

## CONCERN FOR THE FAMILY IN THE PASTORAL LETTERS OF THE BISHOPS OF TARNÓW BETWEEN 1918 AND 1939

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**Abstract.** The family is the centre and the heart of the civilisation of love and marriage is an institution by natural law. The bishops very often called on the faithful to guard the family against various social, economic and political threats. Attacking marital identity is the direct destruction of the family. This was also pointed out by the bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period. This article aims to present the pastoral teaching of Bishop Leon Wałęga and Bishop Franciszek Lisowski on the subject of concern for the family. This article will address the issues of threats to marriage and the family. In this matter, the bishops of Tarnów were also inspired by the preaching of Polish bishops. In this context, Bishop Wałęga and Bishop Lisowski emphasised that the upbringing of children is the fundamental task of the Christian family. However, upbringing cannot be effective without the good example set by the parents. Finally, this article discusses the duties of children towards their parents, among others: respect, obedience and love. The pastoral letters of the bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period are undoubtedly an important and significant element in the history of the Diocese of Tarnów in their message and broad references.

**Keywords:** Bishop Lisowski; Bishop Wałęga; marriage; family; upbringing.

### INTRODUCTION

In his Letter to Families, John Paul II asks the question “What does the family as an institution expect from society?” The Pope gives the following answer: “First of all, it expects a recognition of its identity and an acceptance of its status as a subject in society. This social subjectivity is bound up with the proper identity of marriage and the family. Marriage, which undergirds the institution of the family, is constituted by the covenant whereby «a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children». Only such a union can be recognised and ratified as a «marriage» in society. Other interpersonal unions which do not fulfil the above conditions cannot

be recognised, despite certain growing trends which represent a serious threat to the future of the family and of society itself. No human society can run the risk of permissiveness in fundamental issues regarding the nature of marriage and the family! Such moral permissiveness cannot fail to damage the authentic requirements of peace and communion among people. It is thus quite understandable why the Church vigorously defends the identity of the family and encourages responsible individuals and institutions, especially political leaders and international organisations, not to yield to the temptation of a superficial and false modernity.”<sup>1</sup>

The family is the centre and the heart of the civilisation of love and marriage is an institution by natural law [Bączkiewicz, Baron, and Stawinoga 1958, 142-43].<sup>2</sup> The bishops very often called on the faithful to guard the family against various social, economic and political threats. Attacking marital identity is the direct destruction of the family. This was also pointed out by the bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period. This article aims to present the pastoral teaching of Bishop Leon Wałęga<sup>3</sup> and Bishop Franciszek Lisowski<sup>4</sup> on the

<sup>1</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, *Litterae Familiis datae ipso volente sacro Familiae anno MCMXCIV Gratissimam sane* (02.02.1994), AAS 86 (1994), pp. 868-925, no. 17.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on the sacrament of marriage in the 1917 Code of Canon Law is rich. It is worth mentioning such positions as: Bober 1935; Biskupski 1956; Grabowski 1934; Pycia 1922; Szmyd 1929; Wilanowski 1931.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Leon Wałęga, son of Józef and Katarzyna, was born on 25th March 1859 in Moszczenica in Gorlice Poviát. He graduated from the primary school in Gorlice, but he attended lower secondary school in Tarnów. He passed his final exam in the secondary school in Jasło. Then he went to the seminar in Lviv. As a cleric, he was sent to Rome to study theology at the Gregorian University. In Rome, he was ordained as a priest on 24th March 1883 and in the same year he obtained a PhD degree in theology. From Rome, he returned to Lviv where he was successively a vicar, prefect of a small seminary, lecturer of dogma at the University of Lviv and served as a parish priest at the Metropolitan Basilica in Lviv. With a bull of 15th April 1901, Leon Wałęga was appointed Bishop of Tarnów. He took possession of the Episcopal See on 12th May 1901. The consecration was performed by Cardinal Jan Puzyna assisted by Archbishop Józef Bilczewski and Archbishop Józef Weber. In 1928, Bishop Leon Wałęga held the first diocesan synod. In the same year, he resigned, but the Holy Father asked the Bishop of Tarnów to hold another synod. On 8 April 1932, he sent an official request to the Pope and on 10 May a reply arrived from the Secretariat of State that the Holy Father had agreed to his resignation. Earlier, on 27 January 1932, the Pope appointed Bishop Wałęga as titular Archbishop of Ossirinco. He died on Saturday, 22 April 1933 at 10.35 a.m. He ruled the diocese for 32 years [Sitko 1933, 34, 45-46; Nowak 1986, 91-101; Nowak 1999, 56-62].

