

SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR THE FAMILIES IN CRISIS IN CROATIA

TWENTY YEARS AGO AND TODAY

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Twenty years ago Croatia was at war. Civil war for the independence. In these days nobody thought about support structures for the family in crisis. Only concern was how to survive.

After we achieved independence unfortunately we have not fared particularly well in the transition from a socialist to a capitalist society. Croatia entered the European Union (EU) on July 1, 2013 as the 28th member state. The government has been striving to raise Croatia's competitiveness to compete in the large EU market and maximize the opportunities that membership brings, especially the absorption of a large amount of EU Structural Funds.

Before the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the Croatian economy grew at a healthy 4-5% annually, incomes doubled, and economic and social opportunities dramatically improved. The prolonged crisis is testing this progress, as well as Croatia's aspirations, as the country is now entering its sixth year of recession, having lost over 12 % of its output. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is so far fall by 0.5% in 2014. Unemployment rose to 17% at the end of 2013. and youth unemployment, at over 40%, remains one of the highest in Europe. Before the recession, poverty was below 10% and mainly affected those without a job for more than three years and low-skilled workers but the protracted recession has led to an increase, and the poverty rate now stands at 18%. Today, due to the prolonged recession, the profile of the poor is changing, with normally economically active, better educated and younger people living in urban areas falling into poverty.

Due to the poor economic situation today in the Croatian society mainly we can see resignation and hopelessness. Croatia has turned into a spiritual desert where running out of hope, faith and love, and life is literally turned into a pure existence. No wonder growing dissatisfaction in men, although as far as discontent was justified, often turning to people muttering that replaces poised and thoughtful (dis) speech. Resentment of the people turns into a spiritual discomfort that creates an atmosphere of distrust in people, institutions and in the future. In such a spiritual atmosphere cry out for critical and reasoned confronting the real causes of deep spiritual crisis of contemporary Croatian society.

Responsible and conscientious freedom in a democratic and political society do not fall from the sky. It does not occur at once, rather than necessarily going through the desert, or through a personal cleansing from sin and evil, but also through social catharsis.

Unfortunately, none of this really happened. As a consequence many people are complaining and murmuring. Fact is that mumbling turned into a kind of existential attitude. People do not want to change themselves from the inside but they expect changes - waiting for changes in how they think they should get from others.

But it just does not go. The lesson is clear. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In this light, one can understand that more true human dignity, personal freedom and responsibility with an empty stomach, but a full stomach without human dignity, personal freedom and responsibility. This proves that even today we count with a man who, from the caves to the atomic bomb, in its essence has not changed, but remained permanently attached to it instinctive in them.

But man is not just a complex web of natural instincts. Man is the image of God. Man has free will of reason. Therefore, the service man never stops. We will never be able to say, here we have completed the new man, in the Christian sense of the new creature who unconditionally, consistently and completely live a new life as a child of God. This confirms that no permanent passing through the desert, that is, without a thorough spiritual cleansing we will not be able to see the fertile plains of the promised land that our soul is filled with the divine life, the spiritual serenity, true happiness and complete prosperity.

For all of this, Croatia is in the need creating a structure that will ensure and provide appropriate support to the family as the fundamental unit of society.

Due to the all of the aforementioned Church in Croatia has decided to make a change, and as is evident from the following example.

The psychological and spiritual help to the faithful

In Croatia has always been a rich pastoral work that began by making some visionaries have recognized the needs of the faithful and offered them various forms of pastoral care and support. Opening marital and family counseling was followed by a similar way: it is a form of pastoral action that takes care of the individual needs of the faithful, couples and family. Actually this is a psychological and spiritual help to the faithful in various aggravating circumstances of life. Marriage and family counseling is recognizable place where exhorts the

benefit of every man and trying to protect the family and marriage in situations where they are vulnerable valuing the institution of marriage and the family – (eg.:endangered because of tolerance towards violence, non-marital forms of life, the impact of war, economic problems of society, the transition , increased unemployment, etc.). As ecclesiastical institutions, marital and family counseling not only serves the general welfare, where it helps to preserve and protect individuals, marriages and families, but encourages all listed on a new quality and dimension of existence: existence "through Christ, with Christ in Christ". Although it seems idealistic the ultimate goal of counseling should be a family as a "domestic church".

Marriage and family counseling is recognizable place where the Church promotes the well-being of every person because every issue that touches on family always touches on the whole society because society makes a collection of many families and healthy family means a healthy society. Observing the family in today's society which is directed by: „individualism, secularism, hedonism, violence and generally expanding 'imbalances'“ as it's stated in the document of the Second Vatican Council „, we congratulate each family that was able to resist this process of 'imbalance' or fight against it. "

Through concrete practice marital and family counseling center offers psychological and spiritual help to people, married couples and families, direct and indirect marriage preparation, organization and implementation of prevention programs through workshops, lectures and seminars in parishes and public institutions, participation in family pastoral care... They also propose programs and projects which includes the resolutions of acute problems in local communities. The function of counseling is penetrating into all areas of human life through counseling, guidance, clarification, prevention and support, with the aim to detect problems, seek solutions, process emotions and attitudes of one who asks for help, then organized and provide purposeful assistance that is important for their own progress, growth and development of people in need.

