

YOU PROBABLY KNOW THE SAYING “Love is all you need”. Suppose someone answered: “No, it isn’t!” This is the subject of C.S. Lewis’s book *The Four Loves*, which reflects on affection, friendship, eros, and charity. We believe that this story sheds a suprisingly fresh light on the recent International Conference on Moral Theology, which had the significant title: “Pastoral Practices, Life Experience and Moral Theology: *Amoris Laetitia* Between New Opportunittes and New Paths”, whose principal papers are published in this issue. This conference in Rome was organized and led by the John Paul II Institute and the Gregorian University, under the guidance of Don Maurizio Chiodi, Miguel Yañez, and the newly nominated rector of the John Paul II Institute, Professor Msgr. Philippe Bordeyne. It took place from 11 to 14 May 2022, and INTAMS (the International Academy for Marital Spirituality) was an interested participant. When C.S. Lewis reflected deeply on the four types of love in 1960, before the Second Vatican Council, there was already a struggle to grasp new opportunities and a hope for new theological developments. What can this story of C.S. Lewis teach us today with regard to this important conference?

It is important to note that Lewis could not have written this book if he had not fallen in love with Helen Joy Davidman, who was Jewish, and eventually married her. Their love story is a remarkable one, for, at first sight, one could hardly imagine a more ill-matched pair: Lewis, the sixty-year-old Professor of English Literature and one of the greatest Christian writers of England, and the American Jewish woman Joy Davidman, in her youth a member of the Communist Party, a divorcee who later converted to Christianity. When Joy developed cancer and was outwardly at her least attractive, she won Lewis’s love. Shortly before she died, they married, in the conviction that the blessing of God was indispensable for their faithful union.

In this respect, his profound pondering on the four types of love reflects the many unresolved questions that married people, and so many families, are asking themselves down to the present day. Only a theology and spirituality that are rooted in the praxis of daily living can make sense of and shed light on the numerous questions concerning the lived reality of spouses and of “wounded humanity” today, as Pope Francis put it in the special papal audience during the conference, on Friday 13 May 2022.

The pope always exhorts us to let the church become a “field hospital”. With this image, INTAMS can tell of its history of almost 34 years, that we have not separated ourselves from the world with its urgent questions but have let ourselves be involved in the many injuries, even those of a sexual nature, of the most diverse marriages, families, partnerships (both opposite-sex as well as same-sex partnerships), between those of the same Christian tradition or different traditions, as well as those of different faiths, which physically, psychologically, and spiritually codetermine our time.

It also became clear once again in this conference that the exhortation *Amoris laetitia* fearlessly exposes and tackles in a prudent manner the burning questions raised by the two-year worldwide survey in connection with the 2014 and 2015 synods and the decisions taken there. Many of the questions with which marriages and families are struggling remain unanswered even today.

This conference also gave serious consideration to the possibilities of taking to a deeper level the theological and pastoral reflection on these questions. Only a theology that is “free from fear” and “free from a lack of courage” has the potential to reflect on the actual situation of lived married life and to respond to current concerns.

A garden is not beautiful in itself or thanks to a famous name, nor is it simply something to be maintained in its present state. It needs to be planned, cultivated, and cared for. Exactly the same is true of the organizations that seek to explore the theme of marriage and the family. This recognition, and the desire to develop over the years with the varying perspectives on life, give us hope, perspectives, and potential to develop, to grow, and to mature in order to connect with the twenty-first century, even if – or indeed, precisely because – people are living in an increasingly secularized world and longing for a kind of “aggiornamento” or “bringing up to date”. What is true in marriage or for unmarried persons is true of any other institution: in politics, in social and professional life, and in our Christian church/es.

Some of the church’s teaching and practices need to be improved. Its teaching needs to be presented in a way that would appear relevant to faithful people and to their daily life, something they could understand. Most people are longing for an answer and are sympathetic to embracing a “change” because time cannot be brought to a standstill, whereas others see little need for change and resist efforts in that direction. In recent years, unfortunately, this discussion of further development in the church has provoked a considerable degree of polarization in the decision-making church! At the papal audience during the conference, Pope Francis said that “casuistry...was a staple for me and my generation in studying moral theology”, and, although it is now outdated, this “Thomism in decline” can still be re clothed and disguised (“un po’ travestita”) behind propositions about what one can or cannot do. But does not our Christian ethics and *epikeia* possess a great wealth in view of transformation and of an adjustment for our epoch? The INTAMS review, *Marriage, Families & Spirituality*, has the honor today to publish for you the principal contributions to the International Conference on Moral Theology.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage and exhort you, dear readers, to enter into dialogue with the text of *Amoris laetitia* and with all the wonderful contributions to the conference. We enjoy providing space for such dialogue within the pages of our journal, and we aim to continue doing so in the future.

ALDEGONDE BRENNINKMEIJER-WERHAHN & JAMES F. KEENAN