

THE MALTESE FAMILY

The TSA commission on the Maltese Family Report

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Research on the family in Malta has been going on for some years. It confirms that the family is at the basis of Maltese society and that two out of three families are satisfied with their home life (Tabone C.). This means that the Maltese family remains strong and continues to provide support and formation.

However, presently, it is facing challenges and problems which seem to be increasing as time passes. In the light of this situation, some are claiming that the introduction of divorce might provide a solution to these problems while others claim that divorce would only compound the problems the family is facing.

We believe that the family still has a central role to play and, given its importance, we feel that every effort should be done to protect its integrity.

SUMMARY

The first section of this report by the Theology Students' Association summarises the teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage and then reports the findings of research on the family and the shifting values of the Maltese. In Section 2, an analysis is made of the factors which led to marital conflicts of couples who sought counselling services from the Cana Movement (1996) and the Social Welfare Development Program (S.W.D.P.), as well as 109 cases filed for separation in the Second Hall of the Civil Court between January–June 1997. Section 3 reviews the diverse adverse socio-psychological and economic impacts of separation and divorce as experienced abroad. The fourth section proposes recommendations for future research and action.

1.0 The teaching of the Catholic Church

Over the years the Catholic Church has consistently preached the indissolubility

of marriage. The husband and wife commit themselves to become one and support each other through good and bad times. "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matthew 19, 6) and "everyone who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery and he who marries a woman divorced by her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16, 18).

For the Church, marriage is said to be 'an intimate partnership', 'partnership for life'. It is not something passing but is intended to be lifelong. In the marriage rite, this is phrased as 'for better or for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness in health ... till death do us part'.

Moreover, according to the Church, marriage between two baptised Christians is a sacrament. *Gaudium et Spes* sees marriage as modeled on Christ's own union with the Church. The Lord, the Council says, encounters Christian couples through the sacrament of marriage. He abides with them. Their married love is caught up into divine love. Thus the couple is led by God.

The Church strongly holds that such a validly contracted and subsequently consummated marriage between two baptised Christians cannot be dissolved by any human power.

Despite the fact that ancient Jewish law and Roman Civil law traditionally sanctioned marital dissolubility by the spouses themselves, the Church nevertheless has constantly taught that Christians were forbidden to remarry after obtaining divorce (Bevelacqua, 1972). Once marriage has taken place, the bond is perpetual and the property of unity regarding one man and one woman and excluding all others must be maintained. (Siegle, B, 1986).

The Catholic Church, however, recognises the fact that sometimes marriages break up and partners, for various reasons, cannot live together. In such cases, partners are allowed to separate. But the marriage bond in such cases is still valid and the Catholic Partners are not free to divorce and start a new relationship with someone else.

The Catholic Church also asserts that in those cases where the envisaged enduring bond inherent in every true marriage is not contracted, the marriage has not taken place and hence the marriage is null. There has never been a marriage contract.

1.1 Shifting values and belief in the teaching of the Catholic Church

The Maltese have, for centuries, preferred to be believers in the Catholic Doctrine. Indeed, the right of the Catholic Church to teach unfettered its beliefs is specifically recognised by the Maltese Constitution. However, despite this teaching of the Catholic Church there has, in the last few decades, been a continuous change in Maltese culture and values regarding the family. These cultural and social changes may have been brought about by a number of factors mainly:

- the improved living standards;
- the emancipation and the financial independence of women;
- the improved means of communications mainly the reception of various TV channels and the consequent exposure to different models of married life;
- improved means of transportation and travelling facilities;
- the recent expansion of the tourist sector;
- increased mobility which resulted in the early integration of the younger generation into different social classes and the resultant loosening of ties and social customs;
- the erosion of religious values.

Several recent studies analyse the changing values among Maltese regarding family formation and support. These studies include: *Maltese Families in Transition*, (Tabone, C., 1993); *Shifting Values in Malta and Western Europe*, (Abela, A., 1995); and *X'Taħseb u X'Temmen Int*, (Kummissjoni Djoċesana Żgħażaġh, 1995).

1.2 Economic Factors

The improvement in the living standards of the Maltese was made possible because of the encouraging performance of economic activity in terms of output growth and income redistribution. Aggregate domestic output per head increased by 27% from Lm1028 in 1989 to Lm1303 in 1995 whilst consumption rose at a slower rate until 1994 up by 13% in five years and surged ahead in 1995 by an estimated 11 percentage points (Table 1).

