



“WE HAVE TO LEARN TO DESIRE WHAT IS OURS”

FIFTY WRITTEN PIECES
ON THE FAMILY

With recommendations
by Katalin Novák

“We have to learn to desire what is ours”

Fifty written pieces on the family

With recommendations by Katalin Novák

“We have to learn to
desire what is ours”

Fifty written pieces on the family

With recommendations by
Katalin Novák

Edited by: Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (KINCS).

Editor-in-Chief: President of KINCS

Editor: Katalin Novák

ISBN 978-615-6447-02-9

Layout: György Protzner

Printing: GELBERT ECO PRINT KFT.

Copyright © KINCS, 2021

The Publisher's volumes (in print and e-book formats)
are available for order at the KINCS bookshop:

www.ekonyv.koppmariaintezet.hu

*I would like to thank the authors for taking on the task,
Zoltán for thinking together,
Judit, Vili, Gergő, Matyi for their honest feedback,
Tünde and her team for their perseverance,
Sefi for helping me go on, and Gyuri for his infinite patience,
Ágota and Zsolt for solving seemingly impossible problems,
and all those who helped without me even knowing it, KLK
for being there for me, Granny Bori and Granny Jutka,
Grandpa Feri, Grandpa Zoli, Mummy, and Daddy,
Zozo, Adam, Toto, Bimbi and the others, for making me
exist and making me who I am, and of course István,
for enduring this too, and, what is more, supporting it,
and the Lord for being with me this time too*

THANK YOU

Foreword



As a teenager, I read lots of interviews with Hollywood actresses: beautiful smiling women with snow-white teeth and perfect figures, with an Oscar or two under their belts, sitting in their perfect villas talking about how they sewed their children's carnival costumes themselves or cooked healthy meals for the family. I found this perfection both attractive and repulsive. Later in my life, I realised that real life is rarely the same as the image people project of themselves. Family is the miracle of waiting for and giving birth to a child, looking at the world with new eyes again and again, interdependence, caring, love, pride, and, many times, pain, renunciation, letting go, coping and loss – all this together. When talking about the family, we should not ignore any of these things.

The family. What does this word bring to mind for the cardinal, the bishop, the rabbi, the Olympic champion, the medical professor, the director, the writer, the politician, the bank manager, the racing driver, the opera singer, the head of a family organisation or my own father? I asked them. I invited them to write something about the family, anything they think, without genre restrictions, be it personal, professional, scientific or

literary in style. I invited Hungarian people who are worth listening to, whom I personally appreciate. For me, it was important to involve, besides representatives of the historic churches, representatives of culture, science, sports, civil society, the media, the economy and politics – although the latter only in exceptional cases, that is, when they were willing to share personal stories that readers may find a source of strength. Some of the authors are familiar to most readers, others may be unknown. Some have children, some do not, some have small families, others have big ones, some have found their partner for life easily and for some fate had something else in store. There are authors who are bringing up children with disabilities and have first-hand experience of situations when the body is more of an obstacle than usual, and there are others who have dedicated their lives to helping children in need of special development. Some became parents at a very young age, while others had to wait a long time for this miracle to happen, while others still have been given the gift of an adopted child. These written pieces are about belonging and coping, with their common denominator being faith and grace.

Dear Reader,

The written pieces in this volume are about us too. They are not Hollywood fairy tales, but accounts of real lives, inspiring and profound reflections we may draw strength from in everyday life. I hope You will find your own story. While reading, we may reflect on the meaning of the family we come from, the family we long for, the family we live in and the family we wish for our children and grandchildren. I also hope that the volume will help us to learn, as the title says, quoting Simone Weil, “to desire what is ours.”

Budapest, October 2021.

Katalin Novák

Contents

LITERATURE	13
János Lackfi	15
Erzsébet Schäffer	21
Zsolna Ugron	27
Iván Bagi	33
CHURCH.....	39
Prof. Dr. Péter Erdő	41
Zoltán Balog.....	47
Fülöp Kocsis.....	53
Péter Gáncs	59
Slomó Köves.....	65
Zsolt Marton	71
Anikó Schanda.....	77
SPORT	81
Tamás Lőrincz and Viktor Lőrincz	83
Judit Polgár	87
Anita Görbicz and Ottó Vincze	91
Kornél Dávid	95
Norbert Michelisz.....	99

SCIENCE	105
Prof. Dr. János Martonyi	107
Prof. Dr. Emőke Bagdy.....	113
Dr. Tamás Sulyok.....	121
Prof. Dr. Balázs Schanda	127
Barbara Czeizel.....	131
HEALTH	137
Prof. Dr. András Csókay	139
Dr. György János Velkey.....	143
Dr. Péter Tóth-Heyn.....	149
Prof. Dr. Zoltán Novák.....	155
ARTS.....	161
Erika Miklósa.....	163
Ferenc Rófusz	167
Attila Vidnyánszky	171
Zsuzsanna Vincze Zsuráfszky and Zoltán Zsuráfszky	177
János Balázs.....	181
Ági Szalóki.....	185
Gergő Oláh.....	191
Katalin Kokas and Barnabás Kelemen	195
FAMILY MOVEMENT	199
Katalin Gyurkó Kardos	201
Fruzsina Skrabski	207
András Székely	211
Tünde Fűrész	217
Anna Nagy	221

ECONOMY	227
Éva Hegedüs	229
Ágnes Hornung	235
Zsófia Laposa	239
PUBLIC LIFE	245
Katalin Makrai Schmitt	247
Rózsa Zsigó and Róbert Zsigó	251
Dr. Mária Schmidt	257
Dr. Katalin Szili	263
Gábor Bányai	269
MEDIA	273
Fanny Hozleiter – Mosolyka	275
Gergő Süveges	279
Ilona Keresztes	285
Krisztina Vrábel	291



LITERATURE

János Lackfi

Erzsébet Schäffer

Zsolna Ugron

Iván Bagi



János Lackfi

Poet and writer,
laureate of the József Attila Prize,
twice awarded the Children's Book
of the Year Prize.
His wife is Júlia Bárdos,
they have six children.



Recommendation

How many times have I felt how good it would be to put into words, to describe, to capture and pass on the moment I am experiencing! And how many times I have felt that I do not have the means to do so. Even though I love the richness of our mother tongue, the words I know do not convey the feeling that has gripped me. How many times have I felt that it would be good to share, to multiply, to put into words and store for hard times love, happiness, pride, joy, exuberance, catharsis, and grace; and to remember disappointment, failure, pain, and misfortune! But I cannot do all that. Then, while reading a poem or a book, I suddenly realize: this is it! This is exactly how I am, this is how I feel, this poem, this story is exactly what I am, it's about me, it's about us.

This is how János Lackfi writes, this is how he creates a community with me, the reader. It is good to see what he sees, it is good to see the way he does it, it is good to feel what he feels and it is good to believe what he believes. János Lackfi's writings are not didactic, they do not lecture, nor are they parables or about perfection: perhaps they are more about perfection in the biblical sense, that is, about something, someone's purpose being fulfilled. Our partner, our children, our parents, our family are meant for us, destined for us, and we are perfect for them, for each other.

We read a lot to our children from an early age, and we want books to be part of their everyday lives. In addition to Hungarian folk tales and the classics, it was important that they should be exposed to contemporary literature, which they could feel close to them in a different way, which spoke about the world around them while preserving eternal values and

respectfully enriching our language. This is how the poems and tales of János Lackfi came to be part of our lives, and, like many Hungarian families, we felt we knew him without ever having met him.

No matter what they are about, János Lackfi's writings include, unspoken or unspoken, his parents, his wife Júlia, their six children and four grandchildren. It is no secret that they lost two babies before they were born. Many people know this pain, but bury it inside themselves, not knowing, not wanting, not daring to share it with others. I hope that those who have been blessed with the miracle of childbirth and those who have not (yet) can draw strength from this writing.

Thank you for that!

Katalin Novák

What a man cannot lift

It is the man who solves everything. Absolutely everything.
But what if there is nothing to be solved?

Then the man is embarrassed, scratches his ears, stands from one foot to the other, rubs his hands. What good is a man if he has nothing to help with, nothing to hammer in, put together, lift, or carry? If only he could test his skills on a tight jar top at least! Or change a light bulb! Or fix a tile on the roof! Or explain to the art of integrals to someone. But if there's nothing like that in sight? At least there should be a football match on television or something... Or a deck of cards at hand, a car magazine, a beer or a game console!

There have been quite a few memorable moments, minutes, hours, days in my life when I didn't have to do anything manly. I didn't have to take the piano upstairs, take the washing machine down to the cellar. I didn't have to pack up a hundred and twenty-three bundles of shutter boards, change a tyre, get a trailer or deftly park the car. No putting the world to rights, no telling the world what to do.

When I was waiting for the birth of my sixth child, I sat in the sterile hospital lobby and prayed, in nervous immobility. I wasn't a doctor who

could cut that endangered baby girl out of my endangered wife's perilous belly. I wasn't an assistant to administer the bandages, the scalpel, the thread, to pull open the wound, to help tamponade, to check the data displayed by the machines.

Yet I had planned everything in advance. Three weeks before the due date I had already made no commitments so I would be ready to drive her to the hospital at a moment's notice. Then I was driving home from Eger and got a text message saying that the doctor had refused to let Juli go home after the check-up. She was devastated. What would she do in that institution for weeks? But something told her to follow the doctor's orders. I told her I'd bring all her stuff in at the crack of dawn the next day, and she should just rest. Then in the morning, just as I was about to leave, I got another message that the delivery had started. Her water had broken, my wife could barely climb half a floor to the delivery room. The little one probably didn't want to be born yet, though she was already on course, so whoops, she turned back, and her leg got stuck in the birth canal with the umbilical cord. The OB doctor was on the ball and twenty minutes later surgery was underway. Just as well that the good Lord had His way, because if we had had to go from home, from Zsámbék, neither baby nor mother would have survived by the time we would have arrived or the ambulance came.

The feeling of uselessness erodes the sense of masculinity. I can't stand not to be needed. But in fact, I'm not only needed when I'm spectacularly putting myself out there, doing my best, heaving and hauling, being clever, being smart. But also when all I can do is surrender and just be there. Even if there is no visible need for this surrender.

I waited for the baby to cry, while other men did the work for me that I don't know how to do, that I'm not good at, that I don't have the skills for. And then they brought her out, and I held the skinny little mite that had just been rescued from her mother's belly. My wife's life was in danger, a woman can bleed to death through the womb very quickly. What could I do? The midwife put the tiny pink body in the incubator to warm up, and I watched. How hard did I watch her? By tons, but I was careful not to squeeze her. Could anyone else have looked at her in the same way? They couldn't, because I was her father.

And I talked to her, even though she didn't understand. "Welcome, my little one, we will try to take care of you, to protect you from everything, to do everything we can to make sure you have a beautiful childhood, to make sure you grow up to be a beautiful young girl, to make sure you find a mate, to make sure you live in faithfulness and justice. And as long as I can breathe and move my arms, and as long as you want me to, I'll be there for you, helping you in any way I can."

Was that manly? Would it have been more manly to watch scuba diving lessons, sports columns or videos of women making a pig's ear of parking on my mobile phone? Let's each decide for ourselves.

Nothing happened in the traditional sense of the word. I was inactive, but I was present. My presence was my action. If I had sat like an inattentive bubble, slipped away, made a run for it and disappeared, who knows what unconscious processes would have been set in motion in the little one. Decades later, she would've ended up paying a fortune to psychologists to discover the insidious ways in which the absence of her father had eroded her self-esteem, the very foundations of her existence. Is it the father who does something? Or is he just there?

I was there, holding her, reading the set book, helping with maths, watching football practice, ballet recitals, piano exams, ceremonies, puppet shows. I watched what she participated in, I wished I could have afforded an expensive ticket, a professional pianist, a professional ballet, a professional football match. But what I care about is who she is and how she is in the world. I have to give myself over to that story.

I confess I often have trouble with this. The old king's greatest joy is when he can see his grown children gathered around the house, and he can look at them, listen to their words, see what they have become, how they are developing, struggling, growing. And yet I often think that I am not really needed at such times. Perhaps that is why I have introduced a habit, not entirely bad but not entirely good either. We have an open-space kitchen and living room, so whenever we have guests over, I do the washing up immediately after eating. In other words, I'm part of the conversation, and there's no unfinished kitchen work. And I also hone my skills, no

doubt as a dad doing housework. It has its advantages, but it also has its drawbacks, which points at an even worse habit I have.

Every now and then I remember something I haven't done, and even though my children are visiting us, I run down to the cellar and quickly finish that terribly important job or answer that terribly urgent letter on my laptop. I take my time and presence away from my loved ones, I don't give them my all. Or rather I take back what I've already given them in principle. I have an excuse of course, I am earning money precisely to support my family or help my children. But what good is it if I give my money and my time to work, but I don't give myself?

There are many moments in the life of a family when the man is helpless. For months, we took turns walking up and down the flat with our colicky little sixth one, humming to her, rocking her. I couldn't ease her pain, I could only carry her like a living piece of scaffolding, soothing her with my presence. A man cannot breastfeed his child, he cannot share the close intimacy that brings mother and child together while nursing. What's more, he is even forced to restrain himself for a time in physical intercourse. What makes him a man at such times?

It may not be spectacular and it may not seem manly to love – to love that child and that woman in the way that only I can.

Even if there's no direct feedback that yes, this is important now. To love with arms down, idly, is sometimes a very easy and airy thing; at other times it's a mighty hard lesson. As a man, it is an incredibly heavy burden, but if I'm strong enough, I can cope!

Erzsébet Schaffer

Journalist, writer and publicist,
winner of the Pulitzer Prize
and the Prima Primissima Prize.
In 2018 she was awarded the Officer's Cross
of the Hungarian Order of Merit for her activities.
She is a mother of four and grandmother of seven.



Recommendation

I have been a fan of Erzsébet Schaffer since I was a little girl. Even my grandmother had a copy of the weekly women's magazine *Nők Lapja*, which I read from cover to cover. Maybe I learnt to read before starting school so that I could understand the letters and not only the colourful pictures. From the very beginning, Erzsi had a column inviting me on a spiritual journey. In my imagination, I sat with her in the train compartment, saw the tired man opening a sandwich, the lonely university student reading, the nagging couple, the mother breastfeeding her baby in the corner of the compartment. I was travelling with her in my mind on the suburban train when the cocky gypsy boy started to talk to her, and I shed a tear with Erzsi when the young man unexpectedly began to recite one of the renowned 20th century Hungarian poet Attila József's most beautiful poems. And how! In my imagination, I travelled with him around the country and we went far and wide. To the remote corners of the Hungarian Highlands, Transylvania, Moldavia, and together we listened to the stories and the people telling them.

Erzsi Schaffer's writings teach us to see, to hear and to love. To watch, to listen and to speak when necessary. But most of all, as Ervin Lázár wrote of her, they help us to live.

The motto of her column was Simone Weil, a quote so dear to me that we even printed it on our wedding invitation: "We have to learn to desire what is ours."

It has been a great gift of the past few years that I came to know Erzsi in person. I, the one-time little fan girl, the college student looking on from the back row of a book launch, the woman growing up reading her writings and books, finally met Erzsébet Schäffer. We sat at a café table, immersed in endless conversation, and it is a great joy that we can do this time and again.

Stipendium Peregrinum, or STIPI, is a state scholarship scheme that provides generous grants to young Hungarians admitted to the best universities in the world, to help them with their studies. I invited Erzsi to the three-day selection camp and asked her to tell the young people a story one morning. She was excited. I was less so, although I wondered what the eighteen- and twenty-year-old students, boys and girls who filled the room would think of this Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist they hardly knew. Who, moreover, is pretty much of grandmotherly age. She walked onto the stage and began to talk and tell stories in a way only she can. The characters in the stories came to life. We were there with her when she was a rebellious adolescent, a street performer, a manual worker, a funky bride, a young mother, and then at the arrival of one child after the next. And we were there with her at her mother's and then her husband's bedside, feeling the sluggish drag of years spent caring for a beloved partner condemned to muteness and immobility, the highs and lows she experienced. We listened to Erzsi and learned to desire what is ours. Needless to say: the girls, but also the boys, were sometimes in tears, sometimes laughing with abandon, and the applause went on and on...

