

The Family: A Reflection of the Trinity

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While in God there necessarily is absolute simplicity, because of his infinitely perfect divine nature, in the human person God's image appears, as it were, reflected or refracted into different aspects just as a ray of light falling on a prism comes out split into a variety of rays representing the rainbow colours. Thus both man and woman, in their spiritual and sexual differences, are God's image and likeness. And so is their complementarity and their instinctive urge to be attracted to each other and become one, through mutual love and total self-giving, and thus share in God's creative prerogative by becoming procreators of new life. Thus the family itself, of its very nature, is God's image and likeness.

Reason does not tell us much about God, for God transcends the limitations of a created mind. It tells us what he is not, rather what he is in reality. By reason we know that God is infinite, immense, unchangeable, without beginning or end, unlimited in his perfections and therefore the fullness of being.

Here is, therefore, where divine revelation comes in. In order to assist human reason, so limited in itself as it is and still weaker because of sin, God has deemed it fit to reveal himself to mankind in a way which goes far beyond the natural possibilities of human nature. This is called supernatural revelation, by which man, assisted by God's own help, is enabled to attain further knowledge not only about his own nature and destiny, but also about God's nature and essence. This is in fact the proper task of theology which, using the resources of reason, is always seeking and never reaching final answers and definitive insights.

God as 'Family'

It is thanks to this supernatural revelation, contained in God's dealing with his chosen people, subsequently manifested through the prophets and reaching its fullness in Jesus Christ the Son of God made Man, that we now know that God himself is a "Family." This is what we call the mystery of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are distinct persons, but they are so intimately

united as to constitute one entity, one Divine Nature, one God. The communication that goes on between them is infinitely perfect and gives rise to a perfect unity of Persons, or rather to an infinitely perfect communion, an infinitely perfect divine family. We therefore learn from divine revelation that the Godhead, by its very essence, is a Holy Trinity, a Divine Family. The human family, created in God's image and likeness, is at the same time a reflection of the Holy Trinity, three Persons in one Divine Nature.

The Trinitarian mystery, as everyone knows, is the fundamental mystery of Christianity. The greatest theologians, especially Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, have proposed various explanations, not to unveil the mystery, but to illustrate it by means of analogies derived from our experience and from our way of thinking as humans, and thus show that no contradiction can be proved in believing that the three Divine Persons are fully distinct and yet fully united. God knows himself by an infinitely perfect knowledge, and through such knowledge God conceives an infinitely perfect idea or 'word' which is an expression of that knowledge. This divine word, conceived and expressed in the divine mind, is the Son, a perfect image of the Father, proceeding from the Father. But knowledge begets love, and perfect knowledge begets perfect love. As true love consists more in giving than in receiving, in the act of perfect knowledge God elicits within himself perfect 'love' and thus He 'spirates' the Spirit, who is personified Love proceeding from the Father and the Son.¹

No matter how much one tries to explain or illustrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity, it remains a mystery. One thing, however, also remains true. In the above and similar explanations there are concepts and ideas which, reflecting on the human family, we find analogically reproduced in it.

There is, first of all, the idea of plurality in unity. No matter which kind of family we do have in mind, there are at least two persons in it, and these are united by the bond of love, a love which should be total, faithful and irrevocable, resulting in a union which is as perfect as it can be in this world among two human beings of different sexes.

1. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1q27, 3, 5; q. 28 4c; q. 37 1c; q. 41 6c.; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Revised Edition), Chapman, London 1999, nn. 253-256

Although there exist families which, for one reason or other, do not or cannot have children of their own, the complete sexual expression of conjugal love between the spouses is of its nature open to the begetting of new life, as we shall see further down. Hence, besides unity in plurality, a trinity of persons also belongs to the nature of the human family.

This analogy between the Blessed Trinity and the human family, showing how the former is actually reflected in the latter, has, to my knowledge, not yet been developed in doctrinal theology. We do nevertheless come across a few references of it here and there.

One of these references was made by Bernard Häring, one of the leading theologians in recent times. He writes as follows on this subject; "The fundamental mystery of our faith, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, is the cornerstone of social theology. Every community has its starting point in the triune life of God, which is its model and ultimate goal [...]. The family is the most intimate and most vigorous natural community of love. Proper love between the spouses and between them and their children is the most perfect earthly representation of trinitarian love.