Moreover, recent information on the income distribution of a sampled number of households surveyed in 1994 in the course of constructing a Retail Price Index (Central Office of Statistics, Malta 1997) suggests that the average annual income of the Maltese families interviewed is Lm4,483 up from Lm3,482 in 1989/1990,

the median income is Lm5,148, higher than the Lm3,214 registered five years earlier. The overall distribution measured by the Lorenz Gini coefficient is 0.2579 implying a wider spread than that obtained in 1989/1990 when the coefficient stood at 0.164. The Household Budgetary Survey suggests that 44% of the families had incomes which fell below Lm70 per week. Such families have difficulty sustaining their expenditures.

The share of income from employment and self-employment in the G.N.P. as well as the number of gainfully occupied continued to rise in the 1990's (Table 2).

Female employment also rose steadily by 12% between 1994–1997. The greater female participation in the labour force made more women financially independent (Table 3).

1.3 *Shift in Moral beliefs*

This improvement in the living standards was accompanied by a constant shift in moral values and the consequent erosion of the religious values. Tabone (1993) suggests that consensus about the Church's teaching about the family has fallen in the decade 1983–1993 as illustrated by the data in Table 4.

This change in mores is confirmed by both the K.D.Z. study and the Junior College reports. The former study indicates that 26% of youths believe that divorce is a solution to the family problems. 45% of Junior College students are in favour of divorce whilst 55% approve of pre-marital cohabitation. 53% of youths interviewed by K.D.Z. confirm this view. Moreover, 3 out of 4 youths agree with the use of contraceptives.

Over the last decade, a substantial number of Maltese have stopped to identify themselves with the Catholic Church (Abela, 1994). Figures indicate that in 1984, 94% of respondents considered themselves religious. This figure fell to 65% in 1995. Moreover, the non-religious have increased from 4% in 1984 to 33% in 1995. The percentage of Maltese who have a great trust in the Church declined from 67% in 1984 to 46% in 1995. This detachment from the Catholic Church is reflected in both the K.D.Z. and the Junior College reports. The former survey indicates that 45% of youths think that the Church is too detached from them and is outdated. 6 out of 10 believe they can love God without going to Church. The Junior college report suggests that 1 out of 10 students do not believe in the Catholic Church.

Disagreement with the Church's teaching increases the younger the age cohort. (Tabone, 1993, Table 11, p. 54). In fact, about 4 out of 10 respondents aged less than 54 years disagree with the Catholic Church's teaching on divorce. 3 out of 4 and 7 out of 10 aged 20–34 years disagree with the Church's teaching on birth control and pre-marital sex respectively. The figures are lower for respondents aged 35–54 years. 1 in 2 and 1 in 3 respectively disagree with the Catholic Church teaching on civil marriage. Relatively more males are in favour of divorce than females.

1.4 Shifts in Family Values

Research on the Maltese family carried out to date identifies the supposedly strong bonds which kept the Maltese community together. Basing itself on the extended family which was amenable to the economic and housing conditions of the period, the research departed from this presupposition and concluded that self-fulfillment followed “naturally” from cultural set roles. These roles were followed “blindly” and willingly by all. Consequently this research did not pay enough attention to areas where this bond is weak.

The economic conditions have changed as a result of the massive emigration movement of the 1950s–1970s and the successful expansion of economic activity after independence. Concurrently the idea of what constitutes an ideal/workable family and the search for fulfillment within this family changed. This research identifies these new attitudes and supports certain hypotheses regarding the family-individual dual relationship.

However, what constitutes happiness satisfaction or fulfillment is entirely subjective. These terms mean different things to different people living in different or even in similar circumstances. Ultimately, it is the degree of dissatisfaction which triggers people into action and leads them to search for psychological support outside their home, sexual satisfaction outside marriage and other forms of self-fulfillment.

Given these premises, it is still of interest to review the salient features of the transitional change which emerged from recent studies on the Maltese family. Going against the trend of identifying what unites, would perhaps be more useful for an understanding of the problems faced by Maltese at present. Finding out their degree of ‘dissatisfaction’ or lack of fulfillment would be more revealing of the true state of the Maltese family.

