothers and sisters”: *AL* 195.

⁶⁰ Francis, *Address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See* (Jan. 9, 2020), *OsRom* 6 (Jan. 10, 2020), pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ Cfr. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* [*Hex.*] XII, 12 (*Quaracchi* V 386a).

⁶² Alejandro de Hales, *Summa Theologica*, II, inq. 1, tract. 2, q.3.

Sin has blurred our capacity to immediately perceive the reflection of the Trinity in every creature (LS 239). We need to recover that “distinctive way of looking at things” (LS 111), to be able to contemplate the world “from within” (LS 220) and build together the universal and cosmic family.

FAMILY RELATIONS IN THE RECENT MAGISTERIUM AND IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

SUMMARY

This article studies the family in the recent Magisterium and in Franciscan spirituality. Besides being recognized as the basis of society and its first school, the family is also proposed as a model to express some theological realities and fundamental human values. The paper begins by showing the importance of the concept of family in the Magisterium (1st part) and then it studies how the Franciscans have assumed it in their way of understanding themselves, in their legislation and in the exercise of authority (2nd part). Finally, the third part focuses on the Franciscan vision of creation as a cosmic family.

FAMILIENBEZIEHUNGEN IM LETZTEN MAGISTERIUM UND IN DER FRANZISKANISCHEN SPIRITUALITÄT

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Familie im neueren Magisterium und in der franziskanischen Spiritualität. Die Familie wird nicht nur als Grundlage der Gesellschaft und ihre erste Schule anerkannt, sondern auch als Modell vorgeschlagen, um einige theologische Realitäten und grundlegende menschliche Werte auszudrücken. Der Beitrag zeigt zunächst die Bedeutung des Familienbegriffs im Lehramt (1. Teil) und untersucht dann, wie die Franziskaner ihn in ihrem Selbstverständnis, in ihrer Gesetzgebung und in der Ausübung der Autorität übernommen haben (2. Teil). Der dritte Teil schließlich befasst sich mit der franziskanischen Vision der Schöpfung als kosmische Familie.

RELACJE RODZINNE W NAJNOWSZYM MAGISTERIUM I W DUCHOWOŚCI FRANCISZKAŃSKIEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł analizuje rodzinę w najnowszym Magisterium i w duchowości franciszkańskiej. Oprócz tego, że jest uznawana za podstawę społeczeństwa i jego pierwszą szkołę, rodzina jest również proponowana jako model do wyrażania pewnych rzeczywistości teologicznych i podstawowych wartości ludzkich. Artykuł rozpoczyna się od ukazania znaczenia koncepcji rodziny w Magisterium (część pierwsza), a następnie analizuje, w jaki sposób franciszkanie przyjęli ją w swoim sposobie rozumienia siebie, w swoim prawodawstwie i w sprawowaniu władzy (część druga). Wreszcie trzecia część koncentruje się na franciszkańskiej wizji stworzenia jako kosmicznej rodziny.

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