The two-year training family counselor

To become a family counselor you have to pass a two-year education which includes 400 hours of theory and practice. The training was organized by Croatian Caritas in the project "Establishment and development of a network of Church family counseling in Croatia", with the financial support of the German Caritas. The theoretical part covered the themes: advisers knowledge, personal and institutional identity, aims and tasks of counseling and Christian practices, labor law, how to establish cooperation and create a relationship with a client,

interview skills and active listening, malfunctions, conscious and subliminal relationship, experiencing and understanding of the client, developmental psychology, psychoanalytic concepts, concepts from other psychotherapeutic directions, the structure of personality, personality disorders, addictions, hagiotherapy, psychosomatic disorders, psychiatric disorders, objectives and tasks of counseling, diagnosis, focusing on the problem, the consultation process, dreams , the difficult situation in consulting, system concept consultation, observation and understanding of family dynamics and the dynamics of couples, marital and family law, contract consulting, process consulting to system-oriented counseling couples and family counseling, completion of consultation and evaluation. In addition, the counselor needs to work on it, and even go to psychotherapy alone or get help from spiritual and professional work counselors. They also must pass guidance, instruction and supervision of a psychiatrist, psychologist or psychotherapist.

Consultation with individual cases lasts a full hour, couples and families takes an hour and a half and the consultation process ends through more than six months. If an individual, couple or family, once was in counseling because of a one problem it does not mean that they can't re-engage in the consultation process again because some other problem. At the beginning of the consultation is necessary to set a clear work frames, goals and objectives of consultation - the user must be aware of the limits of work before the start of counseling. The first meeting is usually diagnostic. At the second meeting counselor explores the personal history and only the third enters into a sort of verbal agreement on methods, capabilities and timeframes work. In addition to professional work with clients, advisors role is to raise public awareness and the culture of counseling, prevention activities - promoting the dignity of marriage and the family, co-operation with similar or related institutions, reading professional literature and participate in continuing education and so on.

In the technical advisory counseling work involved psychologist, doctors, priests, nurses, lawyers... They are in the form of advisory work which are include if necessary. If a person asks for help and first motivational interviews reveals that a person can not get the expected help in counseling we have to refer client to the appropriate institution where they will take care of her/him properly. In social care center, hospital, center for psycho-social support, hospice, a center for mother and child, Caritas, spiritual center and others. For many people it is difficult to decide to go to one of the aforementioned institutions, and one of the counselors tasks is to motivate this person to visit the appropriate institution because it is the only place where they will get help and support. The counseling is also offered another form

of assistance in collaboration with the Catholic association of educators and its free learning for children whose parents live in aggravating social conditions and legal assistance in the field of education and schooling.

Marital and family counseling should not be a place of prejudice, intolerance, misunderstanding, etc.. Counseling is not a place to make territorial, ethnic, religious and other differences, all are welcome.

As for the figures, counseling is in its first year of existence processed hundreds and hundreds cases. Why „cases“? Because it's not just individuals, but also married couples and families. If we multiply all of that, we would get more people in need. Because of that we talk about „the cases“. Each of these cases is not just a number - it is a person who has entered into counseling with fear and distrust or shame, but still bravely ventured out to work on it, to solve not only current problem but also become a better person or a believer . No case has not been solved in one meeting, but for some it takes many months of work and prayer in order to achieve certain goals.

As to age structure, only a handful of juveniles visited counseling, by themselves or with their families, while others were of all ages. We can see mainly young girls, women aged between 45-55 years, males aged 35 to 45 years, rarely we can see retired people of both sexes and couples usually come after 5, 10, 25, 35 to 40 years of marriage.

Preventive action marital and family counseling

Sometimes, for the counseling is impossible to organize a lecture due to lack of space. In that case we organize workshops and self-help groups. In the area of preventive action marital and family counselors participated in some projects of Diocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of veterans and war victims as a speakers and workshops leaders. Topics are generally related to marital processes and problems, learning communication skills, living with those suffering from PTSD, the role of wife and mother and so on. Besides that, counselors also participated in the same way at some parishes at the invitation of the local parish priest. That was usually a pleasant experience for the participants of lectures and workshops, as well as for parishioners. The groups were divided according to profile: candidates for Confirmation, their parents, the parents of altar boys etc. The topics were similar to those already specified above. Some of these lectures and workshops was attended by the professional staff counseling volunteer. We can say: „As you regularly need physical exercise to achieve good physical condition there is also a need for regularly renewal of

spirituality to renew your faith“ and you'll benefit from occasional training on methods and techniques for solving life's problems.

Maybe we can not influence to the global ideological tendencies, but that remains to help families at the local level through these counseling centers which will increase the quality of marriage and family life.