Research by Tabone and Abela consistently indicates that 1 in 3 respondents have marital problems. In fact, in both studies, only 6 out of 10 were completely satisfied with their home life. They feel secure and do not see a chance of their

marriage breaking down. Moreover, the number of Maltese who were completely satisfied with their home life has declined from 76% to 60% between 1991 and 1995. The share of dissatisfied persons had increased. This discontent with family life is further confirmed by the fact that only 65% of respondents would get married again if they had to start afresh. 23% would not remarry while 12% were doubtful (Tabone, 1993).

One in two people questioned feel their family is united while 3 in 4 claim there is dialogue. However, 1.3% described their family as an empty shell or dissolved, 2% have serious problems and another 2% acknowledge he/she is on his or her own.

This sense of disillusion with the family may be a direct outcome of the shift away from conformity to *traditional values* such as religious beliefs, children, tastes, interests in common, an adequate income and agreement on politics to the more *intrinsic values* of self-fulfillment, mutual respect and a happy sexual relationship (Abela, A.).

It is rather surprising and telling that only 5 out of 10 respondents get married because they loved their spouse. 34% got married to raise a family while 5.2% were inspired by egoistic motives such as not wanting to stay alone (3.4%) or for future security and protection (1.8%) (Tabone, C.). These motives are in direct conflict with the intrinsic values mentioned above. The shift in culture concerning the role of women in the family and society compounds this conflict. It seems that as years go by fewer women feel the need to become mothers or to stay at home to be fulfilled (Abela, A., 1995).

Changes of these values as well as a movement towards self-preservation and self-interest and control (Tonna, B.) may partly explain the pronounced sense of frustration in 1 out of 3 Maltese families. Parents still feel that children need both mother and father to grow happily. There are close family ties and high demands for reciprocal care between generations. However, parents are increasingly aware that their life should not be sacrificed for their children's sake.

Besides, Maltese attitudes towards sexual matters have become slightly more permissive over 1991–1995 (Abela, A.). In fact, the number of Maltese who denounce extra-marital affairs, divorce and homosexuality remains high although it has decreased slightly.

At the same time, those who believe that people should have complete sexual freedom has doubled over the period from 6% in 1991 to 12% in 1995. Moreover,

the Maltese are becoming more tolerant of women who have to rear a child as a single parent without entering into a stable relationship with a man (Abela, A.).

Individualized values lead to situations where marriage breakdown could easily result when the partner is not satisfied with the quality of the relationship. Different factors which may lead to such unhappy situations were identified. They include domestic violence, homosexual tendencies and unfaithfulness. Sometimes, quarrels arise when rearing children. Partners cease to love one another. Moreover, alcoholism, unsatisfactory sexual relationships, personality conflicts, illness, relatives or in-laws problems as well as financial problems may also shake a family. Though financial problems were not the most important factor contributing to marital breakdown, the strain that the lack of financial resources could impose on the Maltese family should not be overlooked.

Between 1991–1995, there was a slight increase in the number of those who were not satisfied with household income.

If the economic activity experienced over the last decade is not sustained because of a slowdown of economic activity, and if housing facilities are not made available to young couples at bearable prices, the financial constraint will overstretch our future Maltese families which may more easily collapse under these heavy pressures.

In this changing socio-cultural environment, where the Catholic Church does not seem to be giving adequate answers to family, moral or life problems (Abela, A.), more Maltese are apt to find sufficient reasons for marriage breakdown. They are more likely to accept divorce. In fact, in 1995 (Abela, A. 1997) while 56.6% were totally against divorce and 16% were in favour, 27.5% said they would accept divorce depending on circumstances. In a more recent survey carried out on divorce (Discern 1998) 62.64% of the respondents expressed their view against the enactment of a law introducing divorce in Malta.

2.0 *Marriage Breakdown: Case History*

The shift in values and family-related attitudes among the Maltese noted in section 1 refers to the population at large. It represents a general thrust which may condition personal behaviour and, thus, personal relationships. A better understanding of more factors closer to the marriage break-up may be observed from pursuing case histories of individuals who have either sought counselling services from the Cana movement or the various agencies of the Social Welfare

Development Programme or who have filed for marriage separation and marriage annulment in the civil court or the Church's marriage tribunal.

2.1 Cases presented before Ecclesiastical Tribunal

Between 1982–1997, 919 couples applied for annulment before the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. Decisions were made on 528 cases. Of those 271 marriages were declared null while 257 cases were considered valid.