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Franciszek Lisowski was born on 1 October 1876 in Cieszanów. He attended secondary school in Jarosław, where he received his secondary school certificate on 5 June 1895. He pursued his theological studies in Lviv and Rome, where he obtained his PhD in theology in 1902. Earlier, on 19 August 1900, he was ordained a priest. He was vicar in Zolochiv and assistant catechist at secondary schools no. 4 and 5 in Lviv. Starting in 1913, he began to teach dogmatic theology at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv. He was successively prefect, vice-rector and, from 1923, rector of the Metropolitan Seminary in Lviv. On 20 July 1928, he became titular Bishop of Mariamme and helped as suffragan bishop in the Archdiocese of Lviv.

subject of concern for the family. This article will address the issues of threats to marriage and the family. In this matter, the bishops of Tarnów were also inspired by the preaching of Polish bishops.<sup>5</sup> In this context, Bishop Wałęga and Bishop Lisowski emphasised that the upbringing of children is the fundamental task of the Christian family. However, upbringing cannot be effective without the good example set by the parents. Finally, the subject of children's duties towards their parents will be discussed: respect, obedience and love.

## 1. THREATS TO MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

A serious threat to the institution of marriage and the family, in the opinion of Polish bishops, were civil weddings and civil divorce. In their *Pastoral Letter*, Polish bishops noted that there were various forms of civil marriage. In some countries, there is a so-called compulsory form, applicable to all, so that only that marriage is considered valid by the state and only that marriage is entitled to the defence of the state authority, which was concluded in the manner prescribed by the secular authority. Other countries introduced an arbitrary form, whereby the secular authority leaves it to the bride and groom to choose whether they wish to marry before a secular official or a priest. Other countries introduced a form known as conditional, whereby the state authority offers, gives its marriage officiant to all those whom the clerical authority refuses on the grounds of an ecclesiastical obstacle between the bride and groom. The bishops protest against the plans to introduce civil weddings in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

Under the state law, the state may, for just cause, dissolve a marriage and allow both parties to marry anew. The state bases the authority to grant divorce on the assumption that the marriage contract is a civil contract, equal to any other civil contract. Some representatives of the authorities

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With a bull of 27 January 1933, he was appointed Bishop of Tarnów – the tenth in succession. He began his rule in the diocese by solemnly offering the Tarnów diocese to the Heart of Jesus. He ordered that an enthronement of the Heart of Jesus be held in every parish. This event was commemorated by the commencement of the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Tarnów. Bishop Lisowski wanted to be present in the religious life of the diocese. Every major celebration in the parishes not only connected him to the parish spiritually, but he himself wanted to be at the celebration, to celebrate the service. He consecrated churches, bells, organs, came to the end of parish missions, retreats, attended priestly jubilees and funerals of deceased priests. In this way, he was in contact with his entire flock. In 1938, Bishop Lisowski convened the second synod of the Diocese of Tarnów. Bishop Lisowski died on 4 June 1939 at 2.30 a.m. His funeral took place on Wednesday, 7 June, under the presidency of Cardinal Primate Hlond [Kantor 2023, 14-16; Nowak 1998, 78-86; Nowak 1999, 36-39].

<sup>5</sup> *Listy pasterskie, orędzia, odezwy Episkopatu Polski 1918-1939*, edited by A. Gąsior, J. Królikowski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II, Kraków 2018.

<sup>6</sup> *List pasterski biskupów polskich do duchowieństwa i wiernych o małżeństwie* (20.10.1921), in: *Listy pasterskie, orędzia, odezwy Episkopatu Polski 1918-1939* [hereinafter: *Pastoral Letter*], p. 105.

justify the introduction of divorce on the grounds that the Catholic marriage law, by refusing to grant divorce, violates the laws of human nature, is detrimental to public morality, is against progress, the spirit of the times, reason. Well, the bishops, in their *Pastoral Letter* to the Clergy and Faithful, challenged the arguments cited. "It is true that God has also imposed difficult duties on the rational creature. Such a difficult duty is sometimes the duty to maintain lasting love for the unfaithful spouse. This duty can and must be fulfilled for the spiritual good of the spouses and of society as a whole."<sup>7</sup>