Here physical love between the spouses, and the blood-tie between parents and children, are embodied in the highest and most self-sacrificing form of love and are inspired and formed by it."²

Häring also stresses the fact that love in the family tends of its very nature to become trinitarian, because it is an assent to the creative presence of God, from whom the spouses desire that he should bless their love with a child. "In their adoring assent to the Creator, in their faithful and receptive assent to the child, the love of the spouses is protected from becoming a closed circuit, from being restricted to merely physical love, and from the enslavement resulting from the idolisation of oneself or of one's spouse."³

Thus the greatest and most beautiful feature of the family is only discovered when one sees it in the image of the triune community of love within the Godhead, as Häring goes on to write: All true living in human community, but especially in the hallowed bosom of the family, should be a valid manifestation of the impenetrable

2. *Marriage in the Modern World*, Mercier Press, Cork 1965, p. 144; see also by the same author, *Law of Christ*, II, Mercier Press, Cork 1965, pp. 347 ff.

3. *Loc. Cit.*

and eternally inspiring mystery of the triune flame of love in God, and a signpost showing the way there. In marriage, man as a lover, as one gratefully receiving and returning love and gladly and experiencing the fruitfulness of that love, is truly the image of the God who rejoices in the eternal bliss of his threefold love. The mystery of divine love is, to the extent that such a thing is thinkable and possible in the natural order, pictured in outline in the family, but in such a manner that we only recognise the image as an image when God himself has spoken to us about the original picture, about his own central mystery.”⁴

The God revealed to us by Jesus Christ is one; but he is also a God subsisting in three equal and distinct Persons. And man is an image of this God, in whom the trinity of the Persons is the supreme realisation of his Being. Now it is particularly interesting to bring out that Christian revelation presents to us an aspect of the extraordinary and absolutely unique relationship between the divine Persons with a language that is typical of the family nucleus, namely father and son. Furthermore, although it is true that the Blessed Trinity is not a family in the natural sense of the word, it is also true that the notions of paternity and filiation do find in God an entirely objective realisation. It is therefore not far-fetched to say that man’s innate social tendencies are a concrete realisation of his likeness with God even in the natural order. In the nucleus of the family, then, we see the fullest and most typical similarity to God in the natural order.⁵

It is in their capacity to become three that husband and wife joined in marriage reflect the Trinity. When they get married, they are no longer two, but one; but, because of their ability to beget new life by their union, they are potentially three. It is this very image of the Triune God in them that actuates their potentiality to become three and reproduces the divine model in a human family. Their children, in turn, will be the incarnation of the love existing between the spouses, and in fact will contribute in normal circumstances to strengthen and deepen further their spousal love for each other.⁶

4. Op. Cit, p. 145.

5. Cf E. Ruffini, “La famiglia comunità di grazia”, VV.AA. *Matrimonio, Famiglia e Divorzio*, Napoli 1971, 50

6. See I. Galot, S.I., “La famiglia nel piano di Dio”, in VV. AA., *La Famiglia oggi e domani*, Ed. Ancora, Milano 1980, 25-27; see also M. Gilbert, “Soyez feconds et multipliez, Gen 1,28”, *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 96 (1975) 729-742.

Communications within the family

Just as within the Trinity, so also within the family the communication between its members spells itself in terms of interpersonal encounter. The solidarity which is developed within the family is not a mechanical one, like that of a machine in which the various pieces and gadgets are made to fit into each other and so to move together, but one of persons relating to one another, opening themselves for one another, loving and accepting one another. Having been created in God's image and likeness, man is, like God, a person and therefore, in some sense, an absolute. As a person, man cannot be the *object* of a strict right on the part of another person; he can only be the *subject* of a right. He is the only creature whom God has created for itself. But man's prototype image is God, who is not one person, but a community of three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three Persons not only communicate with, and relate to each other, but their very essence consists in relating to each other, in total mutual giving and receiving, in knowing and being known, in loving and being loved, in an eternal procession of life from one Person to another.