Katalin Novák

About the family – with Erzsi Schäffer

Motto

*I would like to get married and have children,
because then they will grow up, love someone and have children
of their own. And so it's a constant cycle, and life never stops.
And even if I die, there will still be a little bit
of me in someone after me. (Barbara, 13)*

Family drawings

There was once a game I took part in. We asked hundreds of children to draw pictures of their families. This produced some wonderful pictures. Of happiness, pain, joy, mother, father, brothers and sisters. Or of absence. Children's lives were revealed in the drawings. What I would like most of all is to be able to post those drawings here, instead of writing.

This morning at dawn, thinking about this writing about the family, faces suddenly appeared in my mind. Like a film down Memory Lane with people I hadn't seen for a long time, children and adults. And as I watched, I realized, these are my own family sketches. I tried to find words spoken or written by children. I like those too, because they are honest, just like the family drawings.

In the whole world, the family is the smallest community, and the closest. The family always aims to raise the child. Outside of my family, I only love Timi, secretly. I am filled with happiness when I am with her. (Balázs, 8)

Ica Murzsa

I met her when she broke down the door of the Gárdonyi Street Children's Home, and Zsuzsa Dénes, the psychologist at the Home, said that anyone who wants their child so badly should have them back. Norbi was two years old at the time, taken from his mother because the workers' dorm prohibited children from living there even though he didn't take up much room, as they slept in the same bed. Ica Murzsa, a thirty-two-year-old gypsy woman from Szabolcs County, a cleaner at Construction Company No. 43, spoke in a shouting voice, and by then had already collected 60,000 forints for a place of her own, and said that she would blow God out of heaven if she didn't get Norbi back, whom she had given birth to at the age of thirty to her shame, because till then she had begged God and the Virgin Mary in vain to give her a child at last. She had divorced her husband, who was in prison, he is a bad egg, she shouted, and held her son in her arms, crying, when she was finally able to bring him home to her sublet in Gyömrő. The flat was damp and she had only pennies to add to her sixty thousand. Then, the psychologist and I undertook to be her guarantors for the loan she took out with OTP Bank,

but first we were cooling our heels in the waiting room of the CEO of No. 43, pleading for her cause. So a year later she got a flat in Gépmadár Street in Kőbánya. Shouting and hugging, she raised Norbi to become a visibly happy, lanky teenager, and then a joiner, because she shouted that without a trade and without honour, “a man ain’t worth shit”. We told her that she didn’t need to shout, but she wasn’t listening to us, she was setting the table. Because the psychologist and I sat there every year on her birthday, when she made sauerkraut stuffed with corn grits and rice. There was golden yellow chicken soup, she went home to Szabolcs to get the chicken, “Pest chickens are no chickens, no way”, she shouted laughing. I never saw a woman love like Ica Murzsa loved. Children, relatives, work, her small but huge world.

Our family is sometimes strict, and sometimes not. Yesterday I watched how my dad was parenting. He had a way with my youngest sister. She is two years old, a little girl. We love her very much. She has tantrums sometimes. We sat at the table, we ate. And then Judit started to have a tantrum. And then my dad sat her on his knee and asked her what was wrong.

But she just kept screaming. And then my dad lifted her up and said, look, Dani is eating properly. Then he sat her down. Then he lifted her up again and said, Andris is eating properly too. He sat her down again. He lifted her up again. Zsófi is eating properly as well. He put her down and lifted her up. Vince is eating well. So he kept saying, pointing at us. There are six of us brothers and sisters. When he got to the end, he said, “Judit is eating properly too”. Then Judit laughed and the tantrum was gone. I think it was a good bit of parenting. (Gergely, 11)

A sketch about happiness

One day, lunch arrived at a small house I had known well, on the edge of Hortobágy, the eastern region of the Hungarian Plain. There were lots of animals everywhere: chickens, ducks, rabbits. Geese, guinea fowls, quails, cows, buffaloes, donkeys, pigs. And all kinds of garden plants and fruit trees. I’ve been visiting the elderly farmer for many years and have witnessed many happy moments, problems and sad events. But it was only there, at that table, that I realised that I had witnessed the birth of a family. Where the great-grandparents, the grandparents were all there

at the rousing wedding feast when we celebrated the marriage of Péter and Csilla. Almost every two years after that day, almost to the minute, a new baby arrived. First Peti, then Marci, then Erzsike, now the youngest Attila. Many of us sat at the table at noon that weekday. The young family, we guests, the grandparents.

The happiness of the simplicity created was tangible.

Everything was perfect. I watched the children singing the table grace at the top of their voices.

Be present at our table, Lord
Be here and everywhere adored
Thy creatures bless and grant that we
May feast in fellowship with Thee.

No sooner was the Amen sung than Peti, the oldest boy, held up his spoon:
"Okay, if you're finished, I'll start!"

I think it's good that everyone has a family. It consists of several people: dad, mum and children. All children love their parents, and all parents love their children. Every child longs to be back home from school. Firstly, because they are hungry, and secondly because they miss their parents. (Tímea, 10)

Let's bring her home!

Although Ildi and Tamás wanted a baby very much, baby just wouldn't come. So they applied to adopt a child. They went through the whole procedure. Then, a surprised Ildi went to see her doctor after some clear signs that she was expecting. Nine months later, their son was born. He had just turned two when another boy came along. And after the same interval a third was born. This youngest was just three when, as potential adoptive parents, they received a phone call. Somehow they had remained stuck in the system. It's no longer relevant, said Ildi, we've had three little boys in the meantime. But what is it all about? It's about this little girl who had been born in the hospital on Bakáts Square in Budapest, said the person on the phone, and there were no parents willing to apply. Perhaps you'd like to take a look. Tamás and Ildi went to Bakáts Square

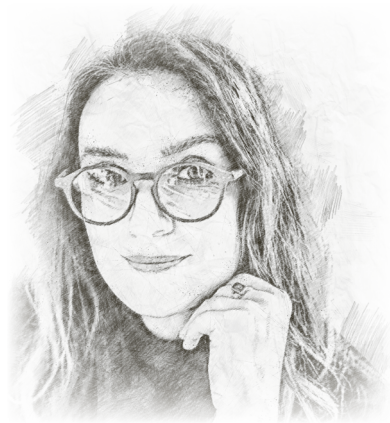
and saw the baby. They knew by then that she was the love child of a Nigerian boy and a Hungarian girl, but they had no idea how chocolate-black she was. They looked at her in her snow-white swaddling clothes and Tamás took Ildi's hand. "See, her ears are the blackest," Ildi laughed, and they drove home to their sons. The story that night was about this baby and how there was no one to take her home. The story wasn't over when the youngest child pulled at the sleeve of Ildi's bathrobe and said, "Mummy, let's bring her home!" "And what does she look like?" asked the middle boy. "Black," said Tamás. And Ildi added that her ears were the blackest. This is how Anna ended up with three brothers at the same time and the three boys got a little black sister. I remember many moments of their lives, smiling, troubled, noisy, serene and quietly peaceful. And something that Tamás said: creating love and inclusive security around them – it's a wonderful gift for us to be able to do this.

If my memory doesn't fail me, Anna is now twenty. The boys are two, four and six years older, respectively.

A good family requires three people working closely together and working well. Now that I'm born and grown, I've bonded my mum and dad together for life. They can't leave each other because I can't be sawed in two. Because then all their hard work would go down the drain. (András, 7)

Zsolna Ugron

Writer, her first novel was published in 2010, and it was followed by a series of historical novels. She has written and directed several documentaries and presented television programmes. She was awarded the Attila József Prize in 2020. She has two children.



Recommendation

When I was a little girl, one of my favourite pastimes was looking at old photographs. I would pull the heavy, hardcover albums off the shelf and carefully flip through the pages. It transported me to a world where my brother and I only appeared in the loving glances of Mum and Dad, where Grandfather's hair was still thick and brown, where Mamka's face had no wrinkles, and Nana Jutka smoked cigarettes just like when she was older. In even older pictures, there were unfamiliar faces to ask questions about, to quiz our grandparents. We recorded their stories on cassette tapes, knowing we couldn't listen to them sitting on their laps forever. I used to stand for a long time in front of the family tree on the wall, trying to memorise the names and the years. I felt proud that our family had been around for so long...

It is from and through these family stories that the history, the story of our larger community unfolds. Our family stories become our distinctively Hungarian stories, from within and beyond our borders.

Zsolna Ugron tells stories through a personal fate, showing the time, place, way of thinking and values, while her writings also include her own story. She comes to the aid of a generation whose members have been kept in the dark about the reality of a divided Hungary, of young people who have not grown up with the natural knowledge that the borders of our country do not coincide with the borders of our nation. And while she writes about this, she has no expectations or demands. All she does through her stories is to teach us about ourselves.

Katalin Novák

Tussle with eternity

I could start with a long list of names of generations. Years, places, married, died. Children. Second spouse. Maybe a third. Data. Family. Inherited family.

If I start like this, I will have to write about unknown landlords and their wives, their loves, their affairs, their children born out of wedlock, their children born into each other's families, their marriages, bad as hell and surprisingly harmonious even according to those in them. Of brilliantly talented lineal and non-lineal relatives working tirelessly for the public weal. Depraved, good-for-nothing lineal and non-lineal people painted over in portraits. Sometimes they were the same. Family memory is fictitious, even more so than history. Perhaps understandably.

I should then write about grandparents I never or hardly knew. About photographs where I cannot identify the faces, where a gaze, frozen in time, might still reveal a former state of mind. A family's (my own family's) stage in life: the way they touch, the way they pull away. Sometimes you can see whole destinies in the angle of an elbow, a nod of the head, a pursed lip, an averted gaze, a determined straightening of the waist.

Goat and donkey carts loom out of the photos; little girls dressed in white lace who had died before they had time to grow up. Famously beautiful women with waists corseted improbably narrow; sullen women who, for all their glittering adornment, never let you forget, not even on the celebratory occasion of a photo shoot, that life was lousy. Little boys with naughty grins; boys and girls making a joke out of their photos being taken; a light-hearted picnic party; a bunch of visibly tipsy people at grape harvest, my great-grandfather in the middle like the lord of the manor. Photos of life from two world wars ago; my other great-grandfather (or is it great-great-grandfather?) in a bucolic shepherd's costume. A great-great-great-aunt (or just great-great-aunt, if that is who she was) posing as a Renaissance lady at some point in time on the other side of the world. Faces with unknown lives behind them. Who knows whom I would have loved and whom I would not? Who knows who loved whom and who didn't? Does it matter? Do I need to know?

Then again, grandparents I didn't know or hardly knew. Their youth in black and white photos, their youth in tinted daguerreotypes, their wedding photos, then no more visual trace. History – we know. Who had time, money, and so on?

I am sitting on my paternal grandfather's lap, he is telling me about the Principality, it's a summer afternoon, I can't be more than four, but I am the only one of the grandchildren who sits still, so he tells me the history of Transylvania. In return, I ask for a rug that day which I like. The old adroitness – or was it greed, take your pick – has worn off or has been dropped since. Probably dropped. Instilled in me. I got it, I pass it on. Or should I not? What to pass on, what not to pass on? (I ended up with the rug of course, though much sooner than I should have.)

My maternal grandfather is sitting on the porch, he has an amazing crop of snow-white hair, I am impressed. He teaches me sayings that my parents don't approve of at all and mostly calls me little shit bug. I don't like it but I accept it, I know he calls me that out of love. I'm going to school in the autumn, and I'm pretty sure everyone there will have different grandparents, because that's how it is in kindergarten too.

It's not even true that happy families are all alike. For some reason, this too only becomes clear after life-shaping crises. That others, elsewhere, have them different. Everyone, in fact. Or do you know a counter-example? There are serious delays in that regard (too). It also turns out over time that statements like this and similar ones are made precisely so that they can sooner or later be refuted.

In our family there hasn't been a divorce for six hundred years, or so they have been saying. Question mark.

Then: well, well, and yet there has, after all. Then you have to reinterpret "staying in the family". Because which family exactly? Or how many families are there? Is that a separate one? Or is it the same? Take your pick. For me, it is one. A big one. It wobbles in places, but it's ours. Whose child, and their own child, and whose mother-in-law is their mother-in-law and up to what point? Is it a matter of a piece of paper? Does it make any difference? It depends: for me the hell it does. We haven't had a divorce in 600 years. Be as it may, but they died, remarried, ran away with the

driver, clichés, etc. And even then, for the last six hundred years, it's been the same: your child, my child, our child. There were exceptions though.

Wills, bequests. Letters. Why, he didn't; oh yes, he did, but it was I who turned him and fed him, he hadn't looked this way in years.

At the same time:

When we came fleeing (I think it's safe to say that now, no point in dressing it up any more) they were waiting for us at the station. There was a home for us. I was given a school bag, a pencil case, I could go to school like a normal kid. Not like someone who had just arrived in the middle of nowhere. The basic experience of my adolescence – which will only be expressed in retrospect – is that even if the world has fallen apart, you can somehow fish the pieces together, because there are lifeboats, the people in them help you, and there is a strong, tightly woven net to hold you up. They don't let you drown. Moreover, you even get a bathing suit and they love you. I don't even know them, how many times have I seen them? And still. It's family. They keep me. Keep track of me. Take me in. Accept me.

It is inexplicable why, as an adult, I can immediately get on with my distant cousin, who lives in London, has a Persian wife and whom I have seen no more than four times in my life. Why I can talk to him as if we'd shovelled sand into each other's mouths with a toy spade in the playground.

It is inexplicable why I put up with my insufferable relatives, and why it is that okay, it's hard, but I know hard, I understand it, it's the kind of hard that is mine.

Okay, so he holds the fork the same way as I do.

But then, Mummy, what will happen when my half-brother is born? You will have another brother. Not a half-brother. A whole brother. One you can love, one who will very likely love you, because you are absolutely loveable. I would hazard a guess that he would still love you even if you weren't loveable. Because you also love your other brothers and sisters, even if they're really crazy, right? Well, try to remember that now and don't forget it when you are a grownup. Like Auntie Margaret, who

isn't really our grandmother but she's still our grandmother? Yes, like that. Only more so? Family, more family, most family. Are there degrees? There is no constant here either. Families increase and decrease. It depends. Struggling together, rejoicing together. Even when for a while they don't – for twenty years or two days or a generation or two – but after that? It's back on track. Right?

Where you recognise your parents, your grandparents. Where you recognize your partner and yourself and your children. The family you still love, no matter what, even if it devastates you. That is yours, and that owns you. That exists despite everything, I think irrevocably. A statement. Give and get – tussle with eternity. The getting, as in getting a gift, should be underlined.

Iván Bagi

Performer, anchorman,
Kamera Hungária Prize
and Karinthy Ring
winning comedian,
poet, writer.



Recommendation

After unexpected spinal surgery, and bedridden, I finally had plenty of time to read. I had just met Iván Bagi, whom until then I had only seen on television shows. I had known nothing about him except for the fact that he excelled in imitation and parody. And I must confess that I might easily have confused him with his fellow performer, Olivér Nacsá. So, being forced to rest, I started to read his autobiography, which he had given me the last time we met. The book captivated me. Perhaps it was because of the post-operative pain, the vulnerability and the loneliness I was experiencing, or perhaps the realisation that our birthdays are on the same day... I felt as if I was personally sharing Iván's struggles: his having been an orphan, marginalisation, his search for a way forward, his struggles to establish human connections, his professional successes that brought him loneliness, and his recurring failures in his private life.