By observing everyday reality, Bishop Leon Wałęga was convinced that the right way and an effective means of preventing these threats and leading to the repair of the world was the Christian family. It is the first and most important school for the young generation. Where families are God-fearing, society is healthy. In his view, godless politics may prevail temporarily, persecution of the Church may even break out, but if only faith and virtue are deeply rooted in families, then society will weather all storms and be reborn to a better life. Only when this last stronghold falls, when families abandon the Lord, then the collapse of society becomes a reality. The Bishop of Tarnów saw in his time such deliberate actions by the godless enemies of religion. "They have already almost completely thrown the Lord out of public life, in politics almost no one looks to Him. After politics comes the turn of the schools, which they want to make completely secular, that is, without religious instruction and without religious practices. Finally, our godless men have launched violent attacks on the Christian character of the Polish family, for they realise that only then will they achieve complete victory when they banish the Lord from families, for then they will poison and destroy religious life at the very source."<sup>8</sup> Among the threats to the family, Bishop Wałęga identified actions in the parliament and outside the parliament to push for civil marriage and divorce. "Without the sacrament of marriage, there would be no Christian families, there would only be loose and sinful flocks – no permanent and lasting families at all. In the interests, therefore, not only of the Church but also of society itself, we are obliged to defend the Christian character of our families, that is, the sacrament of marriage and its indissolubility. It does not end there. Just as we see people who are Catholic by name and birth certificate, but in whom there is nothing Catholic, we also find, unfortunately more and more often, families registered in the parish books but living in a pagan way. Such families become schools of corruption and in them breed all the iniquities of which the world is full today. And who is called to this in the first place, if not the parents themselves?"<sup>9</sup>

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

<sup>8</sup> L. Wałęga, *List pasterski na Wielki Post roku Pańskiego 1923*, "Currenda. Pismo Urzędowe Tarnowskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej" 1 (1923), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

Bishop Leon Wałęga wrote that every family is like a small closed community and is a separate world unto itself. At the head of this community, God has placed two people bound together by the sacrament of marriage – the father and the mother. Both constitute the parental authority guarded by the fourth commandment. The head of the family is the father, for he devises and directs the family, strives to provide for it and is responsible for everything. The heart of the family, on the other hand, is the mother, for from her maternal heart flows that warmth which produces a family atmosphere to which all are drawn. “The mother brings everyone together, she knows how to soothe suffering and win over the stubborn with her dedication. Just as it is difficult to determine what is more important and necessary in the human body: the head or the heart, it is also difficult to say whose role and mission in the family are more important: those of the father or those of the mother. Where the head and the heart are healthy, the organism is healthy and strong, and likewise the family is morally healthy if the father and the mother understand their task well and fulfil it conscientiously. These two influences complement each other and create a normal family.”<sup>10</sup>

The relationship of the spouses to each other is best defined by the vows they take during a wedding ceremony. One vows to the other to love, to believe and to be honest in marriage until death. These obligations are the same for both parties, neither has greater rights or privileges, both are to be a unity bound by mutual love and lifelong fidelity. This love cannot be based on natural and transitory motives, for then it would not be lasting; it should be a supernatural love. However, for such mutual love to be possible, one party must deserve the respect of the other. Bishop Wałęga encouraged parents to have such respect. “A wife will respect a sober, hard-working, God-fearing husband sincerely attached to their home, and on the contrary, it will be difficult for her to have respect when she sees in her husband addictions, selfishness, tyranny, I do not want to mention marital infidelity, because this breaks marital unity, often even forever. But also the wife should have qualities and virtues so that she is respected and valued by her husband. We know how, in pagan times, women and wives lived in humiliation and contempt, and it was only Christianity that gave women dignity and even certain gloriousness by clothing them in Christian virtues: humility, piety, patience, modesty and self-sacrifice for others. Even the worst husband must bow before a wife adorned with such virtues. However, as today’s woman sheds these Christian virtues and, forgetting her dignity, chases after sinful fashion and games, she also loses respect.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> L. Wałęga, *List pasterski w sprawie formacji młodzieży męskiej*, in: *Listy, orędzia i odezwy biskupów tarnowskich w dwudziestolecie międzywojennym*, edited by R. Kantor, Wydawnictwo Diecezji Biblos, Tarnów 2023, pp. 92-93.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Bishop Franciszek Lisowski, on the other hand, included communism among the factors secularising the family. According to him, the Bolshevik worldview cannot be reconciled with the Catholic worldview. Communism wants a community of land and all goods; it abolishes private property, removes all supernatural elements, removes all faith, all religion, and thus wants to create "paradise on earth". This is directly opposed by the Church. Bishop Lisowski notes that "According to the Communists, the Church is the cause of all the misery that afflicts mankind and therefore it must be destroyed. Hence the struggle against God and against the servants of God. Remove God and all faith from the soul. Down with the Pope, the bishops, the clergy, down with all religion." Bishop Lisowski made it clear that consistently "the struggle against God aims at destroying in man the image and likeness of God. All communism's hatred of God was summarised in its hatred of man. This explains why the communists are so eager to mass murder people, above all the religious with the clergy being first. They murder because they hate God, because the souls of religious people are the tabernacles of God."<sup>12</sup>