2.2 Separation cases before the Second Hall of the Civil Court between January and June 1997

Moreover, the number of new marriage cases before the Second hall of the Civil Court reached 893 in 1996 and 707 up to the end of October, 1997. There were 148 new cases before the First Hall of the Civil Court in 1996 and 100 up to the end of October, 1997 (P.Q. in *The Times*, Feb. 10, 1998). These numbers may be inflated because of double counting since sometimes, both the husband and wife may file for separation with the result that the same case is filed twice. Several cases of separation are settled by consensual agreement (*Bonarju*). Here a public deed where both partners agree to separate, is signed by the notary and the judge. Observation by Moira Mamo of 109 new cases filed for separation between January and June 1997 indicated that most of the new cases filed for separation came from the working class who faced financial problems and wanted legal separation in order to apply for alimony (*manteniment*) which is granted by law. It was also observed that although many higher income class people did not legally separate, it seems that many of these would remain separated 'de facto'. It was noted that three quarters of the separation proceedings were initiated by the wife. Husbands filed 14% of cases in this sample whilst 11% of couples both filed for separation, 8% of the couples had already separated 'de facto' before they decided to start proceedings and file for a legal separation. The study revealed that the first years of marriage are crucial. In fact, almost 6 out of 10 couples who sought separation did so in the first nine years of marriage. Of these 1 in 4 (23%) applied for separation in the first four years of marriage. The causes which are said to have led to marital breakdown are very similar to the ones for which people seek advice from both the Cana Movement and the S.W.D.P. agencies. Causes include: financial problems (22%), domestic violence (19%) and infidelity (18%). Other factors which seem to be shattering Maltese families include possessiveness (9%), alcoholism (7%), gambling (6%), interference by in-laws (5%), pregnancy before marriage (5%), neglect of

family (9%), and time spent with friends (9%).

2.3 Counselling services provided by Cana Movement

The causes that contribute to marital disruption are very similar to those for which couples who face marital problems seek advice from the Cana Movement. In 1996 the Cana Movement gave counselling services to 348 cases who made 678 claims of marital discord. 71 cases (20%) were 40+ years old while 4 cases (1%) were 60+ years old. It seems that the factors that contribute to marital problems are changing. An analysis of persons who sought counselling services of Cana Movement in 1996 identify 18 major causes of marital discord which could lead to marital breakdown. These include infidelity, or suspected infidelity, personality clashes within marriage, drug abuse, parent about child, sexual abuse of wife and/or child, alcohol abuse, difficulty with in-laws or extended family, beating of wife, child or husband, gambling problems, other money problems, psychological illness e.g. depression, lack of communication, pre-marital pregnancies, moral problems, lack of maturity and bereavement.

The Cana data base indicates that the upcoming generation of young couples, that is, those aged 18–25 years appear to be facing problems which are significantly different from those of their parents' generation. A statistical test (Spearman's Rank Order Correlation coefficient) relating together the factors causing marital problems suggests that there is more similarity between the problems faced by the middle and elderly groups. The lower age groups seem to be troubled by a different set of problems. The statistical results are appended in Annex 1.

2.4 Cases provided by S.W.D.P.

Counselling services given by Cana Movement complemented those offered by the S.W.D.P. through its Family Therapy Unit, the domestic Violence Section and the Child Protection Services Unit (CPSU). The sterling services provided by the latter two services are very important. They safeguard the mental and physical health of young children and at the same time they assist in the early rehabilitation of families in crises. Domestic violence has been identified as a major source of family breakdown. Between 19th August, 1994 and 15th September, 1997, there were 966 cases who reported 1153 alleged child abuse. Of these 397 (41.1%) were males whilst 569 (58.91%) were females aged under 15 years old. Children were abused sexually (13%), physically (31.7%), emotionally (30.2%) (Table 11).

In the same period, the Domestic Violence Section of S.W.D.P. tackled 899 cases of adult abuse. Violence, defined as any abuse of power was often a symptom of deeper problems such as power conflict, possessiveness, anger instigated due to substance misuse, or psychiatric cases. Violence against women increases when the victim is pregnant.

2.5 The Family Therapy Unit

The Family Therapy Unit which deals with a wide range of family problems or marital issues, complements services provided by the Cana Movement and other S.W.D.P. agencies. Cases are often referred to the team of six professionally trained personnel from the support line 179, by schools, general practitioners, psychiatrists, counsellors and self-referrals.