I asked Iván Bagi to write a piece for this volume, because I think his story may help us to appreciate what we have. It may help us realise those (often small) things that we have been blessed with. It may help us to give thanks and feel grace. Iván's life, and the thoughts he expresses in poetry or prose, show us what a blessing it is to grow up in a family, how precious it is to experience closeness and love as a child, how important it is to have our self-confidence boosted and what a privilege it is to find a partner and have children.

Iván Bagi's name is known to many people. He has achieved the highest professional recognition for his work, and made who knows how many people laugh. But now I am recommending his writing for another

reason: because he talks about his own failures with admirable honesty, and because he professes the sanctity and unquestionable importance of the family, even though his own life has been different from what most of us might dream about.

Katalin Novák

Thoughts on the institution of the family

When I was invited by Minister for Families Katalin Novák to contribute to this special volume with something personal, I did not realise how difficult it would be for me to discuss this topic with the most profound honesty – and not necessarily for the reasons known to the public. In the last 30 years, the fact has been widely discussed, especially in the tabloid media, that I was abandoned by my parents when I was only a few weeks old and that I grew up in an orphanage, and was even homeless for a few months. The main reason was that, for me, the notion of “family” does not allow for elegant, unnecessary frills or polite vagueness. So, if you do not mind, this time I will refrain from polite subtleties and will not use euphemisms often expected in this genre. In doing so, I will unwittingly overstep the implicit boundaries of this essay and embrace the embarrassing facts of harsh reality in a situation that is far from easy for me.

To put it plainly, I had no childhood. I never had a family, I had no background, I could never count on anyone. I had to start work while still very young. At the age of 15, I was working for the Radio Cabaret and took part in other gigs (it is funny to look back now) thanks to Tivadar Farkasházy and his team. One of the consequences of this was that the growing popularity, which came along with the hype so characteristic of the popular genres, slowly but surely made it impossible for me to be loved for myself.

Allow me to be even more honest. At first, I was completely immersed in the struggle for mere survival and in coping with the many horrors that stemmed from my miserable childhood. But at least I was still young in spirit. Thanks to my age and my physical appearance, I could easily

engender affection in women. Moreover, at that time my name was little known, so in theory every condition was in place for me to finally live in a normal family. In theory. But in practice my misery was by any order of magnitude bigger than myself. I was simply not ready to trust the people close to me. In this respect, I disappointed them most of the time. I had an elusive, unpredictable and unstable personality, coupled with the lack of a sense of proportion, all of which affected my relationships.

I had no childhood *per se*. Neither did I have a period of being a young person. Thus by the time I was able to feel more or less "adult" in the traditional sense of the word, it was too late to make any honest effort, because, as my father used to say, friendships are made in childhood, while adults enter only alliances of interest.

So, by the time I was psychologically ready to start healthy relationships on an equal basis, I had to face the fact that unfortunately most people liked the Iván Bagi they saw on TV rather than the person who I really was. Obviously, given my rootlessness, I could easily have left everything behind and gone abroad, as many advised. But I have such strong ties to the inexhaustibly rich gumption and expressive diversity of my mother tongue, Hungarian, that being deprived of it would most probably have fatally robbed me of my very identity. Had I been loved for myself by a foreign-speaking girl, I would have been unable to truly love her in return. In any other language I can only communicate, but cannot feel.

But let me return to my original thought. It took time for me to calm down, but by then I had lost my parents. My elder sister and brother, who had been very much responsible for my situation in which I had to gain a foothold as an emotionally and financially deprived tramp, did not want to know about me. But, as I pointed out above, after the age of 40 I more or less gained a sense of proportion, and these things no longer inevitably determined my daily life. Apart from some emotional turbulence of a minor or major degree, I have become much more prudent and, if I may say so, mentally more grounded.

As for my present, I can safely say that being famous makes it intrinsically impossible for me to be loved for myself. In a sense, I have never left the foster care institution. I have an old acquaintance from secondary school who also grew up in such an institution. Later, for some years he worked as

a supervising teacher at a residential institution for children in state care. It was he who told me that nine out of ten such children hopelessly lose their way. Those who must go without the intimate atmosphere provided by family love will, sooner or later, come to a bad end. This acquaintance of mine found that he had no means to handle these hardened, vicious rogues, all of whom had a high degree of freedom in the most negative sense of the word. In my poem *Stolen Home*, I made an attempt to convey this profound and unfair dilemma:

“Those who share my fate will know
that I ever wanted to be different
from what I really was.
I lived in their stead,
Away from the mournful army of indescribable misery,
As falsely as possible,
Ever denying
the tireless dying of paupers.

In this alone, I should have been honest
like all the others
who died before turning forty.”

Perhaps the first and last time I felt I was in a loving, intimate environment that resembled some kind of a family was from 1997 to 1999, when I was caring for my terminally ill father. He was living in very poor conditions, in a miserable ground floor, courtyard flat that had no toilet, hot water or a shower. It was located in the worst possible neighbourhood, and we had to use a courtyard shared toilet – still, then and there, we had real meaning. We had no time to be dishonest.

I was given the chance to be my father's son at the best possible moment and in the best possible place. And it was worth being born for that marvellous fact alone.

I think I am a favourite of destiny. I was that one out of ten children who eventually found his way, and did not end up in prison or die young, even if I was close to it many times. But, to be honest, unfortunately I have not been able to start a family of my own yet. I am alive, and

I live an artistically meaningful life. But my life is passing by without me becoming a link between generations past and the generations to come.

I used to say that those with a family have their homes, but I have the whole world. Sometimes I hope that on the Internet I will find people who are like me – rootless and carrying the burden of a heavy fate – and try to connect with them somehow. But for some reason all my attempts fail. It is high time that I realised: for the unfortunate, wounded souls like us the lack of self-love, coupled with insurmountable primordial distrust, often create such a huge obstacle that we are unable to relate to others with affection. There is no point in clinging to the idea of the inevitability of fate when surreal emotional hunger destroys everything anyway. Quite simply, we are not equipped with the means to be able to trust anyone, and it is very difficult to make us reconsider our position.

Still, on behalf of all of us, I would like to express my gratitude to those who, with their modest resources, have at least tried. They defy the zeitgeist that looks at human relationships from the perspective of consumption: "if something is broken, discard it, buy a new one and forget the old one. Live a superficial life, forget about burdens or stakes, and do not even think about basing your identity on old-fashioned things such as God, your country or family, anything that is truly human."

Fortunately, God never lets us down, and, for more than a decade, Hungary has been governed in a spirit that attempts to preserve our national heritage and traditional family values alike. What is more, political decision-makers are trying to reorganise Hungarian society along these very values, and this is something everybody with common sense can only support.

To conclude, I would only add that value-neutral governance does not exist in reality – or if it does exist, then all is lost. I have experienced first-hand what it is like to exist isolated from everyone and everything, having nobody to rely on, just myself, without family, without parents, without love.

I trust that the editors and contributors of this collection of meaningful writings will, with their sensitive approach and dedicated work, make a major contribution to saving more and more disadvantaged children all around the world from the deadly embrace of evil nihilism that inevitably stems from these children's negative notion of freedom.



CHURCH

Prof. Dr. Péter Erdő

Zoltán Balog

Fülöp Kocsis

Péter Gáncs

Slomó Köves

Zsolt Marton

Anikó Schanda



Prof. Dr. Péter Erdő

Roman Catholic priest, cardinal, theologian, canon lawyer, university professor, full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, president of the Szent István Academy of Sciences, rector of Pázmány Péter Catholic University between 1998 and 2003. Since 2002 Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Esztergom–Budapest, Primate of Hungary. Since 2003 member of the cardinal electors for the papal conclave.



Recommendation

When I looked around on the family day of the International Eucharistic Congress on Budapest's Margaret Island, a feeling suddenly came back to me that I had been experiencing for most of that week. The scene, with all the children and families chatting peacefully and singing songs of praise, made me feel the presence of a strength and faith that I had not experienced so intensely for a long time.

For a Christian, family, marriage and having children are the foundations of our community; values that need to be defended most naturally as a matter of course. Obviously, not all the faithful necessarily have children. And even those who do may not necessarily be capable of implementing the values they regard as fundamental. What is more, even we, Christians, fail and sin, and sometimes do not even realise it. However, our failures, mistakes and errors do not mean that there is a problem with marriage, the family and having children *per se*. Whether we live alone and in a family, we are humans and we are weak.

Today, traditional families are under manifold attacks. A growing number of people regard marriage as an obsolete institution, saying that the concept of the family needs redefinition or that having children is an irresponsible decision, meaning that those who marry and want a traditional family are old-fashioned, and those who have children are irresponsible. These are stigmatising and frightening views.

The thoughts of Cardinal Péter Erdő provide us with a point of reference. His wisdom as a theologian, his firmness as a pastor, his straightforward words and his gentle, serene faith may provide support in this noisy and violent, all too often superficial world.

Katalin Novák

The reality of the family according to the Creator's plan^[1]

It was forty years ago, in 1981, on the feast of Christ the King, that Pope Saint John Paul II promulgated his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. It discusses the family, or, to be more precise, and as its subtitle says, *the role of the Christian family in the modern world*.

All over the world, the family is facing a major crisis, fulfilling its mission among very unfavourable conditions. Some opine that this is merely a “natural” crisis; others talk about violent attacks. Undoubtedly, this crisis has devastating demographic and cultural repercussions.

The doctrine of the Church, while adhering to its original foundations unwaveringly, has also raised new issues over these last forty years. The reason for this was that some issues called for reconsideration, given that life and various ideologies were posing new challenges to families.

1. The notion of family

Since time immemorial, the family was discussed in the Catechesis of the Church, as part of the exposition of the Ten Commandments, in the context of the fourth commandment. The Book of Exodus says, “Honour your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you”.^[2] It is thought-provoking that the sanction, so to say, which accompanies the commandment to honour one’s parents is life: the life of the people on earth. Those who observe this commandment will reap peace and prosperity on this earth. In contrast, failure to observe the commandment will cause terrible harm to individuals and communities alike. This is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, which discusses the family in great detail and exalted terms^[3].

Today, many people avoid the notion of the family, and many believe that it is an outdated concept that denotes nothing more than an old social institution, something that can be redefined or reframed as we wish, for example on the basis of a majority or ideologies, or something we can completely forget. But in forgetting the family, we forget our very lives.

Because the family is not created by man, but forms a part of the plan of God the Creator.

What is the family according to the Creator's plan? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family. This institution is prior to any recognition by public authority".^[4]

The Compendium, a brief summary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published at the time of Pope Benedict XVI, says that "God instituted the family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution. Marriage and the family are ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children."^[5] This means that it is not the spouses who decide on the content of the family or the subject of marriage as a contract, as some say. Rather, all of this is predetermined. The family and marriage have a natural purpose, which means that marriage and the family serve common goals, in harmony with the purpose God endowed them with.

Saint Augustine writes in his commentary in the Book of Genesis that "the goods of marriage are threefold: fidelity, the child and sacrament. Fidelity means, that the married partners must not live with another woman or man outside the bond of marriage. The good of children means, that they must accept all children with love, nourish them with affection and raise them carefully and religiously. Sacrament means that married couples must not divorce, and those who are divorced, should not marry another person, even for the sake of having offspring."^[6]

These texts clearly state that the good of the sacrament (*bonum sacramenti*), does not mean that only the marriage of Christians is indissoluble. The modern meaning of "sacrament" as a technical term did not consolidate in the Church until later. Undoubtedly, marriage between Christians is a special sign given to the world.

Marriage is a sacrament *per se*, a source of grace, and not only at the moment it is concluded but throughout its existence. Therefore, the family, which is built on marriage, serves as a special context for the action of grace. What are the implications of this reality according to the Creator's will? What is a family built on marriage?

2. The family: a community of persons

For the modern man, the reality of marriage and the family is difficult to face and handle. Why? Because nowadays people object, like the apostles did. For instance, many people feel that it is not worth getting married. I think that a few decades ago nobody foresaw that not only the number of church marriages, but that of civil marriages would also fall. It shows that a lot of people simply do not dare to commit as a person must commit in a marriage. People are afraid to make a lifetime commitment. There are social reasons for this phenomenon, but there is a psychological reason as well: the misconception of the human being and the notion that defines freedom as being free from all constraints. Objective truth, the sheer existence of objective reality and our self-created reality also appear as an obstacle or limitation to freedom.

People rightly seek happiness in marriage and in the family. Everyday language speaks about happy marriages and a happy family life. Yet all too many fail to find this happiness in their lives because they fear for their misunderstood freedom. This is nothing new, either. Tomás Sánchez, the great Spanish theologian and canon lawyer of the early 17th century, in his work on the sanctity of marriage (which, according to Saint Alphonsus Liguori, would not be excelled for five hundred years) says that the goods of marriage, discussed above, are also burdens. However, these burdens amply compensate for the inconveniences of marriage. Sánchez even gives a list of such inconveniences, and starts as follows: “The first of the inconveniences is perpetual servitude, and giving up freedom for good.”^[7] This, he adds, is compensated for by the sacrament, which provides a power where the spouses love one another as Christ loves the Church. That is, they are endowed with grace so that they can endure the difficulties, Sánchez points out. This holds true even today. Happiness does not stem from a freedom that is totally independent of all, but from the complete and self-sharing loving relationship that opens up to eternity. This is the true good of married couples!

Therefore, when we say that in marriage and in the family, the man and the woman see the good of themselves and of each other as a main objective, what we are primarily talking about is a loving relationship,

which is the real "good" of marriage. This is why, Pope John Paul II says in *Familiaris Consortio*, "The family, which is founded and given life by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives. Its first task is to live with fidelity the reality of communion in a constant effort to develop an authentic community of persons".^[8] That is, a personal communion of love is a gift and a task for the family. This is the source of happiness.

It is God's face that shines upon us in the family. God reveals his face in the family, because the spouses see Christ in each other, and in their children (as new human beings) they see the human being created in God's image. "Without love", adds Pope Saint John Paul II, "the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons."^[9]

The unforgettable Pope continues, making a reference to his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, "man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."^[10] Therefore, the life of the family is comprised of incessant inner dynamism. It is a cycle of love fought for, day after day, with both small and great sacrifices as well as self-denial. Consequently, having children and bringing them up with love stem from the inner logic and from the essence of marriage and the family. This love also calls for the equal dignity of man and woman.

Therefore, the family and marriage are a mutual relationship. St Paul refers to the love of Christ, who gave his life for his betrothed bride, the Church, and also gave his life for mankind. Such radical love has weight. This is what the family asks for and requires. But, at the same time, this is what constitutes family happiness. This love opens up to the wider family: to the grandparents, the elderly, the lonely and the sick. This is why is parents who have a lot of children and devote their lives to them are happy to adopt orphaned children: they do not feel that they have enough problems and cannot make more commitments, but, on the contrary, their love overflows and they embrace those in need.

Today, there are many communities of large families that help each other as well as others. They do so, because such love is boundless strength. If

there is an inner logic to hopelessness, isolation, fear or selfishness, then, all the more so, there is an inner logic to and energy in personal love which falls in line with God's intention. As Pope Francis says, "A positive experience of family communion is a true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth."^[11] The divine and human love experienced and shining in the family is a power that can renew our people and our world, and can lend a living impetus to our Church.

[1] This writing is based on the author's work *A család Isten tervében. Katekézis a család évében* (Family in God's plan. Catechesis on the Year of the Family), Budapest 2011.

[2] Exod. 20,12.

[3] Catechism of the Catholic Church, Point 2200. [4] Catechism of the Catholic Church, Point 2202.

[5] Catechism of the Catholic Church, Point 2201.