## 2. BRINGING UP CHILDREN AS THE PRIMARY TASK OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS

The Lord offers children to the parents as an expensive deposit for the purpose of raising them not only to be good members of society but, more importantly, to bring them up for heaven, and one day He will demand from them a strict account of how they fulfilled this honourable mission. Bishop Franciszek Lisowski reminded parents that they are the first teachers and educators of their children and this right cannot be taken away from them by anyone. "The upbringing of a child should begin from conception itself, not from the cradle. This first period of education, silent, secret, known only to the mother herself and entrusted in prayer and Holy Communion to Jesus, is very important for the life and development of the child. Just as the farmer prepares the soil for the seed to take in and bear fruit, so too the mother has to prepare a dwelling for the child's soul. When, therefore, the mother realises that God has entrusted her with His treasure, let her henceforth remember that she no longer belongs to herself."<sup>13</sup>

The great secret of parenting is love. A child needs to be loved, but with a good, rational love. According to Bishop Lisowski, it is not good when it is based on the child's natural qualities and when it seeks only temporal welfare for the child. It is not just the body, but the soul that must be loved

<sup>12</sup> F. Lisowski, *List pasterski Światła i cienie w mojej owczarni*, in: *Listy, orędzia i odezwy...*, p. 237.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, *List na Wielki Post O kryzysie moralnym rodzin chrześcijańskich*, in: *Listy, orędzia i odezwy...*, p. 158.

above all. Love, based on natural qualities, is unstable, as are these qualities. "Soon bitter, unpleasant disappointments come and love fades away. Actually, such love is not really the love of the child, but rather the parents love themselves and seek their own satisfaction. Parental love is to be based on the belief that their child is first and foremost a child of God and bears the image of God. These values are supernatural, eternal and love based on them never fades. It is not true love when it is not guided by reason, but only by blind feeling, for then it will turn into weakness."<sup>14</sup>

In the interwar period, the Bishops of Tarnów taught that weak, indulgent parents become slaves to their children who will grow up to be capricious, unforgiving egoists. "When they are children, parents deny them nothing, they want their children to live at home like in paradise and they forget that paradise is gone irretrievably and that their children are destined to live in a valley of tears. When the child grows up, they pity him or her, lamenting his or her every effort and work at home or school, they pity him or her when the holidays are over and the child has to go back to school, as if they have forgotten that people have to work by the sweat of their brow. They pity their young daughters that they have not yet played, that is, that they have not enjoyed life."<sup>15</sup> The Hierarchs pointed out that this exaggerated emotional love blinds especially the mother who does not want to see the faults in her child. "She regards the child as an angel incarnate and allows him or her to do everything. And then what happens? Already at a young age, the child becomes a tyrant and the mother his or her slave. Evil inclinations, self-love, stubbornness, lying – unpunished, grow. The mother's exaggerated compassion and unthinking pity distorts character. The child will not learn and understand that life is linked to hardship, work, suffering and sacrifice. True, childhood is a time of joy and merriment. Where there is innocence, where there is lack of care and responsibility – there is joy. What sunshine is to a plant, joy is to youth. That is why children should be allowed to play innocently and not be discouraged by merriment and shouting. It's their age, it's their time. But on the other hand, children are to learn and understand that sports and games are not the content of life, but are only a brief respite after work to refresh their strength for further work."<sup>16</sup>

The Bishops of Tarnów emphasised that the entire upbringing of a child from the earliest years is to take place *sub specie aeternitatis*, i.e. from the standpoint of eternity. To educate means to raise (*educare*) the child higher and higher up to the peak of perfection, which is God. All other factors of education will fail, will not suffice, because they are insufficient. The important role of the upbringing of children in the family was very well summarised

