

Family's Many Faces

Interdisciplinary colloquium on the plurality of families

Saint Paul University, May 6 to 8, 2010

The Issue

The family is an essential component of all human life. It is the intrinsic condition of our existence. But the forms and models of the experience of family vary widely. Some people grew up in a "traditional" family, while others lived through the divorce of their parents; many were raised in a blended or single-parent family. There are families that have grown bigger and families that have shrunk, families that have been torn apart and families that have been rebuilt. In the West, the large number of divorces and re-marriages, as well as a significant diversity of styles and life experiences, turn upside down and even call into question the current model of the nuclear family. At the same time, our ideas about marriage are put to the test. This shift in our societies leads to different ethical, pastoral and theological problems. In the modern pluralistic context, we – as individuals, as Christians and as a society – must think about the current challenges facing marriage and families.

This international colloquium allows us to tackle questions such as the following:

- How do these different faces of the family influence our reflections and our practice (theological, ethical, pastoral, social, psychological, etc.)?
- How can we support families in what they are living?
- Towards what future can we support families?
- How can we take changes in the family into account in our reflections and practice?
- What defines the family today?
- Is marriage necessary?
- What meaning can religious marriage have today?
- Does speaking of an ideal family model make sense today?
- What is the role of Christian families?

This bilingual, interdisciplinary colloquium on families aims to offer a place for exchanging ideas and encourage dialogue between our different perspectives on (Christian) families. This conversation will take place

- in an ecumenical context;
- between the human sciences and theology;
- between contrasting views of the realities and challenges of families.

These exchanges, we are convinced, will help us to better understand families and better support them.