[6] August., *De Genesi ad litteram*, Lib. 9, c. 7, nr. 12: PL 34, 397.

[7] Sánchez, T., *De sancto Matrimonii sacramento*, Lib. II, disp. XXIX, nr. 4: ed. Antverpiae 1617, I, 151.

[8] John Paul II, *Adhort. Ap. post-synod., Familiaris Consortio*, Point 18. [9] John Paul II, *Adhort. Ap. post-synod., Familiaris Consortio*, Point 18.

[10] John Paul II, *Enc., Redemptor hominis*, Point 10.

[11] Francis, *Adhort. Ap. post-synod., Amoris laetitia*, Point 316.

Zoltán Balog

Calvinist pastor, bishop, pastoral president of the Hungarian Reformed Church. Former Member of Parliament, State Secretary for Social Inclusion, Minister of Human Resources from 2012 to 2018. Former President of the Foundation for Civic Hungary. He is married, and has five children and eight grandchildren.



Recommendation

I once complained to my pastor, that I was stuck in a rut: for months, or even maybe years, I had not been progressing in my journey of faith as I had intended. He asked me: "How often do you exercise?" "Every day", I replied. "How much do you work?", he asked. "Ten to twelve hours a day", I answered. "How much time do you spend with your family?" "The rest." "How much time do you devote to deepening your faith? How often do you open the Bible? Do you pray and talk to God besides the Sunday services?" Since that conversation, I have been reading the Bible every day, and have been regularly attending the mid-week services of our congregation.

I personally owe a lot to Zoltán Balog, not only for his work as a leader of our congregation and Church, but also for the experience he shared with me and the guidance he gave me in public life. When he served as Minister, I was Head of Cabinet in the Ministry of Human Resources for two years and State Secretary for another four years. He helped me find my way in the world of politics, which was unfamiliar to me at the time.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in the first lockdown, Zoltán Balog posted a prayer on his social media page. This prayer went viral, just like funny pictures or photos of kittens do in normal times. Many people shared the prayer, and many found comfort, support and encouragement in it. Since then the writings that he produced during the difficult months of the pandemic have been collected and published in a volume titled *Nem csak kenyérrel* ("Not by bread alone"), which I heartily recommend that people read.

During his six years as Minister, Zoltán Balog did a lot for Hungarian families. It was he who suggested that family policy be made a separate area of governance. The extended childcare fee, the Housing Subsidy for Families (CSOK), the Umbilical Cord Programme targeted at Hungarians living abroad, and many other forms of family support were introduced during his mandate. The guidance based on the firm faith that he offers in his sermons, publications and speeches to those who seek it is just as important.

Katalin Novák

Familia Dei – The Family of God

Our Lord, our faithful God!

You are the primordial beginning,

You are the primordial pattern for us human beings.

The way You give Yourself away teaches and inspires us to give ourselves to our mothers and fathers, our life partners, our children and to all those whom You have entrusted to us.

Let us give so that one human being may become two, then three or four. So that we together may become a community (communio), a church (communitas) and a nation (natio).

Make us able to profess our faith.

So that we may commit and profess: You are our Creator, our primordial companion, and this is why we are each other's human companions: children, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of other human beings.

Men and women.

But You are also the One who delivers us from the prison of our own lives, the captivity of our lives of selfishness and our deadly loneliness. You set us free into companionship.

Bless us, Giver of all Good, the God of Love and Grace!

Where the world is barren, give us life.

Where darkness blinds us, bring light.

Where there is lack of love, give love.

Love those whom we love and those whom we do not love.

Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, bless us.

Amen.

(A prayer for man and for family,

4th Budapest Demographic Summit, 23 September 2021)

As people of faith, we profess that the foundation, the centre and the bulwark of the family is the Creator and Redeemer God.

Creation and redemption: these are God's two fundamental acts, the very basis of human life. The result of the first, creation, is that we, His creatures, exist. The result of the second, redemption, is that we are saved and set free. While the first denotes our origin, the second marks our potential to keep to or return to that origin from the errant ways that stem from the godless presumptions we make about ourselves.

But when we profess this in the Church do we help those who are struggling day to day, in the areas of public life, culture, science or governance to ensure that the family (comprising of a man and a woman, and completed by a child or children) has a future, that it is indeed regarded as a key to sustainability?

The question is justified. There is strong opposition to, and rejection of the clear principles that define the meaning of human life and its unquestionable, eternal and transcendent origin, on a religious basis. A key slogan of the dominant "Western" intellectual trends and movements is "cancel". They deny that there is any good in the way our parents and grandparents lived or in the essence of the family as handed down throughout the period of Christianity, beginning with the Bible.

But if we try and hear what is behind the din of the media, it becomes clear that there is a growing need for the teachings among those who would not accept ready-made answers to the big questions of human life (*where, why, how and to where*), and instinctively feel that the Internet-style recipes for salvation are nothing but dead-ends. As proven by the current intellectual struggles that surround the notion of the family, it will not suffice to create good programmes or to declare repeatedly that a prerequisite for the future of 21st-century mankind is the strengthening of the institution of the family, and to argue for this fact rationally so as to understand and make others understand. It will not suffice to know what is the right thing to do. We must have the inspiration and strength to actually do it. The world of Christian faith offers exactly this inspiration and source of power. That is why we cannot give it up.

The Christian faith and ethics regard the family as an order of creation, given to mankind as a gift by God through his creative will. With children in the family a human being becomes God's partner in creation. Is there – can there be – greater dignity or inspiration than this for those who call this God “our Father”?

Still, the expression “order of creation” implies immutability and a lack of change. In contrast, the culture of romantic relationships (the unique aspects of this order as experienced by the individual) reflects changeability instead of stability. It reflects how people cohabit in different ways in different historical eras. God's word is a revelation, but we humans want to live our lives in the relative world we are born into. Therefore, the divine text – what He says and what he had the authors of the Scriptures write – is addressed to us. And it becomes a prescription, something that is written into our lives, into the changing circumstances, into the context, where context (the actual context of human life) is changing, but the text is eternal.

How is it possible to realise what is eternal in what is changing and ephemeral? How is it possible to see the unchangeable in the changes? “Faithfulness” is not only a key word for romantic relationships and marriage, but it also denotes the very the essence of Christian life. We want to be faithful to the word of God and to the order He has defined. Because we believe that our lives will be good, our marriages will be good, our families, our way of parenting and our relationship with our parents will be good only if they all stem from this faithfulness. If we want to translate the unchanging into a liberating, attractive, serene family life practice in our changing life, into something which, of course, is a burden and responsibility at the same time, we cannot avoid the intellectual and spiritual struggle that turns revelation into a timely teaching, into help in life. Christian life, which is intrinsically fulfilled within the community, may show the world precisely this way of life that has been formed with struggles and tested here as the way of life that is a timely manifestation of the order of creation. That is why we must devote just as much attention and energy to translating “eternal” Christian values into everyday life guidance as to declaring or professing the same values. To highlighting the principles we always adhere to. There is only one thing which is more

important: presence. Presence even when there are no problems. And we must be present, endowed with the love given "from above", when there is a failure to live life according to Christian principles. We must stand beside those whose lives seem to be failing and do not seem to be able to stand the toughest test, those who fail and cannot find a way out. Accompanying them, we can and must show that the Christian doctrine not only declares what is good and right, but is also a source of strength and inspiration to help the fallible human beings arrive at that good.

The first key expression or fundamental proposition of the order of creation is that God created man and woman "in His image and likeness".

A major attribute of existing in such likeness is the ability to enter into a dialogue, to converse with each other and to relate to each other. The human being is addressed by God and is able to respond and live in a conscious relationship with God and with other human beings alike. It was always a sign of the failure of religion or religious morality when these two abilities were played off against each other. Human beings can truly want to love one another and are able to love each other only when this all stems from divine love. I myself had to suffer for understanding this truth in a crisis of my marriage. All this is possible only in a dialogue, that is, in a living, dynamic relationship.

The relationship between a man and a woman, or, what is more,

any real human relationship is never finished or settled. On the contrary, it has the capacity within it for constant renewal.

Similarly, a human being's relationship with God is not a closed fact, or something that is settled for good. It is not that it is enough to know the rules God has set for life and that is all. The divine commandments (in the original language of the Bible, the word we translate as "law" means "guidance" or "orientation") are endowed with their true meaning in the context of a dialogue with God. This is how it becomes possible to comply with them.

It is the Christian community that first embraces, unfolds and then transmits teaching, and helps others learn to translate it into everyday life. In my twenties, as a grant holder student in Germany, I once

heard my favourite professor talking about his mother. It was then that I understood why my own mother was so wonderful. As Professor Jüngel said, “A woman does not become a mother by giving birth to her child, but by teaching the child to live.” And this is the task of the Christian community as well: to make family values attractive, comprehensible, enjoyable and liveable, through love.

Fülöp Kocsis

Greek Catholic monk,
metropolitan archbishop
of the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog.
In 2012 he was awarded
the Middle Cross of the
Hungarian Order of Merit.



Recommendation

I had been preparing for the Greek Catholic liturgy at the International Eucharistic Congress, but the government meeting ran late, so I knew I wouldn't make it to the start. I sent a text message to Fülöp Kocsis apologizing for my absence from the service. But he reassured me: "you can't be too late for a Greek Catholic mass, feel free to join in later, you are welcome". And so it happened. I arrived an hour late, and still had the chance to get into the proceedings, to join in the communal singing and the liturgy. Perhaps this short story reveals some of the important qualities of Metropolitan Archbishop Fülöp Kocsis: his graciousness, his attentiveness and, at the same time, the inviting love with which he addressed many people and was able to win them over to the Greek Catholic Church.

Father Philip is a regular visitor to Romani settlements, to poor families and institutions that cater to underprivileged children. Dressed in a cassock, wearing a headdress and sporting a long beard, he arrives on his bicycle on the dusty dirt roads, with his characteristic kind smile on his face. In no time at all he starts greeting everybody and inspires confidence in Roma women, young children and adult men alike. He also arouses the interest of teenagers when he plays football, rides a quad bike or shows off his skills to juggle a featherball. And he uses this attention to pass on the teachings of his church to those around him. Ten years ago, at the invitation of then State Secretary for Inclusion Zoltán Balog, he was one of the founders of the Christian Roma College Network and has since done much to help talented Roma young people gain access to higher education.

Although I am Protestant, I also feel a strong connection with Father Fülöp's Church through my Greek Catholic husband. And reading the following writing by Father Fülöp, we learn what the family, this diverse bond, means to Greek Catholics.

Katalin Novák

Family: hearth and shrine

Etymologically, the Hungarian word for family, *család*, is related to the word *cseléd*, meaning all those belonging to a household. It primarily meant one's own children. In some dialects, a child is still called *cseléd*, or *pulya*, *lurkó*, *kölyök*, *poronty*, *csimota* –, kid, bairn, moppet, nipper, take your pick. In our predominantly urban culture, it now seems almost offensive to call a child *cseléd*, as the common meaning of the word is servant. Yet this etymology is a beautiful illustration of the unity of a human community working in perfect harmony. The servant is not just a servant waiting for his master's orders, but one who acts and works for the benefit of a community. Being a servant is now a lowly status in life, whereas in the past, a well-to-do family had a number of servants, i.e. a number of children, who enriched the whole community through their work. In our upside-down world today, people with lots of children are considered poor because they do not seem to have as many material goods. In the old days, having lots of children was considered a form of wealth because they contributed to increasing the family's material goods. Today, material goods are simply a given, or at least we think we are entitled to them, and we resent even a partial lack of them. But lots of *cseléd*, lots of children meant richness not only in the production of material goods, but also, and more importantly, in the accumulation of emotional treasures. Lots of children, a large family mean emotional wealth. And this is the most that the members of a family can give each other: they teach us to love by their very existence.

I am quite proud, but even more grateful, that according to a survey, in Hungary Greek Catholic families have the largest number of children. Of course, this surplus can only be measured in decimals, but it still indicates something. Although I have not carried out a comprehensive study of the

reasons for this, I thought it might be instructive to try to explore this phenomenon to some extent. Several things come to mind.

Historically, the largest numbers of Greek Catholics lived in the northeastern regions of Hungary, which have for centuries been the poorest parts of the country. This was typical of this area even in the times of Greater Hungary, and the people living here, especially the Rusyns, were mostly serfs (*cseléd?*). There were precious few people with the rank of nobility among them and they had almost no political representation. This was true not only of the population, but also of the clergy who led them spiritually. Their priests were also among the poorest because of their territorial and national provenance, and they also had to support their families. They shared the fate of their followers, often working as serfs themselves to support themselves and their – often large – families.

Whether this is a past to be ashamed of or a legacy to be proud of is not important now. However, it is relevant to the issue at hand because, according to a well-known but interesting sociological phenomenon, the number of children in poorer families is generally higher. It is not for me to explain the reasons for this, but we can stop at the observation that if Greek Catholics came from the poorer classes in large numbers, this may explain the higher number of children in their families.

At the same time, today we can hardly say that Greek Catholics live in more modest circumstances on average than their fellow countrymen of other denominations. It is more likely that the past has an influence in this respect. All the more so as followers of the Eastern Church tend to adhere to past traditions more strictly. If there were many children in the past, say, because of poverty, this may, to some extent, lead to more children now. Sadly, this attraction of the past is weaker and weaker today, but it is still there to some extent. And from this we can extrapolate another fact that may also have an impact on children in Greek Catholic families: the preservation of customs and traditions.

Observing traditions is not only a sociological phenomenon. It has a much stronger impact in other areas of everyday and religious life. The Eastern Church is characterised by a fundamental respect for, and a careful preservation of, tradition. According to liturgical scholars, for example, the reason why the rituals of the Eastern Church are so long in

their present form is that, over time, new prayers have been added to the old ones, but the predecessors did not have the heart to take anything away or to leave anything out. So our services gradually swelled to several hours. But people who attend them today do not suffer from this, it is not a burden, on the contrary, they experience it as a great blessing, because it has a deepening effect on the prayerful spirit.

Traditions therefore remain, even if they are often transformed and change as life changes. They change, but they remain. Eastern people keep them, and they keep Eastern people. These customs have a tremendous hold.

Families that uphold traditions handed down from their ancestors keenly experience the ancient truth of inseparability.

God intended the family to be one, the smallest unit of humankind. So one of the most important tasks of the family is to stay together. Obviously, death does not break this natural bond, it only transforms it. More and more family members are going to heaven and are remembered from time to time, on the day of their passing, or on specific days such as All Souls' Day. Thus the family gets bigger, like the ever-expanding liturgy. No one is left out, the family is always added to. If we live together, in a sense, with our ancestors, if we involve new generations in the commemoration of the dead, then this cohesive force, this kinship bond, becomes more and more tangible.

The extended family makes it all visible and appreciable in an everyday way. With the birth of more and more brothers and sisters, the circle widens, love and the need for love come from more and more sides and in more and more ways. Everyone in a family with many children knows how important this bond is. It is an existential experience of belonging together.

Family rituals help a lot to keep this togetherness alive, to form a community with long-dead ancestors, with the noisy moppets of the present, with the newcomers not yet born. Perhaps this is another characteristic of Greek Catholic family life: ritualism.

If we are given a pattern in the church, we will unconsciously follow it in our homes. It happened once that a young boy spent a few days with us in the monastery. He enthusiastically joined in all our prayers. Later his parents told us, while laughing, how on his return home, he demanded the same long, chanted prayers before each meal as he had seen the monks perform. It is good to have the liturgical atmosphere of the church influence our daily lives. But we can also make it conscious. We can also build up the rituals of our family life. We can create a bond that lasts for a long time, a bond that lasts a lifetime.