Since September 1996, the unit dealt with 224 cases of which 90 were marital referrals whereas 134 related to other family problems. 40% of the former involved a power struggle between the couple, 35% had communication conflicts whereas 10% and 15% related to incompatibility and personality disorders and mental illnesses such as depression, schizophrenia, alcoholism and gambling respectively. 55% of the other 134 cases who sought help from this unit included complaints by parents who lacked the parental skills to manage their hyperactive children or adolescents. 10% were purely psychiatric cases concerning adolescents or children who were schizophrenic or obsessive. In such cases, families often reacted by expressing high levels of emotion or silence. This behaviour affected negatively the family fabric. The other 35% of these cases related to pains experienced by bereavement, depression or interference by in-laws.

The factors which seem to be contributing to marital or family problems often reflect deep set psychological and sociological factors which often deter the healthy development of a relationship. Understanding these underlying causes is essential for drawing up a comprehensive strategy to assist the present victims, containing marital conflicts, and equipping the upcoming generations with the relevant interpersonal skills. Relating with others and resolving life conflicts are aptitudes which lead to enduring relationships.

3.0 Marital Disruption: Experience Abroad

The marital problems discussed in the previous sections often leave costly,

indelible sometimes irreversible externalities (spill over effects) on the other members of the family and society at large. Since empirical evidence on these negative impacts of marriage breakdown in Malta is not available today, a review of research carried out abroad may shed some light on the prospective social and economic costs that our society must bear if the family, as a unit, is not strengthened and the right proactive action is not taken to empower the family.

Research indicates that there are several undesirable social, psychological and economic consequences of marital disputes which emanate from divorce and separation.

3.1 *Socio-psychological impact*

In most countries, though in varying degrees, the higher divorce rates led to an increased number of children living in poverty. Sometimes the separated or divorced family has to live in a completely different environment. They move to new houses which are equipped with the minimum of basic household goods in places away from their circle of friends where social ties have been cut.

Children experience negative psychological/social effects. They find it difficult to accept the fact that one of their parents has abandoned them even when they were victims of domestic violence. The negative impacts vary with the children's age as well as the relation with the parents before separation. Modern research confirms that divorce is an example of major stress which weakens the body's immune system thus making these people more susceptible to disease. (Alloy et al, 1996, p. 206). Many children are shocked when they learn that their parents are splitting. They feel depressed, rejected and develop a very low self-esteem. It is often difficult to make these children think positively about themselves. This will, in turn, affect negatively their emotional development. They are academically weak and develop an inferiority complex (Kinard & Reinherz, 1986). "Some children get angry at their parents. Some keep their anger hidden for years out of fear of retribution and punishment. Others show it. Little children have temper tantrums, older children explode.... Related to the anger is a sense of powerlessness" (Wellerstein & Blakeslee).

Younger children experience worse psycho-social effects resulting from marital discord than older ones. According to N. Zill (1983) 14% of children whose parents divorced, needed counselling. Some only started to forget these traumatic experiences when they were 10 years older. Adolescents may refrain from

developing intimate friendships. These problems may later on lead to problems of drug abuse and juvenile delinquency.

Children who keep contact with their parents may not be so badly hit (Amato, 1993). Neither are those whose parents continue to show them love and provide them with their economic needs (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). When the divorced parents remarry, children are subjected to further stress. They have to accept and adapt to a stepfather/stepmother. Possibly, they have to share their family life with stepbrothers and stepsisters who compete for their parents' attention. Children are sometimes thought to deter the wife from remarrying. Young children adapt more quickly but adolescents are often the sources of conflict and the cause of the breakdown of the second marriage.

3.2 Economic repercussions of separation and divorce

Marital breakdown brought about by either separation or divorce result in economic deprivation. Data from the USA shows that single parent families which are normally headed by the wife, experience a lower standard of living after divorce. Peterson estimates a decline in women's standard of living of 27% after divorce for a sample of Californian women in the 1970's (Peterson). Price & McKenny state that 'female-headed' families constituted 15% of all the American households in the 1980 but 50% of these had incomes below the poverty level. More recently, Cheal reported that the incomes of consumer units with children that are headed by a separated or a divorced woman are drastically lower than the income of married couples with children. Furthermore, in over one half of the consumer units with a separated or divorced person as the reference person, income is more than 50% below the national median (Cheal, David J. 1996). A similar picture emerges in the U.K. where in 1992, one in 3 children lived in a poor household and more than half of these lived in a single parent household (Economist, Sept. 1995). Single parent families are the largest single group on welfare benefits in Britain.