The fact that man is by nature a "social animal", far from limiting his very nature, is an enriching factor for him. His need to relate to others and communicate with them, finding his fulfilment in forming a family, is not to be understood as a stop-gap or a remedy making up for his imperfections, but an innate vocation inherent to his dignity as man. He cannot be himself except by the gift of self. If God, as we have indicated, is a family, then man too, in order to fulfil his destiny, must be a 'family'. There is no other way for man to be like God. He must allow himself to be made one through the binding power of true love. An isolated human being, in no way seeking the oneness of family, does not in fact reflect the Trinity, the divine family. The celibate person, who chooses to be so for the sake of God's kingdom, is no exception to this rule: he or she relates to other persons in a deeper and superior way, he too enriches others and is enriched by them by his service and the loving gift of self. In all truth he or she too has set up a family which, while being of a different but superior order, is no less modelled on the trinitarian family.⁷

"As a matter of fact the ties of flesh and blood, which contribute for the cohesion of the family, are nothing else but signs, engraved into the psychology of man, of

7. See Guido Gatti, "La Proposta Cattolica", in *Proposte Religiose per la Famiglia d'Oggi*, III, Convegno Nazionale, Roma 5-6 Feb. 1983, p.4; T. Forrest, "The Trinity: Model for family life", *New Covenant* 6 (1976) 4-6.

the above-mentioned constitutive vocation of his to realise himself fully in love and communion through communication and self-donation. They bind him to that community of multiple and differentiated effects which is the family, the privileged moment of gratuity and intimacy, a living image of the trinitarian community in the world.”⁸

Perfect Model

Thus, if one wishes to set up an ideal model for the family to imitate, there cannot be a more suitable one than the Triune God himself. The Trinity represents the intimate life of God: the intimate traits of that life can be analogically reproduced by man and woman united by the bonds of marriage. Though remaining two distinct persons, their conjugal union implies the total mutual giving of self in love and can be the source of a third person, also distinct from either of them and yet united to them also by bonds of love and forming with them the triune community, which is the family.

Such is, then, God’s plan: that the human family should be an image and likeness of the divine Family, the Blessed Trinity. If this means anything, it certainly means that the same basic characteristics and traits of a family are to be found in both families. By meditating on the Trinitarian mystery we can have a better insight as to what the human family is or should be. But the reverse process should also be valid: by observing the way in which members of a successful and happy human family relate to each other, we can have an idea of the prototype in Heaven, summing up all the good qualities we find existing in the human family and applying them analogically and in the highest possible degree to the Family in the Godhead.

By using this inverse method, we would be making use of the family as a locus *theologicus*, as theologians call it. According to this method, knowledge about God’s supernatural revelation and theological conclusions regarding it can be acquired not only from the inspired word in Holy Scripture and Tradition, but also, although in a lower degree, from creation itself, especially from those elements in it which are under God’s special and supernatural providence.⁹

8. Gatti, *loc. Cit.*

9. Cf N. Rocholl, *Die Ehe als geweihtes Leben*, Dulmen 1936, 108-110; Ch H. Massabki, *Le Christ rencontre de deux Amours*, Paris 1958, 105; P. Grelot, *Le couple humain dans l’Écriture*, Paris 1969, 99.

Dealing with the interrelationships within a family situation, psychologists tell us about the development of the so-called 'triangular personality' in us. "A human being reaches the necessary fullness of personality only by being able to adjust himself to a 'triangular situation'. This is the stage in emotional development [...] when the child, as boy or girl, forms a relation with the parents in as much as they are a couple, instead of as before when the child tended to feel closer to one parent than to the other. The married couple, on the other hand, achieves its own fullest life only if it is fertile and is the fountainhead from which comes a child, the 'third person'. This is the 'triangular situation'. Following such thoughts, the image of God in mankind can be seen as the relationship between persons, especially among three persons. As for God himself, we know from the full ¹⁰ revelation of the Holy Spirit that in his basic essence God is the Mystery of the Trinity

This so-called 'triangular situation' is always potentially there whenever two lovers are bound by the bond of matrimony. Sexual intercourse between husband and wife, even when the latter has already passed her menopause, always has of itself the implied relation to a 'third side' of the triangle, so long as their conjugal union is a sign of their total mutual donation. "If a man and a woman exchange kisses, they alone are involved. But if they have intercourse, becoming one, they create at least the possibility of a third person: a child. At the moment of intercourse, a whole new world of relationships and responsibilities comes into existence. The child, in order to become a good, balanced human being itself, will need in its emotional life a security and stability which the mother alone can give. The mother herself, in turn, needs the sense of security that will come to her only through being close to the child's father."¹¹