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



by Bishop Leon Wałęga who said that: "If all Christian parents conscientiously fulfilled their vocations, how different the world would look – there would not be so much depravity among the young, there would not be so many crimes. How many criminals sentenced to death accused their parents of being responsible for such a terrible punishment. With what complaint will all the condemned appear on the Day of Judgement? And yet the worse the world is, the more careful should be the upbringing at home to protect the young from corruption and to harden them for the future. Older people will remember the old and large families that were a good school of obedience, piety and good manners. Unfortunately, such families are becoming fewer and fewer today; even in Catholic families, laxity is creeping up on them. Parents abandon their children's obedience, leave them free, are too weak towards them and even quite often succumb to the influence of their sons and perhaps even more so of their daughters. Although some parents do their best to amass wealth for their children or to provide them with a career, but they do not care about their children's souls, they treat their transgressions leniently, and, indifferent to salvation, they do not know how to instil the fear or the love of God in young hearts."<sup>17</sup>

### 3. GOOD PARENTAL EXAMPLE

Bishop Wałęga as well as Bishop Lisowski were unanimous in stating that there is no more effective means of bringing up children well than by good example. The life of parents should in every respect be the model based on which their children are educated and formed. Bishop Wałęga recommends piety for the fathers of families. "In this respect, seldom can a father be a model for his children. The overwhelming majority of our men are truly cold and religiously indifferent. They do not feel the need to pray more fervently, they seldom receive the Holy Sacraments; worse still, they are ashamed of signs of more fervent piety and sometimes even ridicule it. Of course, children and especially older sons follow the paternal example. How much trouble poor mothers have with the sons of such fathers before they get them to pray or go to confession. On the contrary, where the children see their father often on his knees, see him frequently receiving the holy sacraments, there these practices of religious life become a common custom of the family, which even the older sons will not avoid."<sup>18</sup> With regard to the mothers, in turn, Bishop Wałęga recommends that they set a good example by modest dress. He argued that one of the greatest scourges of the modern world is the fashionable and indecent dress of girls, which

<sup>17</sup> L. Wałęga, *List pasterski w sprawie formacji młodzieży męskiej*, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.



spreads widespread depravity. All serious people fear sad consequences for future families from this. The greatest blame for this widespread misfortune lies with the mothers who allow their daughters to dress in this way and often encourage them themselves by giving them bad example. "It will be of no avail for any exhortation to revive the Christian family if mothers do not understand their duty and declare war on sinful fashion. Only the example of an organised larger group of Christian mothers can effectively put an end to this misfortune."<sup>19</sup>

Bishop Lisowski equates good parental example with exemplary married life. He condemns so-called "trial marriages", "marriages until certain time". He expresses this in his Pastoral Letter of 1934 by writing: "And what is to be said of this fashionable, and so shamefully degrading to the woman, "trial marriage", "companionate marriage", "marriage until certain time", i.e. until it is shown whether or not there will be offspring from such a union? And what is to become of this unfortunate woman, whom this supposed spouse, friend, companion, after some time, will reject with revulsion, like a withered rose, like a squeezed lemon! What is to become of the poor, unhappy children of such unions? Think about it and you will understand why the Church constantly, so consistently, with such obstinacy defends the indissolubility of the marriage bond and has one answer to all the complaints, threats and imprecations: *Non possumus*, we cannot – and you will not suspect it of being too strict, of lacking heart and forbearance. The Church is the greatest benefactor of mankind, because the security of mother and child, of the Fatherland and of the Church, rests only on the indissolubility of the marriage bond."<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS

The Christian family is not only the parents' responsibility for their children, their upbringing, good example, but it is also the children's duties towards their parents. The Hierarchs of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939 focused on three fundamental duties: respect, obedience and love.

The fourth commandment of the Decalogue is the truth, valid under the pain of sin. It is based on the principle that parents replace God on earth and, therefore, there is a halo of solemnity and majesty on their foreheads. Therefore, immediately after the commandments relating to the honour of God, the fourth commandment on the honour of parents takes first place. The reason for honouring parents is neither their virtues nor their merits, but the dignity of fatherhood, flowing from God. Conversely, the

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 95-96.