Man created into this world is *homo liturgicus*, he needs rituals. Rituals need not be invented, but adopted and carried out faithfully. It is a specific task of the 21st century to rediscover and relearn this forgotten ancient knowledge. Today, the family no longer has a hearth, and children rarely encounter a fire with deep symbolism. So how can there be a family hearth without a fire? Even if the old stoves, ovens and wood burners cannot be rebuilt in most places, family rituals can and must bring back the warmth of the hearth. Remembering our ancestors is a characteristic feature of human life. The animal world does not know this. Only man, made in the image of God, is aware of the community of which he is a part, of the depths to which his family ties lead him, from where he originates, where he ends. There must be a place in family ceremonies for the remembrance of the departed, but also for the perceivable presence of the saints, the helping care of angels, and through and beyond all this, by and in all this, the infinite and inexhaustible love of God. Our Eastern Church facilitates these ceremonies, adding gestures, words, colours, and scents. Nothing has to be invented. You just have to bring the church home. We need to connect the millennia-old rituals with everyday family life. Just as the prayers of the monks worldwide, springing from the glowing depths of their devotion must be connected with our family and individual prayers.

There is still more to learn from, to rediscover, to bring back home. The community of saints is deeply connected with the community of families with lots of children. If we want our children to live and grow up in happiness, if we want them to have a foretaste of heavenly happiness

here on earth, let us give them this diverse bond, let us give them many brothers and sisters. Let us introduce them to the great family of the Church through the extended family experience. Let them experience the communion of saints, the helping love of the angels around us. Let them experience, from the moment of their birth, and even nine months before they are born, that they are born into and never leave the embrace of God, that this infinite love that sustains them will accompany them from their birth to eternal life. This is the true value and gift of the family, and especially of the extended family, and it is irreplaceable.

Péter Gáncs

Evangelical Lutheran pastor, President-Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary from 2010 to 2017. Before that he was a national evangelist and missionary pastor. Since 2003 he has been bishop of the Southern Lutheran Diocese. He is married and has three children.



Recommendation

I have often tried to imagine what it is like to be born into the family of a pastor: to have a natural connection to church, to prayer, to the Word and to the congregation from the youngest age. Is it easier or harder for a pastor's child to discover faith and experience communion with God? What is the path of a person who is following the footsteps of a pastor father? What is a pastor father like? How does he make his children feel that they are important to him not only as sons and daughters but also as the children of God? What is it like to share a father's attention, time and love not only with brothers and sisters, but also with the rest of the congregation? How can children of pastors get the exclusive attention that every child needs?

Péter Gáncs, Lutheran pastor and retired bishop, comes from a family of pastors. In the family, he is the seventh generation of pastors, and his son the eighth. The following writing was authored by a pastor who served as the President-Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary for seven years, contributing greatly to strengthening the Lutheran communities through his firm but peace making statements and the work he carried out in church and in public life. For him, direct contact with young people is of the utmost importance. Through his personal example, he attempts to inspire those who are afraid of commitment, getting married and having children. Péter Gáncs is proud of his wife and their three children, all of whom are providing a valuable service. He is convinced that compromise will not lead to salvation. He has always shunned fashionable ideologies, and sticks to preaching the Gospel.

His writings provide only an indirect answer to the questions I asked in the introduction; it shows the possibility of a faith-based approach to the notion of the family and renders an account of heart-warming personal experience. I heartily recommend it for reading.

Katalin Novák

“Earthly Trinity”

It is my conviction that the gift of the family can be grasped in its true depth only in 3D or three dimensions. For that, we must discover that certain “upper link” or vertical connection, that is, the transcendent link or correlation which is all too often forgotten or ignored these days. Some biblical orientation, the eloquent message of an icon that is perhaps the most famous in the world and the recollection of the baptism of the most beautiful grandchild (or one of the most beautiful grandchildren) in the world may help us do so.

A little theology

In his thought-provoking and provocative book, *The Divine Dance* (published in Hungarian by Ursus Libris in 2018), Franciscan friar Richard Rohr points out that modern man needs a Trinitarian Revolution in thinking. We must re-examine our existing notions of God and man which are often false or one-dimensional. This may help us comprehend the incomprehensible and unlock the deepest mystery: what is the meaning of the biblical revelation that the Holy Trinity, the one true God created us in His own image and likeness?

This revelation comes at the very beginning of the Bible, in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, which says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” It is already puzzling that the Creator speaks in the first person plural, as if He were not alone but a community... Yet there is an even more intriguing question: how to interpret the expression “in our image, after our likeness”? Obviously our “likeness to God” does not denote external, formal resemblance, but, rather, an inner and essential kinship with the Eternal God, who seems to be a community, or, if you like,

a "family". The mystery of the Holy Trinity is not an abstract theological concept or philosophical speculation. It urges us to recognise that

God is not a static but rather a dynamic reality, not a substance but a relationship.

What is more: God is a loving relationship.

I am well aware of the fact that this biblical concept of God and man does not seem to be up-to-date at all, or, to use today's overused expressions: neither "trendy" nor "politically correct". Because if we live in a responsible relationship of love, what becomes of our freedom, our independence and unlimited rights of self-realisation that we cherish so much?

Yet if we use the Book of Life, the Bible as a point of reference, if we draw from the source of life, that is, the Word of God, then we will be able to understand that the true dignity of our humanity, given from above, is the very fact that we are able to exist being loved and in the process of transmitting love.

The life-giving blood circulation of the Holy Trinity is the flow of love (or the "sacred flow") that forms links between the members of God's "family", the Creator Father, the Redeemer Son and the Enlivening Spirit, into a community that lives and makes live, or, as Richard Rohr says in the bold title of his book: "the divine dance". This dance is not a *l'art pour l'art* dance that revolves around itself. The epithets of the three 'dance partners' are not merely frills but clear references to the mission and work of the three divine persons: Creator, Redeemer, Enlivener. And all this points to someone else: the human being, or, to put it more precisely, people, the human community, the loving relationship and the family. Because the Creator's eternal diagnosis that "it is not good that the man should be alone" is still valid today. The diagnosis is immediately followed by the divine therapy: the creation of a suitable companion, Eve, whom the Lord brings to Adam, and the two become one flesh. The fruit of this union is the conception of new life, the Child. This is how the communion of love of the Holy Trinity can be reflected in earthly "Trinity": in marriage and in the family, where we may become co-workers with the Creator in the transmission of life.

I hope that those who may find this ancient and poetic confession about the true source, content and purpose of Life, radiant with profound theology and anthropology, and too mystical to understand, will find help in the message conveyed by an icon, that is, a condensed representation of this mystery.

A wordless sermon by Andrei Rublev

Most people are probably familiar with *The Trinity*, the work of Russian icon painter Andrei Rublev. It represents the biblical scene when God appears in the form of three mysterious strangers who arrive at the house of the then childless Abraham. Abraham, with true eastern hospitality, invites the unexpected visitors into his tent and senses God to be near: “O Lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant.”

He invites them to his tent, and Abraham and Sarah set the table for the guests as generously as they can. At the end of the meal, it is revealed that they have indeed won the Lord’s favour and blessing: the real purpose of the visit is to announce that the elderly couple, who have not been able to have children until now, will have a son in a year. That is, Abraham will become a father and Sarah a mother. The child’s arrival will make the family – the earthly Trinity – complete.

Rublev captures the moment in this heart-warming story when the Holy Trinity sit down at the table – and this company is quite visibly open. The good news, the Gospel, is that there is room even for us at this table, which is an allegory of the Kingdom of God. Abraham believed that it was the duty of the human being to entertain God as a guest and serve him. But, since Jesus, we have known that God is also willing to set the table for us and nurture us.

The Holy Trinity seeks to embrace us into its community of love. That is the reason why Christian service invariably begins with God’s “PIN”: in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is how we can enter into a space or force field where we can experience God’s presence, and the living relationship, communication and vital communion with God and with each other. This is how the heavenly and the earthly Trinity can meet at every family worship service, at every mass, and afterwards we can return to everyday life endowed with the gifts of this community,

with the treasures of the Word we heard, the bread we shared and the joy we can pass on to others. All this is concentrated in the "3D" blessing at the end: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the community of the Holy Spirit be with you evermore. Go in peace!" This is the opportunity for an encounter that Andrei Rublev's icon – a sermon without words that is so telling – wants to shed light on.

The light in Luca Veronika's eyes

After discussing this world-famous sacred image, let me share with you the memories of a baptism. Our most recent family joy was the baptism of our eighth granddaughter, Luca Veronika, this summer. She is over six months old now, but the family wanted to wait with her baptism until an improvement in the pandemic situation allowed all the members of the big family to attend. The ceremony took place in the most beautiful cathedral in the world: under the Creator's open sky, in the shade of the huge acacia tree in the Evangelical parish garden in Cinkota, Hungary.

I am grateful that I, the happy grandfather, was able to baptise this angelic baby girl. Obviously, like in the eyes of all grandparents, for us Luca Veronika is the most beautiful child (or one of the most beautiful children) in the world whom the Holy Trinity embraced at the moment of her baptism. This is how she also became a child of God's family, whom the Lord called by name and betrothed to eternal life. "Luca" means "light", and "Veronika" the "true image" or "icon". As I was leaning over my granddaughter, I could see how her beautiful eyes reflected the blueness of the sky, the brightness of the sunshine, the joy of heaven and the smile of God in Jesus Christ. I wish from the deepest of my heart that more and more Hungarian people will re-discover this irreplaceable joy of which the Psalms say, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward."

Slomó Köves

Orthodox rabbi, founder and leader of the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation (EMIH), rabbi of the synagogue in Óbuda. In 2021, he was awarded the Middle Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. He is married to Lea Dvora; they have five children.



Recommendation

An alarming notion started to spread a few years ago: that having children constitutes a burden on the environment that it's better to avoid. To back up this claim calculations were made which show that the ecological footprint of a child is huge, which means that if we give up having children we make a much greater contribution to protecting the environment than we would by collecting waste separately, using public transport or cutting down on waste. This fashionable philosophy is particularly popular among young people. In a way, it may serve as an excuse to avoid the responsibility of having children.

In 2017, I was invited to the Brain Bar Future Festival to debate with American bioethicist Travis Rieder, who wrote a book on the subject, encouraging people to have fewer children. When I was informed that the other panellist would be Rabbi Slomó Köves, I was sure that we would be able to win over a lot of young people and make them understand that protecting the created world makes sense only if we are prepared to pass life on to the next generations. Because Slomó Köves is a person who contributes to his community with his engagement in the preservation and enrichment of the Jewish faith, religion, culture and traditions, and at the same time, is able to give wise, witty and contemporary answers to questions relevant for young people. In doing so, he does not obey the spirit of modern times or deviate from the teachings. He is willing and able to engage in debate, and his every word and piece of writing is thought-provoking.

Slomó Köves and his wife have five children whom they raise in a loving family. As he said about marriage at a conference, “If you deserve it, your spouse will be a helpmate. Psychologically speaking, the spouses are opposing parties and, therefore, are like a magnet. The laws of physics say that if there is no opposition, there is no fire. But it must not remain just fire, otherwise it will burn everything. A good and successful marriage calls for humility, which is something we must learn.”

This piece of writing also offers an opportunity for learning.

Katalin Novák

“Without a home, a man is not a man”

Jewish tradition holds that man, created in the divine image, is obliged not only to “multiply”, but also to assume all the related responsibilities: to lay down the foundations for the material and, above all, spiritual prosperity of his immediate and wider environment, and to bear all the burdens and lasting joys of passing on a rich spiritual heritage.

However, these days the call to reproduce is no longer self-evident. Consequently, Europe is facing a demographic crisis that will be difficult to overcome. Still, there is hope even if progress, which seeks compulsively to overcome the past, were to remove from the set of acceptable ideas the conviction of the power of the family, along with numerous aspects of the Judeo-Christian civilisation, and which identifies the emergence of future generations only as a further expansion of an exploitative patriarchy. I am convinced that a return to the biblical traditions would mitigate or even remove insecurity and the ensuing demographic challenge.

As per the traditional world view, the Creator created humanity so that humans can unite as one big family. This is clearly shown by the name given by Adam to his companion. Adam, the progenitor of humanity, who, according to our sages, had the ability to recognise the innermost essence of every creature and to name them in a way that expressed their potential most accurately (*“And man named all the cattle and the fowl of the heavens and all the beasts of the field”*, 1Genesis 2:20), gave his companion the name Chava (Eve), which is perhaps best translated

as ‘the mother of all human beings’. Adam knew that according to the plan of the Eternal God, his wife would have the exceptional task of becoming the foremother of all human beings, thus uniting mankind in one extended family. But this plan failed as early as at the time of their children’s generation: Cain murdered his brother Abel, and the Bible emphasises that he murdered not only a fellow human being, but his brother (*“And Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him”*, 1Genesis 4:8). And when the Creator holds Cain accountable for his fateful deed and asks, *“Where is Abel your brother?”*, Cain answers, *“I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”* (1Genesis 4:9). That is, Cain intended to destroy not only another man, but the very notion of brotherhood.

The idea of the unification of mankind is present throughout the first two books of Genesis, but the “subjects” of the plan regularly fail to do what is expected of them. Therefore, the Creator finally decided to create and unite the Jewish nation and, through that, to establish a civilisation that would create the best conditions not only for fulfilment but also for the exploitation of the full potential of the family.

From the above it follows directly that, for the Jewish people, the family is the alpha and the omega. The family is a sustaining force that gives rise to a life that observes the commandments and to the love for such a life. The reason for this is that Jewish children acquire the basics of religious life in the supportive context of their home, through the stories of profound lessons and through their parents’ example. So if the home is based on firm foundations, and the relationship between the parents on deep and mutual trust as well as on respect for Jewish values, then the tradition will surely be passed on to the next generations.

In contrast, if the relationships at home are weak and loyalty to tradition becomes superficial, then, sooner or later, the emphasis will shift from compliance with the commandments, and the institutions of Jewish life will start to reflect the very same weakness or loss of orientation. As shown by many painful examples, families which have become alienated from the life-giving roots of religion are no longer able (and perhaps are no longer willing) to provide their children with

the power of tradition. These young generations will eventually cease being Jews and, as such, will no longer feel bound to comply with the commandment of procreation.

At the same time, we must be aware of the fact that marriage has a significance that goes far beyond having children. If we fail to find the right partner, our lives will not be fulfilled. *“It is not good that man is alone; I shall make him a helpmate opposite him”*, warns the Eternal God (1Genesis 2:18), thus making the establishment and preservation of family cohesion our first and foremost responsibility.

It is also worthy of note that once we take on the responsibility of having children we become, in a sense, partners in Creation. In fact, in bringing another child into the world we are creating a human being *“in the image and likeness”* of the Eternal God. Yet man’s sacred mission does not end with the “process of creation”.

A fundamental principle of our faith holds that God, having created the world, continues to care for his creatures through the inconceivable mechanisms of Providence. We must, following his example, concentrate on laying down the moral and spiritual foundation of the generations to come. And acting as ambassadors of the truth of Revelation we must transmit to all of our children Jewish tradition in its entirety, and “train a child according to His way” (Proverbs 22:6), that is, in a way that is appropriate for the child’s age and talents.

Mankind must find a way back to the sanctity of the family. It is worth recognising that human life has, above all, a spiritual goal. To that goal, the Bible and related religious literature outline a complex set of conditions that are rooted in the sacred and, more importantly, provide a practical toolkit. In this context, the study of the Scripture is indispensable if we intend to familiarise ourselves with the impressive edifice of Western civilisation, along with our place and role in it. In doing so we will realise that in order to enrich ourselves and society, we must first strengthen a pillar that is the origin and, at the same time, an indispensable prerequisite for the knowledge and transmission of the extensive system of traditions that serves as a basis on which we can build our identity.