The well-known preacher and writer Bishop Fulton J. Sheen devotes a whole chapter, entitled "Love is Triune", in his famous booklet *Three to Get Married*, which has now become a classic. After considering marriage as consisting of three distinct elements, namely husband, wife and love itself as something distinct from both, he moves on to consider the family as triune consisting of Father, Mother and Child. Hence he writes the following: "Since love means a mutual self-giving which ends in self-recovery, the love of husband and wife, in obedience to the creative

10. Marc Oraison, *Learning to Love*, Paulist Press, New York 1964, 78-80.

11. Oraison, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

command, should 'increase and multiply'. Like the love of earth and tree, their marriage should become fruitful in new love. There would be mutual self-giving as they sought to overcome their individual impotence by filling up, at the store of the other, the lacking measure; there would be self-recovery as they begot not the mere sum of themselves, but a new life which would make them an earthly trinity. As the three Divine Persons do not lose their personality in their oneness of essence but remain distinct, so the love of husband and wife leaves their souls distinct. As from the love of the Father and the Son proceeds a third distinct Person, the Holy Spirit, so in an imperfect way, from the love of husband and wife there proceeds the child who is a bond of union which gives love to both in the spirit of the family. The number of children do not alter the basic family trinity, for numerous are the fruits of the Most High while he is one [...]. As the riches of the Holy Spirit of love are at the disposal of those who live under his impulse, so marriage, lived as God would have it lived, associates partners to the creative joy of the Father, to the self-sacrificing love of the Son, and to the unifying love of the Holy Spirit [...]. Marriage is a trinity, even when no child proceeds from it through no fault of the parents. But if the child comes, then love is made incarnate."¹²

In the Magisterium

As is often the case with most theological insights regarding other areas of religious and Christian doctrine, the trinitarian dimension of the family, mentioned and sometimes slightly developed here and there by a number of theologians and religious writers, as we have seen, has taken time before it reached the Magisterium and was, so to speak, appropriated by it.

Trinitarian considerations in regard to the family, however, have not been altogether lacking. Back in the year 1940 Pope Pius XII made reference to it in one of his regular meetings with engaged couples at the Vatican. "The family is related to God even on the natural level. It is sacred, first of all because it is at the service of God, and secondly because of God's presence in it at its birth, in its development and in its permanence. The family appears still more splendid if we consider that it is God's image and the likeness of the Trinity. Just as the essential unity of divine

12. Fulton I. Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, Dell Publ. New York 1951, 103-104.

nature exists in three distinct Persons, consubstantial and eternal, so also the unity of the family is realised in the trinity of the father, the mother and the children, all of them living in the unity of fruitful love.”¹³

The same thought is developed further by Pius XII on a later similar occasion, when he said the following: “Just as God’s love for the unity of mankind has brought about the Incarnation, so also the love of the spouses becomes incarnate in the children. Just as God creates, redeems and sanctifies, so also the married couple are called to be collaborators in the creative work of the Father, in the redemptive mission of the Son, and in the illuminating and educating task of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴

While there is no clear reference to the trinitarian dimension of the family in the documents of Vatican II, it is nonetheless there in germ, especially in the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, which stresses the divine origin of the family as a community of persons and its God given task of participating in God’s work of creation.¹⁵

It was no surprise, then, that after the conclusions of the Council in 1965, one comes across numerous references to the family as a reflection of the Trinity in the writings and pronouncements of Bishops from all over the world. Such references, at first implied and made in a general way, became clearer and more pronounced as time went on. This becomes evident by the fact that at the Fifth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops convoked at the Vatican in 1980 on *The Christian Family in today’s World*, no less than thirty-five interventions by different bishops were made in which one finds explicit and sufficiently developed reference to the family as a reflection of the Holy Trinity. I report here only a few examples. “One of the ways for deepening and enriching the natural law is that of an integral respect for sexuality and conjugal love, which sees in the complementarity of the two sexes an

13. Pius XII, *Addresses to engaged couples*, June 1940, in V. Del Mazza, *La Famiglia nel Pensiero di Pio XII*, Ed. Paoline, Alba 1952, 178.

