



The Role of Family Pastoral Accompaniment in Addressing Contemporary Challenges

An Assessment Ten Years after *Amoris laetitia*

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Summary

1. Introduction
2. Changes families are experiencing worldwide
3. Key aspects of the postmodern cultural context
4. Theological roots of accompaniment
5. What means to accompany families today
6. Accompanying families within the Church.

The Institute for Advanced Family Studies

- ▶ Since **2004**: research and formation focused on the family.
- ▶ What **changes** families are experiencing worldwide.
- ▶ Which are the **cultural roots** of these changes that affect family life.
- ▶ Understand what is needed to better **accompany** and **strengthen** families.



Contemporary Families

- ▶ Fast and deep **changes** in society and in families:
 - ▶ Equality between men and women
 - ▶ New paternities
 - ▶ Technologies
- ▶ This new context calls for a **change** in the way we **look** at the family,
- ▶ We need to **support families** according with the new mentality and **circumstances**.



Cultural challenges of postmodernity

- ▶ **Individualism:** human beings are sufficient in themselves and do not need others to achieve fulfillment (autonomy).
- ▶ Unconscious rejection of the **importance of relationships** for each person's integral development and happiness (interdependence).
- ▶ **Loneliness:** one of the worst diseases in today's world, since God did not make us for solitude, but for communion (Pope Benedict XVI)



Individualistic styles of life

- ▶ **Individualism** is deeply present in our forms of daily life today.
- ▶ There is hardly any sharing of **common times** in family life.
- ▶ Little importance given to spending time together, sharing meals, or celebrating family occasions.
- ▶ Spouses develop **parallel professional and social relationships**; they don't share friends, or even material goods.



Pessimistic view of family life

- ▶ **Pessimistic** view of family project.
- ▶ Younger married couples: difficulty in drawing up a **shared project in life**.
- ▶ **Marriage** based on “their own individuality.” as an addition which can improve their personal life and perhaps make them happy...
- ▶ Spouses develop **parallel professional and social relationships**; they don't share friends, or even material goods.



Cultural challenges of postmodernity

- ▶ **Difficulties and crises** not seen as a normal part of growth in personal relationships.
- ▶ Tendency to present an “**ideal model**” of the family that does not exist in reality.
- ▶ Difficulty to understand and to accept **vulnerability**.



Communicating the truth about the family

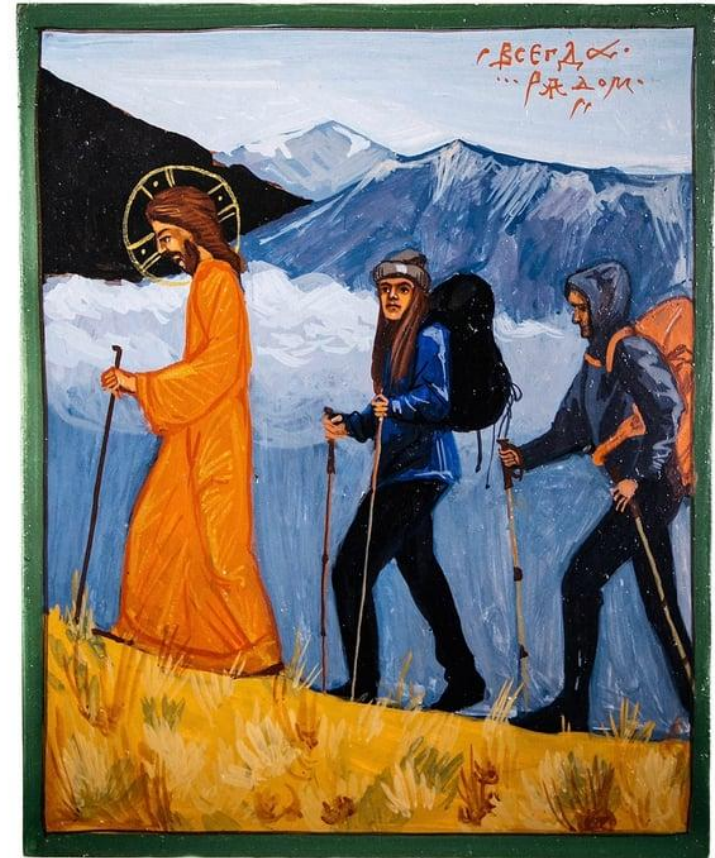
- ▶ Moving beyond a merely **voluntaristic language** of love.
- ▶ Speaking to younger generations not only to the mind, but through the **heart** and **lived experience**.
- ▶ Not a crisis of ideas but a **crisis of bonds**.