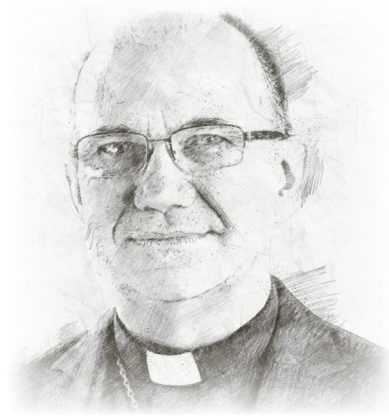
And this pillar is none other than the family. *"A man without a home is not a man"*, says the Talmud (Yevamot 63a), and, indeed,

the family is not only a way to reverse the negative demographic trends that threaten the whole of Europe, including Hungary, but, according to the Jewish tradition, is also the starting point for the salvation of mankind.

The Jewish teachings hold that the event which preceded the coming of the Saviour – the reappearance of the prophet Elijah – was intended to establish the unity of families. The meaning of the prophet's words is the same, *"That he may turn the heart of the fathers back through the children, and the heart of the children back through their fathers – lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction"* (Malachi 3:24). It seems that in the course of Redemption we can eventually perform our original task: to create humanity as a functioning family. And the way to do so is to strengthen our own families.

Zsolt Marton

Roman Catholic priest,
Bishop of the Diocese of Vác.
Since 2020, President
of the Commission for the Family
of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference.



Recommendation

There are so many courses on offer these days. There are courses in driving, cooking, sewing and photography, special preparatory courses for universities, as well as for marathons and other competitions. But not many individuals consciously prepare themselves for one of the great challenges of human life: starting a family. How lucky we are that there are communities that devote special attention to young people who are getting ready to marry in church. The Hungarian term 'marriage preparation' may sound somewhat old-fashioned, yet it shows that preparation is not a modern invention, but has always been part of the Church's ministry. Among other things, this is why the Hungarian Catholic Church has a bishop who is responsible for family issues.

On 19 March in Hungary the Catholic Church opened the Year of the Family, proclaimed by Pope Francis, with a holy mass. This year offers an opportunity for joint reflection, prayer and contemplation on the sanctity of the family. Last December, Zsolt Marton, Bishop of Vác, took over the presidency of the Commission for the Family of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference from László Bíró. Following in his predecessor's footsteps, Zsolt Marton carries out his role as the pastor for families with love, humility and faith. The Year of Saint Joseph, which overlaps with the Year of the Family, puts the role of fathers in the family in the limelight. It offers an opportunity to reflect on how we can strengthen the role of men in their family relationships, contribute to their presence in the life of their children and wives, and ensure that families remain strong.

Zsolt Marton speaks directly to us – children, brothers and sisters, mothers, fathers, grandparents – in his sermons, writings and video messages. He communicates with true sincerity about responsibility, challenges and love. He guides us in grasping how the family, a community of love can represent that which is beyond us. Zsolt Marton does so in his piece of writing below.

Katalin Novák

What does the family mean to me? A gift from God

As a bishop – who lives in celibacy for the kingdom of God – I have no family of my own by blood. But I do have a family of origin. I am infinitely grateful to God that I was conceived and born out of the love of my father and mother. The union of love they experienced in marriage was the net of the joy, freedom and security in which I grew up. The masculine care of my father, a technical businessman, which surrounded me with strength and protection, along with the sacrificial, devoted, somewhat indulgent love of my mother, a nurse, ensured that I had a happy childhood. This net was so strong yet flexible that, despite the age difference, I had a beautiful relationship with my only brother, who is fifteen years my junior. Even today, we have the same relationship: we do not compete, quarrel or envy each other. My father passed away, but my mother, my brother and his family are still indispensable and irreplaceable to me. My family of origin includes my godparents, my parents' brothers and sisters and their families. My cousins and I still love one another as brothers and sisters.

As a Catholic priest (and now, as a bishop responsible for family matters) I have been frequently asked: how can an unmarried man speak with authority about marriage and the family?

I venture to talk about these wonderful aspects of reality, because I myself live in a commitment that is similar to marriage. As an ordained priest for twenty-three years and a bishop for two years, I am living in a particularly beautiful, spiritual and intimate relationship with God, my Creator, the

Lord of my life, my Friend, my Love, my Universe. That relationship is almost incomprehensible to human reason.

In addition to this I am deeply convinced of *what the Church says about marriage and the family*. The Book of Genesis says, "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

The Hungarian language is extremely beautiful and highly expressive: husband and wife are, in a word-for-word translation, "*married halves*", that is, *together they form a complete whole* and they commit themselves to joining their whole lives. In marriage, they form a "*whole-ness*", which is a most accurate reflection of God's glorious image, and in doing so, they themselves become blessed.

Another vivid illustration of this fact is found in the biblical Hebrew language and vividly illustrates this fact: there is only one vowel difference between the words for "man" and "woman", *ish* and *isha*.

The Hungarian word for marriage literally means "*having a house*", which so clearly expresses the commitment of man and woman. Marriage is a joint spiritual "house-building", where the marriage ceremony marks the beginning of the foundation process, or, in other words, the wedding is the ground breaking ceremony. Anyone who builds a house is aware that a good foundation is essential: a lot of material of the right strength is needed for the foundation to ensure that the house is stable. The foundation in the lives of newlyweds contains many things that are indispensable for a good marriage: their love and friendship for each other, the dreams and plans they share, their talents, and the prayers, good wishes and moral as well as financial support from their parents, friends and relatives. But *the most important* aspect is that *God be present in the house they share in their lives*. God gives husband and wife the stability, security and strength to stand by each other for a lifetime. If the couple do not exclude God from their marriage, nothing will tear them apart. God will remain with them in the darkest times, like Jesus was with his disciples in the boat on the stormy sea. Upon marrying, *the couple say yes to each other*, and, at the same time, *God says yes to their relationship, blessing and sanctifying it*. We profess that marriage comes from God. It is for eternity, and partakes

in the indissoluble covenant of love between Christ and the Church. This is why marriage is a sacrament for us Catholics.

These days, many people claim that the institution of marriage is in crisis.

But, in fact, it is not marriage that is in crisis, but society which fails to recognise the value of marriage and forgets about its meaning.

For marriage is eternal. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it, *“The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws (...) God himself is the author of marriage.”* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1603). This means that marriage is not a construct of civilisation, i.e. something that evolved when mankind was in a phase of development where it was needed, and disappears when it is no longer needed. Marriage is not the child but the parent of civilisation. Every human society that has ever existed has been aware of the full spectrum of human relationships. There were relatively liberal societies that allowed a wider range of relationship types and there were stricter ones which allowed fewer. But so far they have agreed on one thing: they attached a special role and gave a specific name to the relationship that is able to create new life bringing children into this world. This is marriage between a man and a woman, and the family based on it, the family, which is the first cell of every human community.

According to the teachings of Pope Saint John Paul II, the great Pope of families, “And since in God’s plan it has been established as an intimate community of life and love, the family has the mission to become more and more what it is, that is to say, a community of life and love.” (Familiaris consortio 17)

Pope Francis puts it this way, *“In this covenant, the familial-conjugal union of man and woman is the generative grammar, the ‘golden knot’, we might say. The faith draws it from the wisdom of the creation of God, who has entrusted to the family, not the care of intimacy as an end in itself, but rather the exciting project of making the world ‘domestic’. At the beginning there was the family, at the root of this world culture that saves us... saves us from many, many attacks, from so much destruction, from so many*

'colonizations', like that of money or of the ideologies that threaten so much of the world. The family is the basis of our defense!' (General Audience, Saint Peter's Square Wednesday, 16 September 2015)

The Bible compares the relationship between God and man to marriage countless times. Marriage remains a mystery or a secret that mankind will never be able to fully grasp. Just as it cannot fully grasp that God is one, yet at the same time three persons. Marriage and the family are the earthly representation of the love of the Father and the Son for each other. This love itself is a person; the Holy Spirit. In the same way, two separate individuals, man and woman, become one in marriage, and the love they feel for one another also becomes a person in their children. In his letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul gives a beautiful description of this mystery, *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church."* (Eph 5:31-32)

Or as Pope Francis puts it, *"The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection."* (*Amoris Laetitia* 11) And he adds, *"husband and wife, father and mother, both cooperate with the love of God the Creator"*. (*Ibid.* 172.)

What does the family mean to me?

My extended family is the Church. For me, the Church is like my mother. It is the community to which I am committed, where I can be a spiritual father to all children and a brother to all the faithful. I am glad to be a member of and to serve a community, the family Church, which, in turn, serves the extended family of mankind as God intended, and, in that context, our beloved family community of the Hungarian nation.

Anikó Schanda

Political scientist, lawyer, theology student,
former Chief of Cabinet of Ministers.

A representative of the operator of RefoRom
and Wáli István Reformed Specialised Boarding
School for Roma Students.

Mother of two (soon three) children.



Recommendation

Career and family. Family and career. We talk a lot about balancing the two. I am one of those women who consider their career important, but have always known that I wanted to be a mother. You pursue your studies for years, acquire one or two university degrees, and you are eager to be tested in real life, in a working environment, and to have an independent income. When it turns out that you can perform well in your chosen profession, and new tasks keep coming up, it is then difficult to decide to give it all up for years and turn your back on a career that has just started, to make a financial sacrifice and take on the unknown responsibility of having children. Such a decision may be easier if you have a supportive partner who gives you confidence and a sense of security.

I first met Anikó Schanda before her marriage, as Anikó Farkas, when she took over the responsibilities from me of the Chief of Cabinet of the then largest ministry of Hungary. She was a surprisingly young, extremely hard-working, determined and tough girl of striking talents, which was only partly explained by the fact that she had held the same position in the Ministry of Defence. She learned quickly, had a flare for responding to unexpected situations, was creative, fought step-by-step for respect, and set a remarkably fast pace.

When I got to know that Anikó and Tamás – a State Secretary, another surprisingly young man of exceptional talents – had fallen in love, few people thought that their relationship was going to last. Many thought that the two career-focussed young persons would not be able to maintain their relationship for long. They were all the more surprised when they

learned that Anikó and Tamás were getting married, and news soon arrived that their first baby was on the way. Then they had a second child, and soon after that, a third.

In the space of just a few years, Anikó, the ambitious and tough young leader transformed into a radiant, patient, loving mother of a large family. She did not seem to mind at all that instead of management decisions she was trying to find out why her baby was crying or that late-night meetings had been replaced by bedtime stories, and events by visits to the playground.

I am sure that Anikó has a long professional career ahead of her if she decides to pursue one. Besides caring for their children, she does volunteer work and studies Reformed theology, serves her church in meaningful ways, and like many other people she also struggles to strike a balance between family life and work. But it is clear which of the two is at the forefront right now.

Katalin Novák

What does the family mean to me?

Dream

First of all, family was my childhood dream, something I always wanted. Like many little girls I created the ideal family consisting of my dolls, stuffed animals and imaginary friends. I played these games for years, and the recurring idea behind all that play was that I would one day have a big family with lots of children.

Then, by the end of my twenties, I had a career (senior positions in various ministries) many men would be happy to have even in their late forties. But my dream was something else. I felt that my work was holding me back, and the hope that one day I would realise my dream seemed to be fading.

Becoming a child

Then I arrived at a major turning point in my life. Perhaps I should call it a "change of ownership". For years then I had been struggling and resisting something, but then I had no choice but to give my life to the One from whom I had received it: God the Creator and Provident Father through His Only Begotten Son and the Holy Spirit. It was a turning point because after that my life started to revolve around belonging to the family of God instead of the desire to have my own big family and lots of children around realising the fact that I am first and foremost a child – whom God loves and who can now be content in this one role – and integrating it into my life.

From child to partner and co-creator

Once this paradigm shift had taken place, I met my husband to-be, and we knew almost from the first moment that God had given us to each other. We felt that God had precisely destined us for each other to fulfil the beautiful order of creation in the Bible: "and the two shall become one flesh". And one soul. These two together are of utmost importance and indispensable. Communion of body and soul. Having a helpmate. This is the basis for a new life to be born from the covenant between two children of God, and for a new community to evolve with the arrival of that new life. Then husband and wife will no longer be merely the partners of each other, but will also be partners of God in creation. And then they become partners of their children, which is another aspect of this determined order.

The smallest congregation

As we were becoming a family and then a large family, we were also becoming a tiny congregation as a family in His kingdom. Church Father Saint John Chrysostom says that the family is the smallest Christian congregation. Indeed, the family is the place where we first encounter the Creator God, first in each other, then through each other, and eventually others encounter God through us.

So the family is no longer a distant dream for me but a real place, a real community, which, however, I contemplate not from my own perspective

but by looking at the Lord of our lives. For me as a mother, keeping this in focus is also my greatest responsibility and challenge. Not losing it when we rejoice together or when we must carry our burdens. Not losing it when I feel I could run away from home or when I feel I could run to them, to be with them.

So that I would be able to see the divine image in my children not only when they are laughing and playing with abandon, but also when they are shouting, fighting or throwing tantrums while lying in the middle of a street.

So that I would be able to reflect God's image when life is easy and full of joy as well as when I am overcome by worry, discouraged or tired.

Our family is not ours

It is important to be able to rejoice in the gift of life when it is given to us, even if it is hanging by a thread. Because that thread, with all our family joys and sorrows, with all our gifts and burdens, is in God's hands, and in the right place. Life is not in our hands... My family can be truly mine only when I know that it is not mine, but I am part of it, of the small family and the big family, as a child of God, as a wife and as a mother. With all the worry, anxiety, vulnerability, pain, joy, laughter, gratitude and blessing. It is grace, and I do not ever need more than that.



SPORT

Tamás Lőrincz and Viktor Lőrincz

Judit Polgár

Anita Görbicz and Ottó Vincze

Kornél Dávid

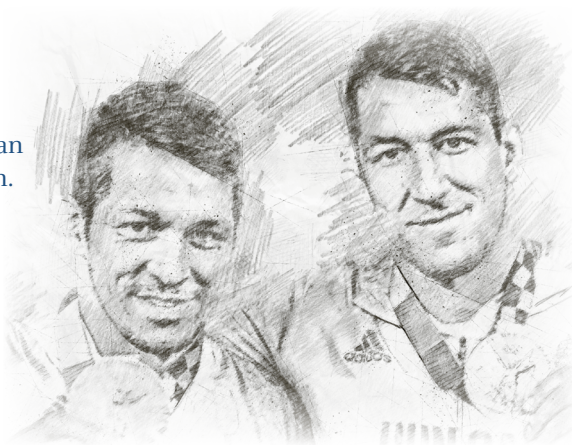
Norbert Michelisz



Tamás Lőrincz and Viktor Lőrincz

Tamás is an Olympic Champion, World Champion and four times European Champion Greco-Roman wrestler. He was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit in 2021. He has two children.

Viktor won an Olympic silver and a World Championship silver, two World Championship bronze medals and a European Championship gold in Greco-Roman wrestling. He was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit in 2021. He has one child.



Recommendation

The Tokyo Olympic Games were special not only because they were postponed for a year, or because this time the audience could only cheer the athletes from afar, but also because among the Hungarian successes we were able to celebrate two brothers winning medals. The success of the 2021 Olympics was both a dressing on the wounds caused by the losses and sacrifices of the previous eighteen months, and a boost for continuation and a new start. We were duly proud of the Hungarian athletes and Paralympians, their fighting spirit, humility and perseverance, and their achievements – which are significant by the standards of sporting history – and of Hungary's prominent place in the medals table. This summer it was good to be Hungarian again, to show the world what our nation is capable of.

When Tamás Lőrincz stepped onto the wrestling mat, even those who do not normally follow the sport watched it on their television, laptop or phone screens. Throughout the thrilling moments of the match we cheered for this likeable young man to win the shiniest medal of his life in his last round. We knew by then that his younger brother, Viktor Lőrincz, would also be competing for the gold. The messages of support between the two brothers, the excitement and pride they felt for each other's success touched us too. When Viktor won the silver medal, we did not lament the fact that he had not won, but we felt that the Lőrincz brothers were fighting for us.