14. See *ibid.*, *Address to Engaged Couples*, 5th March 1941, pp. 178 ff.

15. See GS, nn. 47-52 passim. See also G. Caprile, *Il Sinodo dei Vescovi 1980*, Ed. La Civiltà Cattolica, Roma 1981, which contains an exhaustive collection of all relative documents and the texts of all episcopal interventions made in the course of the Synod. For a less exhaustive account of the Synod proceedings in the English language, see: Jan Grootaers and J.S. Selling, *The 1980 Synod of Bishops on the Role of the Family*, Presses Universitaires, Louvain 1983.

aspect of that truth according to which human beings have been created after the image of God one and triune. Such an attitude of esteem leads one to consider also the necessity of integrating body and mind in the very act of conjugal union through which the spouses express and perfect their mutual self-giving.”¹⁶

“The family, within which the individual is born, grows and develops, is the object of God’s salvific plan inasmuch as he reflects the image of God’s triune love.” From this the Bishop derives a number of virtues which should shine in the married couple and in the family: a love open to life, fidelity, mutual respect and service, moral rectitude, gift of self, communication, participation and sharing, and in brief nuptial, paternal and filial relationships making the components of the family true images of the Holy Trinity.”¹⁷

“In creating man, God has impressed on his physical and spiritual reality the image of his own life and fruitful love. In fact the christian family is a reflection of the trinitarian life. It is an ideal offered to all without excluding any person, group or culture; with God’s help all can tend towards it according to the measure of their own faith.”¹⁸

While the value of the human person could be looked upon as a philosophical conclusion, the specific contribution of the Church, in the light of divine revelation, could consist in showing how a life of relationship is essential for man inasmuch as he becomes a person within a communion of persons. The Christian sees this model of person and communion in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Man too realises fully his own personality when he enters interpersonal relations with others, which take place in a unique and most complete way in the family.”¹⁹

“It is from the trinitarian foundation of marriage and the family that all conclusions regarding conjugal love can be drawn. From the Father, creative love is learned which looks on the children as a gift of God; one has recourse to the Father in difficult moments, and it is from the Father that one learns how to be truly

16. Joseph L. Bernardin, Archbishop of Cincinnati, Caprile, *ibid.*, 80.

17. Rafael Garcia Gonzales on behalf of other two Mexican delegates, *ibid.*, 85.

18. Maurice Marie-Sainte, Archbishop of Fort-de-France, *ibid.*, 168.

19. Angelo I. Fernandez, Archbishop of Delhi, *ibid.*, 301

solicitous for his family. From the Son the spouses learn the meaning of their intimate and profound union; in Christ the sanctifier they find the efficiency of their matrimony; in the Son their human love is reflected, transformed, consecrated and enriched. It is in the Holy Spirit that they find the secret which unites their family, kindles love in their hearts, reveals God's designs, teaches how to pray and leads to prayer, is a source of joy and happiness, renders sweet their sacrifices, gives strength and interior freedom in their service of God, helps them to overcome selfishness and fear."²⁰

"In holy matrimony takes place the mutual donation and acceptance of the spouses in the totality of their personality. In this they reflect the image of the divine Persons. The union and the intimacy of the spouses is ordained to the procreation of new persons: and this is not only a physiological fact, which is entirely lacking during the sterile periods. The spouses, however, must always remain open for the person of the other partner and for that of the child."²¹

After the conclusion of the Synod, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Doctrine, addressed a letter to the Catholic Clergy all over the world, in which he explained briefly the main pastoral and doctrinal points discussed at the Synod on the Family. Among other things, he wrote the following: "God himself is not solitude. Man was created for love, in God's image and likeness; it is for this that God has made man, he who lives in three Persons, that is in his relations of self-giving, self-finding and self-loving. Since, however, man is an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul expressing itself in the body, and a body informed by an immortal soul, he is called to love in this totality of his. Love permeates also his body, and his body is in turn involved also in the spiritual act of his love."²²