A number of factors explain these results. First, the children's custody is normally awarded to the mother who may find it difficult to combine raising children with securing an adequately remunerated job that allows her to do so. Women who never worked previously or who left the labour market to take on family responsibilities are worst hit. Secondly, maintenance payments are often inadequate and at least in Britain and the USA are often not enforced. Thirdly, while single parents are large welfare recipients, the welfare system in many countries is still not geared to bring these families above the poverty line.

Of the countries reviewed, Sweden appears to provide the only example of a high number of single parent families without a corresponding increase in poverty. This may be due to a combination of a 'ferocious' enforcement of child support awards and a generous welfare system, funded by one of the highest tax rates in the world. Even here, however, although the number of children living in poverty is low, children in single parent homes are still slightly worse off than others raised in two parent families.

4.0 Summary and recommendations

The Maltese family has for centuries practised the Catholic faith and believed in the institution of marriage. However, over the last decades the family in Malta has undergone drastic economic, social and cultural changes which have shaken its foundations. Today, one in three Maltese families is reported to face marital problems. Protracted disputes are, unfortunately, rendering a good number of Maltese families the breeding places of conflict, hatred, anger, low self-esteem and violence rather than ones where love, trust, altruism, good communication and problem resolving skills, so essential in life, are nurtured.

This report highlights the fact that Maltese families are crying out in anguish for help. It is therefore opportune to understand the factors which are causing these conflicts with the aim of drawing up strategies to minimise them. Complete elimination is probably impossible. But it is essential to teach the younger generation how to build healthy long lasting relations.

For this purpose it may be suggested that:

1. Information bases are developed.

- Household information is available from census data. These indicators are faceless. It is up to either the Local councils or the Parish Pastoral Councils to analyse the information with a view of understanding the social economic changes in their locality. The systems used by the Parish priests in collecting data from the practising Catholic households could supplement the above information. Such data could help identify persons in need, however defined.
- A data base of N.G.O.'s active in social work e.g. youth organisations, in the respective parishes, is kept updated with the aim of integrating their activities on a local, regional and national level. A similar list of professionals in government and private sectors could bring together persons with communication and work skills, thereby creating effective reference teams for the respective needs.

- Ongoing research should be undertaken to establish the socio-economic characteristics of youths aged 13–25 with a view of identifying the best way of training them for life.
- An evaluation of the present educational system, which is more examination oriented, should be made in collaboration with the Education Department and the Church Schools. An Action plan should be developed to try and reverse the present trend where personality development is given low priority. This fact is also confirmed by recent research in the labour market (Delia E. *et al.*, Chap 7, pp. 110–155).

2. Institutional Changes are carried out.

- The Family Court with its ancillary services should be set up. It should be well organized and sufficiently funded to function in an efficient way. Family Clinics and other counselling services may be offered by the Church or the State to complement the services presently made available by Cana Movement, S.W.D.P. and its various agencies. Presently, such services are made available to a minority of cases since sufficient human and financial resources are not available. Greater emphasis should be placed on preventive mechanisms and supportive services compatible with the dimension of the problem presented.
- The expanding of grounds for marriage annulments must be contemplated more seriously while respecting a sound jurisprudence.
- Annulment procedures should be streamlined and expedited.
- There should be better screening of cases so that only the most probable cases are taken and the Tribunal resources are more efficiently used.
- The Tribunal should appoint an official to liaise with the public. This official would be knowledgeable about the Tribunal procedures and skilled in dealing with emotional problems of persons who seek the service of the Tribunal. Thus this Official would give assistance to persons seeking annulment without distracting the members of the Tribunal whose time may be better employed to process cases.
- The number of professional members of the Church Marriage Tribunal should be increased. If the number of clergy who qualify for this post is insufficient the Church may seriously consider the training of laity to ensure that annulment/separation cases do not drag for years but are determined in good time.
- The right to marry is a natural right of high priority. It is not, however, an unrestricted right. Both the Church and the State can establish legitimate restrictions. The State should consider introducing restrictions when the common good is threatened. The Catholic Church should impose restrictions when both

the common good is in danger and where marriage is seen to be in conflict with Christian revelation. The Church or State may issue a policy on selective postponement of marriage. A policy which, while guaranteeing the right to marry, provides a wide enough consultation with experienced people such as psychologists or counselors who will help them face up the serious aspects of life long commitments that marriage demands. This could be done by using better screening procedures before marriage. Use of already developed resources such as Premarital Inventories (PMI) which measure compatibility or Commitment to Partnership Scale (CPS) and *focus* which is an instrument measuring the extent of marriage preparation of the couple should be made. All these instruments help to indicate weaknesses which may threaten a marriage relationship. If serious problems exist the couple are advised to delay marriage and to seek assistance as required. It is recommended that the Diocese adopt these instruments as part of pre-nuptial inquiry and the parish priests have the results available when they meet the couple the second time so that they can better guide them in their decision and preparation. For this reason the Church Marriage office should be equipped with staff who are trained to score, interpret and write reports to Parish Priests concerning the couples who apply to marry.