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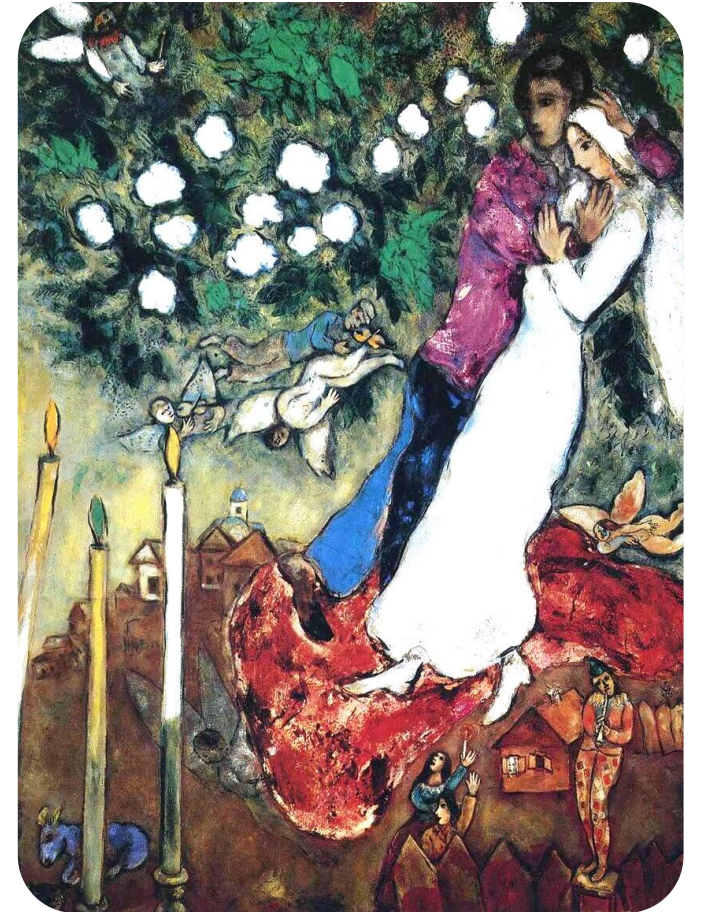
Theological roots of accompaniment

- ▶ “It is not good that the [man/woman] should be alone” (Genesis 2:18).
- ▶ Accompaniment is **not a strategy**...
- ▶ ... but a participation in the very strength of the Holy Spirit through Christian.
- ▶ *Amoris laetitia* brings this intuition to the **center of family pastoral care**.



What does “to accompany” mean?

- ▶ **To be** (share space and time).
- ▶ Establishing a **bond**.
- ▶ Place ourselves **alongside the other** (not above them).
- ▶ It is **not** about **solving problems**, but about sharing the life journey.
- ▶ Not limited to moments of **crisis**.
- ▶ **Time / patience**: results not immediate.



The Church as a *space* for accompaniment

- ▶ Beyond **services**: an ecclesial **home**.
- ▶ Spaces of welcome, **trust**, and belonging
- ▶ The parish as a “family of families” and calls for “spaces of accompaniment and guidance” (AL, 38; 202).
- ▶ Families accompany and are accompanied within the Church.



Formation to be able to accompany

- ▶ Accompanying requires both **competence** and **attitude**.
- ▶ **Competence** knowing real families: cultural context, strengths, and difficulties.
- ▶ **Attitude**
 - ▶ Open-mindedness
 - ▶ No judging
 - ▶ Hopeful look on each family/person
 - ▶ Humility





"It is not good that the family should be alone"

Family accompaniment helps families rediscover their deepest vocation: to become places where love, belonging, and shared life can grow.

Thank you