The above are only a few examples showing how widespread among the Bishops of the Church was the idea of the family as having its source and pattern in the Holy Trinity. In its unity and distinction the Trinity is analogically considered the

20. Paul Hisoia Yasuda, Archbishop of Osaka, *ibid.*, 310.

21. Philippe Delhay, Secretary of the International and Pontifical Theological Commission, *ibid.*, 393.

22. *Ibid.* 585.

source of the family, because both unity and distinction together are indispensable for the family as a community of persons in which the spouses, as distinct entities, become one in their mutual self-donation. Their fruitfulness too, as a result of their mutual love, has its counterpart in the Blessed Trinity. Thus, from this trinitarian pattern, the way is open for a better and deeper understanding of the family itself.

Pope John Paul II

Shortly after the Bishops' Synod of 1980, the Holy Father John Paul I published his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* regarding the *Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, to which we have already referred. Although several references are made in this pontifical document, presenting the family as having its origin in God himself who created man and woman in his own image and likeness and endowed them with the prerogative of sharing with him his creative power, one looks in vain in it for an explicit statement regarding the trinitarian dimension of the family. This was probably so because of the pastoral nature of the Exhortation, in which one would not normally expect to come across elaborate digressions of a doctrinal and theological nature. There is no doubt, however, that John Paul II has very much at heart presenting the family as a reflection of the Blessed Trinity, as can be gathered from other papal documents.²³

By way of example, it is worth mentioning a beautiful statement in this regard made by Pope John Paul II, addressing the population of Puebla during one of his missionary journeys in January of 1979. On that occasion he said the following: "We must make this beautiful and deep consideration that our God is not a solitude, but a family, because there is within himself paternity, filiation and the essence of the family which is love. This love in the divine family is the Holy Spirit. The theme of the family, then, is not at all extraneous to the divine essence."²⁴

Not long after the Puebla occasion the Pope took up again the same theme in

23. See *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Lib. Ed. Vaticana, 29 volumes (1978-90), containing all pronouncements of John Paul II in the original language, sometimes also their Italian translation.

24. *Ibid*, Vol. II, ni, p. 182.

greater detail in his address at the General Audience on the 14th November 1979. On that occasion, explaining the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis, he made the following beautiful analysis of the family itself as the image of the Triune God: “If we wish to draw from the narrative of the Yahwist text the concept of ‘image of God’, we can deduce that man became ‘the image and likeness’ of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of person which man and woman form right from the beginning. The function of the image is to reflect the one who is the model, to reproduce its own prototype. Man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is in fact, right from the beginning, not only an image in which there is reflected the solitude of a Person who rules the world, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons. In this way, the second narrative could also be a preparation for the understanding of the Trinitarian concept of the ‘image of God’, even if the latter appears only in the first narrative.”²⁵

To conclude this brief consideration on the family as the reflection of the Triune God, I find it appropriate to quote, by way of confirmation of the foregoing considerations, what the Apostle Saint Paul has written to the Ephesians: “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.”²⁶

This is probably best understood as follows: just as a family comes from a father, so every family has God for Creator, Father and model. While the same triple affirmation can be made in regard to every human being, here Paul has only the family specifically in mind. What is here, therefore, understood is not only God as source of all things including human beings, but God as ‘family’, that is God’s triune essence reflected in the human family.²⁷

As Jack Dominionian put it, “the discoveries of our age are priceless gifts to expand

25. John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*, St Paul’s Editions, Boston 1981, pp. 73ff
26. *Eph.* 3, 14–15. The word ‘family’ here translates the Greek word ‘*patria*’, which means family; in the Latin Vulgate it is rendered, less appropriately, by ‘*paternitas*’, and in some English translations (e.g. Knox) by ‘fatherhood’; see F. Prat, *Theology of St Paul*, vol. 2, Burns and Oates, London 1964, 139.
27. See Prat, *bc. cit.*; D.J. Leahy, “The Epistle to the Ephesians”, in *Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, Nelson, London 1953, 1123.

the theology of marital love, as an expression of openness to life, life in this world caught up and divinised here and now, but already reflecting the mystery of the eternal relationship of life between man, woman, and the Trinity.”²⁸

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28. J. Dominian, *Proposals for a new sexual ethic*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1997, 84.