Editorial

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (AL). Contrary to what might be expected from a journal entitled *Marriage, Families & Spirituality*, we decided not to dedicate a whole special issue to mark this occasion, primarily because during the past decade articles in our journal have consistently reflected on this important document of Pope Francis. However, a reader who takes a glance at this editorial after reading through all the articles in the current issue might be confused by that statement, insofar as every single contribution engages with AL in one way or another. This observation can, with some justification, be dismissed as a simple coincidence, but, on a closer inspection, it shows the extent to which the apostolic exhortation has become an unavoidable reference point and a true inspiration for theologians reflecting on relational, sexual, or family ethics. In hindsight, perhaps this "coincidence", more than any deliberate effort to prompt our contributors to focus their work on AL, is the best way for our journal to commemorate its 10th anniversary.

A most explicit reflection on the impact that AL has had on current magisterial teaching and theology is offered by the first article in this issue. In it, *Vimal Tirimanna* takes note of several "novelties" that characterize the document and are representative of its different approach to formulating magisterial teaching on marriage and sexuality. Although these "novelties" caused quite a stir when AL was published, Tirimanna demonstrates how all of them are deeply embedded in the tradition; thus, he reminds us of the danger of a narrow-mindedness exhibited by identifying "the tradition" only with what might be found in the magisterial interventions of the immediate predecessors of Pope Francis.

In our second contribution, *Luca Lunardon* reflects on the so-called principle of pastorality, introduced by the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* and especially insisted on by Pope Francis during his pontificate. The principle emphasises the active involvement of recipients in the proclamation of the gospel and treats pastoral relationships as a *locus theologicus*. The author gladly acknowledges that the principle of pastorality is not absolute but should instead always be interpreted in conjunction with the so-called principle of authority which looks at how the free and legitimate recognition of authority takes place. The goal of considering both principles simultaneously and, thus, allowing them to influence but also temper each other is an authentic development of moral and responsible behavior and of a conscience formed through careful discernment of the complexity of reality in light of the gospel.

To what extent the issue of authentic development of doctrine continues to be a disputed issue in the church is also evidenced by *Anna Karger-Kroll*'s contribution that offers a reflection on three models of normative justification in Catholic debates on marriage. The author demonstrates how these different models can be detected (1) in the official teaching of the magisterium prior to

Amoris laetitia, (2) in AL itself, and (3) in the text on relational ethics developed by the German Synodal Way. By comparing the three models, Karger-Kroll reaches the conclusion that current controversies in debates on marriage have less to do with substantive disagreements about moral values, which ought to characterize marriage and are adhered to by all these models, than with differing assumptions regarding the logic of moral justification. If these are properly clarified, a more productive debate on marriage – one that is capable of attending to its ontological foundations, hermeneutical interpretation, and the lived practice of relationships – might be possible.

How that might be done in relation to the specific issue of same-sex partnerships is shown by *Matthias Steindl* in his article. The author considers both ethical and canonical aspects of how same-sex partnerships are seen within the church and argues that a consistent application of what *Gaudium et spes* teaches, and *Amoris laetitia* develops further when it comes to marriage, ought to open this institution to same-sex couples. In other words, both documents place a greater emphasis on love as opposed to procreation that is difficult to reconcile with the magisterial insistence that only heterosexual marriages meet the criteria of what can be considered a marriage by the church.

Inspired by *Amoris laetitia* and Pope Francis's insistence on synodality, *Maureen Ahyuwa* reflects on the integral upbringing of children in Nigeria. She rightly identifies family as a privileged place of formation and upbringing, but that identification, stressed in the post-conciliar magisterial documents, often encounters significant pastoral challenges that might cast serious doubts on the commitment of the church to the good of the family. To ameliorate such a scenario, the author proposes a more thorough integration of contextual analysis with theological reflection and pastoral praxis, or of synodal ecclesiology, communal anthropology, and pastoral ubuntu, as a most promising theological-pastoral strategy to accompany families in Nigeria and, thus, one that gives more substance to the claim that family holds a privileged place in ecclesial discourse.

Finally, *Claudia Leal* and *Julian Paparella* bring to our attention the somewhat neglected topic of intercultural couples. They explore the topic through the use of autoethnography, a still rarely employed method in theology, and thus bring their own experience of being in intercultural partnerships into conversation with magisterial teachings and scholarly literature. The authors single out three particular areas of interest: managing gender roles, navigating social dynamics in the wider family, and managing spiritual and religious differences. They also point out that intercultural families might represent an untapped "resource" as schools of deeper humanity in the church.

The current issue concludes with the customary *Book Reviews* section, which is preceded by two important *Notices*. The first notice, authored by *Bernard Kasamata Kamulinso* and *Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi*, offers a reflection on the two documents issued, respectively, by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, *Una caro* and *The Pastoral Challenge of Polygamy*. The authors express their doubts concerning each document's treatment of polygamy, especially when it comes to "lived experience" that still remains largely unaddressed in both of them, which severely limits any impact they might have in the church. The second notice highlights

the recently published INTAMS Research Report, *The Theology of Marriage after Vatican II: Theological and Canonical Perspectives*, by *Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi*, *Kevin Schembri*, and *Johan De Tavernier*. The report examines theology and canon law related to marriage and highlights areas where development and greater pastoral sensitivity is needed in light of the vision of the Second Vatican Council and the lived realities of couples and families. The notice consists of the foreword (by *Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn*) and the introduction to the report; the complete Research Report is available in full on the INTAMS webpage.

This editorial would not be complete without mentioning two people who have played a major role in the history of our journal, and who recently retired: Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi and Hans Storme. Much of the quality and international reputation that this journal enjoys today is due to the unwavering commitment of Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, who held the INTAMS Chair for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality at the Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies at the KU Leuven, and served as editor of this journal for more than thirty years. Throughout his editorship, Thomas remained committed to the journal's mission of providing a space for theological and interdisciplinary reflection on marriage, family, and related topics. He always encouraged international dialogue on those topics, even during times when such discussion and theological exploration were not always welcomed within the church. The editorial board is deeply grateful for his dedication, vision, and the many sacrifices he made for the journal. As an editorial team, we hope to continue building on the legacy he leaves behind. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Hans Storme, who served for many years as editorial assistant. Hans was responsible for the formatting and proofreading of articles, and his sharp and reliable eye, as well as his enthusiasm, will be deeply missed.

Nenad Polgar