As Denis Ladbrook, Professor of Social Work at Parth Curtin University observes: *"Given the importance to human well-being of both occupation and relationships, it is somewhat incongruous that entry to them is treated so differently by our society. Much preparation and all sorts of protective regulations set parameters on who can do what in the public domain of occupations but little preparation and few safeguards are put in place for the private domain of personnel and family relationships"*.

3. Individual Education and family support are provided.

- Better use should be made of media education. This should help adolescents and adults sift the many negative messages on the value of the family they receive from the media.
- More effective use should be made of the media and the Church assemblies. A production centre could be responsible to produce programs of high quality tackling important values. Such programs could be presented on local television and radio stations. Educational programs enhancing marital health should be encouraged. The use of role play may give the opportunity to look into relationships with the aim of learning how to relate and to think positively on how to find solutions to problems as they arise.

- Ideally families receive a personalised form of social assistance i.e. a family which needs help will have a social worker who coordinates all the help which the welfare state or any voluntary organisation provides.
- The abused child or parent suffers material and social deprivation. The abused often have no place to stay. Housing and child care facilities should be adequately provided for single parents.
- The setting up of professionally run youth centres, where youths aged 13–25 years meet to discuss important issues, relax and entertain themselves is an important tool in youth development. Such centres provide an environment where youths learn how to relate with others and resolve conflicts. Young people should be given the opportunities to organise social and cultural activities which enable them to develop their talents, enjoy themselves and entertain others.

4. Trainers should be trained on a regular basis.

- Regular multidisciplinary meetings should be held between educators, social workers, psychologists, counselors, carers, priests, doctors and other professionals to share experiences, fertilise ideas and project holistic methods of helping the individuals or families in need.
- Students preparing for the priesthood must be specifically trained how to handle family issues and be adequately prepared for this key area of pastoral work. Unqualified personnel may not tackle the complex family problems but may create more family conflict.

5. Adequate funds to be provided

- Programmes demand resources to be carried out effectively. If the family is to be sustained, then both the State and the Church have to budget adequate resources in order to support the formation of sound moral citizens. Such resources should be regarded as long term investment and not as a liability. The opportunity cost of not investing in the family is great.

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Table 1 Growth in Output per Employee

Year	G.D.P. per Head (1) at 1973 prices	Index	Consumption (2) at 1973 prices	Index
	Lm		Lm	
1989	1028	100.00	604.00	100.00
1990	1082	105.30	621.00	102.80
1991	1138	110.70	638.00	105.60
1992	1181	114.90	659.00	109.10
1993	1222	118.90	658.00	108.90
1994	1272	123.70	685.00	113.40
1995	1303	126.80	753.00	124.60

Source: Economic Survey: Jan. – Sept., 1995

TABLE 2 Sectoral Contribution to Gross Domestic Product (Percent)

Sector	1989	1994	1995	1996	1997 (Sep.)
Direct Production	44.0	37.6	36.6	35.8	34.7
Market Services	42.2	46.0	46.6	46.9	48.9
Non-Market Services	13.9	16.4	16.6	17.3	16.4

Note: Data for 1994 and thereafter are revised.

Source: Economic Survey January–September 1997: 227

TABLE 3 Employment

Year	Male Employment	Female Employment
1994	95,593	34,923
1995	98,778	36,054
1996	98,878	37,267
1997	99,642	39,111

Note. The data for 1997 refer to the month of September.

Source: Economic Survey, January – September 1997.

TABLE 4

Agree with the Church's teaching on:	1983	1993
Divorce	87.1	71.6
Birth Control	61.2	54.7
Abortion	83.2	79.2
Civil Marriage	81.9	74.5

Table 5

	1984	1991	1995
woman needs children to be fulfilled	69%	53%	38%
woman can be fulfilled independently of whether she is a mother or not	N/A	N/A	61%
agree that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay	N/A	37%	20%
a job is all right but most women really want a home and children	N/A	26%	19%

Note: N/A means that the respective figures for 1984 are not available.