The family bond and brotherly alliance were also inherent in the performance and success of Tamás and Viktor. In their post-competition statements they also emphasised how much support they had received from their parents, sister, wives, children and each other. We thank them, and through them every member of the Hungarian Olympic and Paralympic team, for giving us a reason to be proud and for a source of strength and hope for the challenges ahead. Thank you also for showing that family can be a legitimate performance booster for an Olympic champion.

Katalin Novák

Brotherly bond

In the many interviews we have given over the years, the topic of family has come up more often in our case than in the case of other athletes, as both my brother Viktor and I have achieved success on the mat. Thank God, we even achieved our oft-mentioned goal of standing on the podium at the same world competition, more than once. In chronological order, at the 2014 World Championships in Tashkent (bronze medal for both of us), the 2017 European Championships in Novi Sad (he came first, I came third), the 2019 World Championships in Nuur Sultan (I won the gold, he won the silver), and most recently the Tokyo Olympic Games (gold for me, silver for him). Most of the time we wrestled on consecutive days, trying to draw strength from each other's rounds, and also give each other strength, because it was necessary when things were working out for only one of us or neither of us.

Brotherly love and togetherness, and the family bond pulled us through many difficulties, and when he matured and rose to the top we went to competitions together, cried together, and laughed together.

Perhaps few people know that there are three of us, not just two: we have a sister, she is seven years younger than I and three and a half years younger than Viktor. So we grew up in a pretty large family in Cegléd. Because of the smaller age difference, my brother and sister were initially closer and tried to team up against me, the eldest. It was just a joke, of course, but apart from the usual sibling pranks we had a really good relationship, and by the time we were all grown up, time had evened out the age difference.

Of course as the youngest and the only girl, Nikoletta was the favourite in the family. Our mother had longed for a little girl, Viktor had been expected to be Viktória, but then luckily it turned out differently, he would probably be a bit scary for a girl. It's interesting that we boys are real local patriots, it's hard to imagine our lives outside Cegléd, but Niki has easily adapted to life in the big city. She feels comfortable in Budapest, where she works as a dental assistant and hygienist.

As usual in a family, as the eldest child, I was a pioneer in everything including sports. My parents took me down to the wrestling gym to burn off my excess energy, and Viktor followed soon after. In the early days it was a bit annoying to have him everywhere I was, but then it became more of a pleasure than an annoyance. Typically, when I was nicknamed Szöcsi – Hopper - because I was always bouncing around, Viktor soon became Kisszöcsi - Little Hopper. And the name stayed, although he soon surpassed me in weight and has been wrestling in a higher weight category ever since. I achieved the first successes of my adult career relatively quickly, as I became European champion at the age of nineteen, but in the early years my brother could not join me on the national team because of his age. When I won the silver medal at the 2012 London Olympics, for example, he was only there to cheer me on from the stands, with my sister and parents. By the way, this family cheering wasn't typical; I actually forbade them to come and attend because although I wasn't blocked by their presence, I didn't really like it. Then when I got to the final and saw them cheering in the stands, I was surprised. All in all, of course, I was happy that I could please them.

After that, it became natural that Viktor and I went to international events together. In 2013 we didn't have to go far, just to the Papp László Budapest Sports Arena for the World Championship, where he won a bronze and I only came tenth. But a year later, in Tashkent, as I mentioned before, we achieved our big goal for the first time, for both of us to stand on the podium at the same major world competition. Besides our shared successes, our shared failures also forged us together. Unfortunately, the 2016 Rio Olympics didn't go well for either of us, I had lost too much weight and was defeated by the Korean world champion in the first round, and Viktor was cheated out of the bronze medal. We both achieved below our standards, especially me,

and I was thinking of retiring, but my brother pulled me out of my apathy saying I shouldn't end my career with my head down.

Viktor's greatness as an athlete is shown by the fact that he won the first big competition after the Rio Olympics, the European Championships in Novi Sad, and moving up by two weight categories worked out for me too. In 2019 we had another great experience together, as we both made it to the final of the World Championship, and I will never forget when we cried on each other's shoulders after my victory. And who would have thought that after the postponement due to the pandemic, we would have had the same experience at the Tokyo Olympics! To experience all this as brothers was truly wonderful, and as it turned out, no other pair of brothers in the rich history of Hungarian sport had ever done such a thing.

Let's not forget our private lives, where we have also followed a similar model. We met our future wives when we were young, dated for a long time, then got married, and it didn't take long for us to have children: we have a little girl and a little boy, while Viktor and his wife had their baby last year. Both of our wives, Emese and Vivien, were also athletes, and so they are familiar with the inconveniences and burdens of being a professional athlete, the long absences and training camps. Few people would put up with all that. They did, and we are grateful to them. As far as family planning is concerned, I thought we would stop at two children, but Emese recently said in a statement somewhere that she was ready for a third, and so we will have to discuss that. Of course, having children is a big responsibility, but we can see from our own example that a good and close brotherly bond can also be fulfilling in a sporting career, and this has definitely been the case with us.

Judit Polgár

Chess player, international grandmaster, best female chess player of all time, eight times Chess Oscar winner and Female Chess Player of the Century. Goodwill ambassador for UNO, honorary vice president of the International Chess Federation FIDE, originator of the Judit Polgár Method, and patron of the National Talent Programme's campaign. She has two children.



Recommendation

I was eleven years old when Judit Polgár, just a year older than I, won the World Boys' (!) Chess Championship and took the number one spot in the world rankings, a position she held for twenty-six years. Judit was an icon for us all. She is almost the same age as us, a girl who can beat anyone, men and women alike. We were extremely proud of her even though we did not know her. Chessboards that had been left to gather dust were brought out; in my family, my grandmother and I would set up the carved white and black pieces opposite each other in the afternoons. Every little girl wanted to be Judit Polgár.

In addition to her achievements of worldwide acclaim, which make us Hungarians proud, I respect and like Judit because since her retirement from competitions she has been working to bring chess and the logical thinking associated with it close to children and the professionals who work with them. She has been building the programme tirelessly with her customary thoroughness, expertise and perseverance, travelling around the country, organising events, writing books, and visiting kindergartens and schools.

Judit was not the only member of the Polgár family who has become household name, as her two sisters, Zsuzsa and Zsófia, are also excellent chess players. Judit has added to the strong family community as she and her husband have two children. The article that follows will relate a fascinating story.

Katalin Novák

Notes on the margin of a family novel

I am typing the word *family* in the search engine of the online Thesaurus. Enter.

In a second the result is on my screen: clan, folk, group, house, household... Not a terribly big catch but it is not the software's fault – after all, it was written by human beings. A machine-given answer, but that's no surprise: my search wasn't sophisticated enough so the essence that the word covers is lost.

I am neither a Thesaurus nor a computer programme. My first association hearing the word *family* is love, togetherness, care, team, consciousness, trust, conviction, perseverance, motivation, fairness. My second association is "predestination".

Let me start by a brief explanation of predestination in this sense, since in chess terms it would be an appropriate opening gambit.

For me the family was perhaps even more important than usual, in the sense that when my parents looked at me as a baby, they saw me as both a child and a chess champion. Even before I was born it had been decided that I would become a chess player, and I was not the exception that proved the rule, but the third in line: I followed in the footsteps of my sisters Zsuzsa and Zsófi. In a nutshell this is the story of our family model and my predestination.

My parents very consciously guided me and brought me up for a life that was ordinary but also Life, with a capital L, so that I could achieve worldwide glory as a girl and eventually reach the top, the men's world chess championship, from Eastern Bloc Hungary. But my parents didn't just set me the big goal and the impressive interim results that were visible to the naked eye: they did absolutely everything to help me achieve them.

With a supportive team by your side, you will go further than you would alone. My team was my family, we supported each other.

As a child, it was a comforting feeling to sit at the table in a tournament knowing that while I was playing, my mother, who taught me the chess moves, was sitting in the sixth row, second from the left, knitting my next

winning sweater with a rook or knight piece, and if I lifted my eyes from the board, they would meet hers. It was from Zsuzsa, my oldest sister that I learned how to analyse and work systematically – work meaning to work out and also to process things. It was with her that I talked most often about how to cope with victory and even more so with defeat. Zsuzsa supported me from a very young age, and over time I was able to reciprocate her care both emotionally and professionally: I was able to help her win the world title, while I was also her mental support. I got stability from my smiling, artistic sister Zsófi, and confidence and belief from my father that I could be the one. (There was also a kind of give-and-take between my family and the world, but in that game the key words were not trust, support and acceptance. Brackets closed.)

We were home-schooled and played chess, or rather the other way round: we played chess and were home-schooled in every subject but mostly languages. Learning, real knowledge and achievement mattered, but at the same time, praise, emotional reinforcement and affection played an equally important role besides the intellectual feedback. Motivation was just as important. The environment at home was a constant incentive to fly, and I wanted to fly – on my own steam, as a result of my own work, or as a reward for my work, whichever you like.

The sense of togetherness was also strengthened by the family rule that whenever my sisters and I had to play against each other in a tournament, we usually played to a draw. We didn't fight tooth and nail, but we played a fair game. This reminds me of a case that was instructive in more ways than one.

It was 1991 and it seemed that I could win the grandmaster title before my 15th birthday. To achieve this you need two favourable results called norms from a total of a certain number of games in tournaments. I had already achieved one, and was close to a second: in the tournament I had entered I was to play another three games and I had to score one and a half points. My schedule and my tactics were as follows: play against my sister Zsuzsa in round 9; in round 10 I would play with the white pieces against an opponent I could easily have a draw with, and although the last game promised to be exciting, I thought I was still good for half a point. That added up to one and a half points – just what I needed.

What happened? Zsuzsa and I ended up in a draw, as we almost always did. Then I won the pre-calculated draw with the white pieces, but in the last game I miscalculated. I attacked, I made considerable sacrifices, but in the end I lost. The last game did not work out as planned but I was still proud, as many people thought that Zsuzsa would simply give me the full point and “lay the foundation” for my grandmaster title. We disproved the malicious, albeit realistic, expectations. In sport, it is said that the idea of fair play was not violated in my game with Zsuzsa, and I agree with that. But I would like to add something because this writing is about my family: we were fair – we brought this from home. (There is a saying that life is basically a draw. No one has calculated and proven this, but I am inclined to think there is something to it. A few months later, at the age of 15 years and 4 months, I met the requirements of the grandmaster level, beating the record of former world champion Bobby Fischer of the USA.)

If this were a novel, perhaps a new chapter would start here, saying that this has been the prelude, the past, and let us finally see the present, and even the future – but this is just a note on the margin at best, with no chapters but just paragraphs, perhaps. And what I have written and said so far is not just the past, but the present. It is also the future.

For I have incorporated everything I got at home and brought from home into my everyday life, into my own family life, and into my work. I apply it all the time, not exactly in the same way as my parents, because they are they, and I am I. I think differently, not like them, I am not a teacher, which means that education is not my vocation or my job. But the example that I saw from them and experienced with them became my own, and my husband and I reinforce each other in passing it on to our children as a kind of legacy: education works when parents support each other in harmony, because the children will be the first beneficiaries of this harmony. It is the parents’ job to provide security, to inspire their children, to give them opportunities in a supportive way, to open their eyes, to raise creative and curious people who can respond to challenges. Adults who can be independent, self-reliant and get on in the world. (This is why I consider learning foreign languages important and I believe that it is primarily by education for practical life that we do the most for our children. Brackets closed in my head, for the last time in this text.)

Anita Görbicz and Ottó Vincze

Anita Görbicz is a former handball player. She made 233 appearances for the Hungarian national handball team and is a world champion. Her husband, Ottó Vincze is a former football player, who played for several clubs in Hungary and abroad, and was also on the national team. Since he finished his active sports career he has been working with talented young people. They have two children.



Recommendation

There is a popular debate about whether men should be encouraged to take a greater share of child-rearing and domestic responsibilities, and if so, how. Some countries grant the father parental leave to allow him to spend a certain amount of time at home with the child, and if he does not take advantage of this, the opportunity is lost. In Hungary, it is up to the parents to decide how they organise their lives and who takes on a greater share of the responsibilities at home in the first years after the child's birth.

Sometimes I take my nephews to nursery school, and I watch the families arriving for a while. I notice that nowadays a lot more fathers come holding their children's hands, and talking with the utmost naturalness, as compared to ten or fifteen years ago, when our own children went to nursery school. You can see that it is not the first time they have helped their little ones change, they know what to put where, they move naturally in the nursery. I also see from my own colleagues that fathers feel that it is just as much their too job to physically care for their children as it is for mothers. It is good to see this.

I hardly need introduce Anita Görbicz and Ottó Vincze to the reader. Of the sporting couple it happened to be Ottó who stayed at home with their young son Boldizsár in the first few years. As a father of a grown-up boy, he was no stranger to changing nappies, feeding and going to the

playground. It is obvious even for an outsider how close a bond father and son developed between them during this period. Anita is also an example of how a tough, determined, battle-hardened athlete can become a soft, sensitive, smiling mother almost overnight. She said that Ottó took Boldizsár to see her last match. From the moment she knew her son was watching, she was in a different frame of mind. The stakes had changed: she wanted to make her son proud.

Anita and Ottó not only bring Boldizsár up, but also help young athletes develop their talent. I asked them to tell me a little about what family means to them.

Katalin Novák

Mirror of reality

For us, the place we feel at home is the family. Our lives are defined by where we are born and who we live with. The definition of family may vary from culture to culture, but the essence is the same: unconditional love and acceptance.

We both started families in the tough, cutthroat world of competitive sport, and it wasn't easy. Clearly, an athlete takes on the struggle and sacrifices because he or she wants to reach the highest levels and achieve memorable results.

Anita: “Two things have defined my life ever since I was a child: my family and handball. I would not have been successful as an athlete if my family hadn't been by my side, shoulder to shoulder with me. From a young age, I was enveloped by a sense of security and support. I believe that without my parents' watchful eyes, guidance and support, I would not be the person I am today.”

Ottó: “I always say that I have been and will be a footballer for as long as I live. My son Ádám is twenty-one, Boldizsár is six. When Ádám was born, I was an active professional athlete. I was always travelling then, and at the time my aim was to make the time I spent with him meaningful. In hindsight, I can see that I was able to spend much more time actively with Boldizsár, and when I compare the two, which is not always fortunate,

I realise that Ádám missed out on a lot: I suddenly realised that he had grown up. These twenty-one years have gone by without us having done many things in our life together. I would like to avoid that with Boldizsár, I would like to be more a part of his life. My current situation is different, as I now manage my own time. I do more things, and I can spend more time and energy on the family."

When a woman has a baby, it brings the mother tigress out of her. She protects and guards the child. A man doesn't have that, they can only cheer and assist. A woman can pay attention to several things at once; a man can pay attention to only one thing at once, but very good attention at that. We think that a man becomes a man when he has a woman around him, and a woman feels like a woman when she has a man around her. When a child is born, everything gets divided and the big challenges come.

Anita: "When I was expecting Boldizsár I often wondered what our family would be like. How we would manage things, how we would show our love to that tiny little one, how we would demonstrate our love more than the maximum, how we would shape our lives. And then Boldizsár was born and all these questions immediately disappeared, or rather became obvious. We became a family. Both Ottó and I have lived in the world of team sports, and the same spirit characterised our family life too. We knew that we had to work together, just like in sport: as a real team. After all, it can often happen that one of us can only put forty percent in a day; then we need the other to put in sixty percent. That's how we are, how we complement each other, how we work as a family."

It was important for both of us to find a balance between career and family. So when Boldizsár was born, there was no question about how our lives would go on.