<sup>20</sup> F. Lisowski, *List na Wielki Post O kryzysie moralnym rodzin chrześcijańskich*, p. 160.

lack of virtues and merits, and even weaknesses and sins, do not exempt the child from keeping the fourth commandment. Bishop Lisowski wrote: "The modern spirit has declared war on all authority and thus on the solemnity of parents. The son, as soon as he has grown up, and if he still has his studies, if he does not scoff, he pities his parents, their backwardness, because they cannot comprehend modern progress. Poor parents, they have often not eaten to educate their children and now this is how they are treated by their own son or daughter. After all, work and years of experience are perhaps worth no less than an academic degree. But this is what the child does not want to acknowledge. If such a son or daughter could look into the soul of his father and mother, they would see what bitterness and sadness they are filled with."<sup>21</sup> He further encourages the children: "Respect your parents because God has commanded it. Never, God forbid, be ashamed that they are unlearned, that they may be modestly dressed, but see with the eye of faith what a halo of divine dignity shines on their foreheads. Reverently kiss the work-worn hand, see what deep furrows have been ploughed in their foreheads by the concern for your education. Respect them not only externally, but in your soul, in your heart, and patiently endure their faults and the weaknesses of their old age."<sup>22</sup>

The second duty is obedience. It stems from this assumption that parents are God's vicegerents and therefore disobedience to parents is at the same time rebellion against God. Obedience should be sincere, not just outwardly, but from the spirit, from conviction. It is to be a kind of homage, i.e. obedience to God himself. Bishop Franciszek Lisowski encouraged obedience by writing: "Obey your parents, for they are your best teachers. They desire only your good. When you are in unfamiliar surroundings, do you not listen to your guide? And yet you are going on a distant, unknown journey. You are pilgrims and your parents have already travelled much of this journey, have gained experience and want to guide you along the right path."<sup>23</sup>

The Hierarchs of Tarnów in the 1930s taught that, after God, children would find no other person on earth who would be a greater benefactor and love them more than their father and mother. The heart must be paid for with the heart, the blessings with gratitude. "It sometimes happens, unfortunately among Catholic families, that son and daughter not only do not love their parents, but that they deal cruelly with them. By asking and crying, they force their parents to bequeath their property. The parents give them everything. After all, it is their child and will not harm them. How wrong they were. After receiving the estate, the hearts of the son and daughter-in-law became so evil. The old woman is a nuisance and they want to get rid

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

of her as soon as possible. They tease and harass her so much, skimping on a piece of bread, that the poor mother swallows the bitter tears, and when she cannot stand it any longer, she leaves the house with a begging stick.”<sup>24</sup> In another place, Bishop Lisowski exhorted to love towards parents: “Dear children, remember that your fate depends on keeping the fourth commandment. As long as you have parents, you are happy. Only when God takes them away will you understand what you have lost. No one can replace your mother’s heart. The miserable plight of the orphan. You will go to her grave, sad orphan, and cry: Mum, Mum – and you will not hear from your mother again, and only then will you understand what a mother means. Love your parents if you want to be happy, if you want your children to love you. Try to sweeten their old age. It is the duty of conscience under the pain of mortal sin to support them when they are in want.”<sup>25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period very often called on the faithful to guard their family against various social, economic and political threats. In their view, attacking marital identity was the direct destruction of the family. The concern for the family in the pastoral letters of Bishop Wałęga and Bishop Lisowski can be summarised as follows:

- 1) The Bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period, when writing in their pastoral letters about the crucial importance of the family, drew attention to dangers that threaten this institution from outside. They condemned civil marriages and civil divorces. They argued that the family is the first and most important school for the young generation. Where families are God-fearing, society is healthy. In their view, godless politics may prevail temporarily, persecution of the Church may even break out, but if only faith and virtue are deeply rooted in families, then society would weather all storms and be reborn to a better life.
- 2) The primary task of parents in the family is to bring up their children. Parents are the first teachers and educators of their children and this right cannot be taken away from them by anyone. The upbringing of a child should begin from conception. This is the first period of education, silent, secret, known only to the mother.
- 3) In caring for the family, the good parental example cannot be forgotten. Bishop Wałęga as well as Bishop Lisowski unanimously stated that there is no more effective means of bringing up children well than by good

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 170-71.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

example. The life of parents should in every respect be the model based on which their children are educated and formed.

- 4) Finally, the Christian family is not only the parents' responsibility for their children, their upbringing, good example, but it is also the children's duties towards their parents. The Hierarchs of Tarnów between 1918 and 1939 focused on three fundamental duties: respect, obedience and love.

When analysing the teaching of the bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period on issues relating to the family, we can easily see that this teaching is still relevant today. Similar dangers threaten the contemporary family. Also the imperishable values related to upbringing such as good example, respect and love are up-to-date.

The pastoral letters of the bishops of Tarnów in the interwar period are undoubtedly an important and significant element in the history of the Diocese of Tarnów in their message and broad references. They are also an incentive to undertake further research into some manifestations of church life in the Diocese of Tarnów, especially the sacraments, faith and customs or ideological and political threats.

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