Table 6

	1984	1991	1995
child needs both the mother and the father to grow happily	93%	91%	93%
must love and respect parents regardless of their qualities and faults	89%	88%	88%
parents should have life of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice it for their children's sake	6%	11%	19%

Source: Abela, A. 1997.

Table 7

Object to	1991	1995
extra marital affairs	93%	89%
divorce	72%	65%
homosexuality	73%	68%

Source: 1991 (Abela, A. 1994); 1995 (Abela, A. 1997).

Table 8

	1991	1995
satisfied with the financial situation	N/A	72%
high satisfactory	37%	20%
very dissatisfied	2%	4%
will get better over the next 12 months	6%	2%
will stay the same	45%	57%

Source: 1991 (Abela, A. 1994); 1995 (Abela, A. 1997).

Table 9 Annulment Cases

Year	Presented	Sentences	Affirmative	Negative	Others
1982	26	12	7	5	6
1983	30	13	8	5	10
1984	41	18	14	4	7
1985	50	23	20	3	6
1986	55	32	23	9	7
1987	51	31	14	17	8
1988	70	35	19	16	2
1989	65	32	11	21	8
1990	54	47	17	30	2
1991	68	26	12	14	10
1992	77	24	12	12	42
1993	57	34	9	25	19
1994	46	35	10	25	15
1995	47	42	25	17	14
1996	70	42	23	19	9
1997	112	82	47	35	25

Source: 1982–1996: Data was made available by Fr. A. Gouder, Oct. 1997.
 1997: Uffiċċju Stampa, Archbishop's Curia, Floriana.

Table 10 Marital Problems by Age Group

	18-25		25-40		40+		60+		Total	
A. Infidelity	6	4.8	45	12.3	20	11	0	0	71	10.5
B. Personality clashes	11	8.8	65	17.7	31	17	2	40	109	16.1
C. Drug abuse	2	1.6	3	1.6	1	0.5	0	0	6	0.9
D. Parent about child	2	1.6	23	6.3	20	11	1	20	46	6.8
E. Sexual abuse	2	1.6	3	1.6	2	1.1	0	0	6	0.9
F. Alcohol	1	0.8	12	3.3	4	2.2	0	0	17	2.5
G. Difficulty with inlaws	10	8.0	22	6.0	6	3.3	0	0	38	5.6
H. Beating	3	2.4	20	5.4	13	7.1	0	0	36	5.3
I. Gambling	2	1.6	1	0.3	4	2.2	0	0	7	1.0
J. Pregnant outside marriage	18	14.4	3	0.8	2	1.1	0	0	23	3.4
K. Sexual problems	5	4.0	20	5.4	3	1.6	0	0	28	4.1
L. Money problems	3	2.4	11	3.0	10	5.5	0	0	24	3.5
M. Psychological illness and depression	5	4.0	25	6.8	14	7.7	1	20	45	6.6
N. Lack of communication	25	20	75	20.4	43	23.6	1	20	144	21.2
O. Pre-marital pregnancies	18	14.4	3	0.8	0	0	0	0	21	3.1
P. Moral problems	4	3.2	9	2.4	3	1.6	0	0	16	2.4
Q. Personal growth	8	6.4	24	6.5	1	0.5	0	0	33	4.9
R. Bereavement	0	0	3	0.8	5	3.0	0	0	8	1.2
TOTAL	125	100	367	99.8	182	100	5	100	678	100

Source: Data base provided by Cana Movement.

Note: Age groups are classified as compiled by Cana Movement.

Table 11 Reported Cases of Child abuse

	Males		Females		Total	
Sexual	38	7.4%	112	17.5%	150	13.0%
Physical	173	33.7%	192	30.0%	365	31.7%
Emotional	178	34.6%	170	26.6%	348	30.2%
Neglect	39	7.6%	42	6.6%	81	7.0%
Pre-natal	1	0.2%	4	0.6%	5	0.4%
At risk	85	16.5%	119	18.6%	204	17.7%
TOTAL	514	100%	639	99.9%	1153	100%

Source: C.P.S.U. data

Annex 1 Rank Order Correlation of claims by Age Cohorts

18-25	1			
25-40	0.5417	1		
40+	0.1249	0.6956	1	
Total	0.5913	0.9216	0.7647	1
	18-25 years	25-40 years	40+	Total