Ottó: "Since Boldizsár's arrival, we have spent a lot of time together. It was also out of necessity that I decided to stay at home with him, because Anita needed to get back into shape as soon as possible after giving birth. For me, it was only natural that I should help my wife to fulfil her sporting career. There is no ego or self-interest involved: we do not see supporting each other as a sacrifice. It's not going out for a beer with your mates that makes you a man; it's doing your share when you need to. For

me, it was natural that Boldizsár had to be changed or fed. I knew my job and I did it, and it was important because Anita was reassured knowing that everything was fine at home, so she could concentrate on her work and not worry.”

It is important to maintain a balance between family and work, because there were many times when we got home tired from a training session or in a bad mood after a lost match. But our child was still there and needed love and care. You can tell kids ‘just a moment!’, but after a while they’ll respond to you with childlike sincerity: ‘Daddy/Mummy, you always say ‘just a moment!’ And then you realize that these moments have been lost and will never come back.

Children are very genuine, they are a kind of mirror of reality,

because they don’t misspeak when it comes to their feelings, but always say what they think.

There is a saying that you can only give happiness if you are happy. Basically, we care very little about ourselves, we always try to please others, but how can we do that when we can't please ourselves? It is a matter of self-knowledge. If one can get to the level of putting energy into oneself, then one can start moving in the direction of being able to create value and give true love and care to loved ones. Small things can be worth as much as big things, if we experience them together. That’s why it is important to find that point, that shared relaxation that brings joy to us all. Because our greatest joy is our family.

Kornél Dávid

Professional basketball player,
the only Hungarian to play in the NBA.
He was on the Hungarian national team
127 times playing centre, and won the
Hungarian National Championship six times.



Recommendation

Before we first met, I was wondering how I would recognise him in the crowd. Then I realised I would simply search for the tallest man I could see. Not many people stand at a height of six foot nine. Yet it is not only his size that makes Kornél stand out from the crowd, but his basketball skills too. Something commonly known even by those who do not follow basketball is that he is the only Hungarian male athlete who played in the NBA. It was him who explained to me what a scout does: for over ten years he has been the director of international scouting for a prestigious American team.

If you live in another country for a long time and have the opportunity to experience life there, you will begin to see your own country through different eyes. You may develop a different appreciation of your own country, but at the same time you will also have the opportunity to discover what you can learn from others. Kornél has brought back from America his valuable experience of scouting and nurturing talent, and has put this at the service of young Hungarians. He founded a basketball academy in Székesfehérvár, and is building a basketball hall, while focusing on young people's sporting performance as well as their academic achievements. Students who have got a place at the best universities in the world were also pleased to see Kornél Dávid among the Stipendium Peregrinum scholarship instructors, and it was good to have him as he added a new perspective to the selection process. Kornél Dávid has the ability to step back, listen to others, ask the right questions at the right time, and answer them when and where it really helps.

I asked Kornél to share his thoughts about the family because I know that in addition to his outstanding sporting achievements, he is the father of four children. It is no secret that he lives with his second wife, Fruzsina Dávid-Azari, a handball player, who, beside two grown-up daughters, has given him two little boys.

Katalin Novák

Family

The first thing that comes to mind is Sunday dinner. Interestingly, that is what I remember most. Why is that? Probably because my very first memory is sitting at the table at my poor old grandmother's house. Sadly, she is no longer with us. There are a lot of us. Being from Zala County, the Church fête also comes to mind. A warm weekend in June, we are all there. My cousins, my parents, Dad, Mom, my brother and of course the whole extended family.

We come from different places and we very rarely see each other like this, all of us together. Maybe only on holidays. We got together at my Grandma's place in a small village in Zala only a few times a year.

The hustle and bustle, the preparations and the mix of different generations give us a wonderful sense of togetherness and belonging.

The smell of the Sunday broth, the long conversations and debates are all part of this celebration. The big family, the cavalcade of men and women, the noise of children. The table is laden with delicacies, a mixture of smells, a feeling of security and love.

And then we grow up, memories fade, reunions become less frequent and, sadly, grandparents pass away one after another. What was once natural now somehow begins to fall apart. I do not want that to happen. But it will happen, until we put a stop to it and we are the ones who take over the roles. Because we have to take over: no matter what tragedies happen, no matter how the world turns around us, the family remains. It will be transformed, but we will be the ones who will have to take on the responsibility of carrying on and preserving family customs and traditions.

The smell of the Sunday broth. The intimate family circle that keeps us together, where we can talk about everything, where we can be who we are, and always be children if we need to. We need the traditions, the familiar gatherings and the unending conversations we never get tired of. They often go on well into the night. Why does everything go so fast around us? Why can't we just stretch and relive these moments?

Why can't we turn back the clock and meet everyone just one more time for a long Sunday dinner?

Wiser and more experienced now, so that we can really appreciate the times we have spent together.

It was America that gave me the final push that made me aware of what was or seemed to be natural until then. All that time alone: travelling, hotels, planes and loneliness. It was not good, but you had to be strong and survive. Then I saw in America that the role of the family is very important to them: where almost everyone is from somewhere else, where almost no one is "home-grown" but comes from somewhere else, and where children very often grow up in broken families.

Sunday dinner. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter. Holidays. Celebrations. Not just an occasion, but a tradition to be cherished. Father, mother, children, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, all together. Where possible, of course. Every day, the close bond, the blood bond. Help, love, sometimes anger and hatred, but in every moment the knowledge that there are those who can be counted on at all times, who will help and support even when there is no one. Who will stay with you for as long as they can, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, always with you, near or far. But they are there.

Family. Everything and the single most important thing. Feel it, build it and support it. Honour and respect it. Hold it together and rebuild it when it is in ruins. Remember where you come from and where your roots are. Be proud and never ashamed of it. Enjoy it while you can and fight for it while you can.

Sunday dinner. I know now what it means now. And so will my children. Dad, Mom, kids. Happiness.

Norbert Michelisz

The first Hungarian racing driver
and winner of the 2019 championship
of the World Touring Car Cup.
Awardee of the Knight's Cross
of the Hungarian Order of Merit.
He has two children.



Recommendation

As I am writing, Norbert Michelisz, the world champion driver, is standing on the top of the podium after six hundred and sixty-five hard days. True, this is only one race, and we don't know yet how he will fare in the World Cup, but we can be pleased that his long run of not winning has been broken.

I don't follow motor racing and Formula 1 has never appealed to me, but like most Hungarians, I know the name of Norbert Michelisz. In fact, it is not just his name that we know, but also that our world champion is a modest, hard-working family man, who is a role model for many people.

We, the majority, who have never had the privilege to stand on the top step of a world competition podium, cannot imagine what it must feel like to be tested and found to be the best. What it must be like to be the first to cross the finish line after all that sacrifice of time, money, training, and practice. It is a catharsis only few things can match. And it is the knowledge that a country, a nation, is cheering us on and is proud of us. When I celebrate the successes of our world champions and Olympic champions, I often think about how difficult it must be to bring up children in a family with such a career, and I wonder what the everyday joys we share mean to someone who is celebrated by the whole world. I was moved by Krisztina Egerszegi's recent confession that she always intended to be a wife and a mother; she feels her life is full, and it is largely filled by caring for her family.

It was equally uplifting to read Norbert Michelizs, who, in addition to his word champion title, is also a proud father of two daughters. I hope that it will also reaffirm for you, dear reader, that although we, the majority, do not win world championships, the greatest source of joy can still be present in our lives.

Katalin Novák

From a cocoon to Hungaroring

The first memories of my life are from when I was three or four years old. My uncle lived next door and was fixing cars in the garage. I used to go over there a lot, I watched him work and tinkered in my own way. We lived in Himesháza, a small village in Baranya County, in a cul-de-sac, while beyond our house it was all arable land. At that time there were only six houses in the street, and for me those six houses meant the whole world for a long time.

My uncle built a small iron-framed car with a 50cc Simson motorcycle engine. It was the soul of the car and its heart was beating inside me. The three pedals and the gearbox lent it the magic of a real car, and my cousin and I used to go go-karting in the street, and it felt like we had the whole world to ourselves. My two best friends from primary school lived in one of the six houses, and my sister Petra was always by my side. I lived in a cocoon, away from the worries of the world, but I only realised that later.

Looking back, I would say that we had a traditional family model. My mother looked after us and my father was the breadwinner. These roles were never so openly expressed, but at that time this was the natural division of tasks, it was what we grew up with, not only we Michelizs children, but also the boys and girls in our street. Of course, Mum was working too and Dad came into the picture whenever I misbehaved. I was basically an obedient kid, but I remember pushing the limits. At those times, if Dad told me off, I knew I'd reached the limit. I was never afraid of him, he never gave me a reason to be; he just had authority.

Several times in my life, I strongly needed my parents to show me the stop sign and get me back on track. If they hadn't, I would most probably not be a racing driver today. Or anything else I could be successful at.

I remember when I was fifteen I was on the point of failing physics. I never said a word, I was hiding my marks, and just rolling the problems in front of me. Eventually I got a D, but when my parents found out what happened I had to say goodbye to fun for that summer.

I went to university in Pécs at the age of eighteen, and after the dead end in Himesháza, the world could have opened up, but I was increasingly closing myself off. I lived alone in a rented flat, where I had no parental control, and instead of studying, which was my job, I spent most of my time sitting in front of the computer, playing simulators in various online tournaments. So obviously my academic studies were not a success, and by the end of my first year I had a serious problem as I had failed to get enough credits to continue my engineering and computer science degree.

I remember one day Mum and Dad had a serious talk with me. The three of us were sitting at the kitchen table in our house in Himerháza, the cocoon where I always felt safe. It was no different there, at the kitchen table, there were no loud words or tense moments. My parents struck a friendly tone as they broached a serious subject: the responsibilities of adults. I had to understand that rent, food, drink, and entertainment are not given to anyone by right, but that someone has to make sacrifices for them. And soon I would have to be the one to make sacrifices for my own welfare in life. The memory of that conversation is etched very deeply in me, because if I had to pinpoint when I became an adult, I would know exactly that it was that evening.

A couple of years later, when I was twenty-one and drove my first ever car racing on Hungaroring, and my career took off, I knew that nothing was free. I had to burn through my parents' savings on the track in order to chase my dreams. A racing career puts an enormous financial burden on the family, especially at the beginning, when there are no sponsors, supporters or patrons. We lived in average circumstances, there was always food on the table and my sister and I had everything we needed to have a happy childhood, and then to make it as adults, but we were not wealthy.

It was amazing to see that despite this, my parents did everything they could and more just to see the sparkle in my eyes. Because in the beginning that's all a career in motor racing could mean, my happiness, passion and

fulfilment, but no one could have predicted where that path would lead. My parents didn't need the promise of a world championship, or even for me to win races. They never let me know, let alone rub it in, not even after less successful races, how much it all had cost them. But I knew it cost them a lot – so much that it could have put my father's business, the family's main source of income, in serious jeopardy. Yet there was no question of whether it was worth it, they supported me almost blindly in what was more important to me than anything else. For a parent, nothing is too much for a child's happiness. I didn't fully understand that at the time, at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two, nor for a long time after.

And then I became a father.

It is hard to put it into words: nothing has ever touched me as much as my children. Not even car racing, to which I have given my life. Even after my worst year, I didn't worry as much about my uncertain professional future as I did about my children when something was wrong with them. Even my biggest victories didn't bring me as much joy as seeing them smile. Even the euphoria of winning the world championship could not compete with our intimate family moments.

With the birth of Mira and Emma, my life with Johanna changed radically: it became complete. I always knew that I wanted a big family, and even as a teenager I felt comfortable with children. I'm an introvert and it was always liberating not to have to say clever things in their company, not to have to live up to anyone's expectations – just to be yourself.

Johanna and I found out early on that we had similar ideas about family, but in hindsight, I smile at ourselves. For a while, we waited to start a family in order to provide the best possible conditions for our unborn children. Now I think it was foolish to wait for all those years.

Children don't need a bigger and nicer house, toys and fancy baby clothes, they just need love and care.

And this does not depend on money or careers.

Our children are still young and most of the challenges of parenthood are still ahead of us, but when I think of the kind of parent I want to be, I think of my own parents. If we can give Mira and Emma the support

that I have had, then we'll be doing a good job. I don't think of material things, I think of a sense of security and the carefree childhood that the cocoon of the family home in Himesháza in the cul-de-sac with the six houses meant to me.

The world has changed a lot in thirty years, and families are changing all the time. But the essentials never change: love, support, trust, security, shelter. For me, the family is where people can give each other all of that.



SCIENCE

Prof. Dr. János Martonyi

Prof. Dr. Emőke Bagdy

Dr. Tamás Sulyok

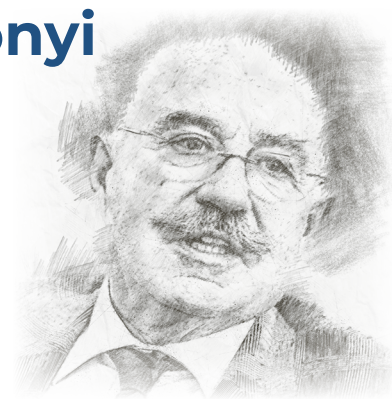
Prof. Dr. Balázs Schanda

Barbara Czeizel



Prof. Dr. János Martonyi

Széchenyi Prize laureate jurist,
diplomat, lawyer, university professor,
holder of the Hungarian Corvin Chain Award.
Foreign Minister in the first and second
Orbán governments. Researcher of private
international law. Father of two children; grandfather.



Recommendation

I graduated in International Relations from Corvinus University (then the University of Economics and Public Administration) and intended to become a diplomat. As soon as I graduated, I applied for a job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but, convinced that I would not be offered the job, I looked for other opportunities as well. I also had a degree in environmental management, so I planned to apply for a job at the Hungarian Energy Office. I was just about to sign the employment contract with the Office, when the landline rang: I was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an interview. It was in 2001, and they needed enthusiastic young people who would gladly participate in raising public awareness about Hungary's EU membership. That is how I joined the diplomatic staff during János Martonyi's first term as Foreign Minister, although I did not meet him personally during that period. As a junior staff member I was far from the Minister, but still, I was proud to be in his team.

In 2010, after having three children and looking after them for years at home, I got the opportunity through an old colleague of mine to return to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this time to János Martonyi's Cabinet, as a member of Hungary's EU Presidency team. We worked together for two years. I learned a lot, gained valuable experience and an insight into how the EU operates and what it means to be a diplomat, attended meetings of foreign ministers and became acquainted with traditional diplomacy. It was a valuable period in my life. I still rely on the experience I gained then, and I am also grateful for realising that this was not the path for me:

I understood that with my husband and three young children, I would not be able to travel to carry out duties in the foreign service.

János Martonyi is an internationally renowned lawyer and diplomat of outstanding intellect. I am always glad to listen to his assessment of foreign policy situations. He still carries out professional tasks; and he is the father of two adult children and grandfather of five grandchildren. I heartily recommend his thoughts on the family for reading.

Katalin Novák

It builds on the past, manifests in the present and has a meaning for the future...

The daughter of Tom Lantos (Tamás Lantos) recalled the words her father said to her when she was a small child, “You know, my little girl, the world is made up of progressively growing concentric circles. The circles start in the centre, with the family. That is where the responsibility of love and support begins”.

True. Human communities start with the family and then gradually expand, reaching the nation and the homeland, the second most important community after the family. Community identities are built on each other. Extended communities, that is, the wider circles cannot exist without the smaller ones, and, above all, without the centre or the smallest circle: the family. And in the absence of a community identity and a consciousness of a community identity, no individual identity can exist. We need to know who we are and where we belong. We do not define ourselves in contrast to other people or communities, but for the sake of those with whom we form a community either by fate or by choice. Or, to paraphrase Endre Ady, the Hungarian poet, “who has been made Hungarian by reason, command, fate, intention or opportunity”.

So what would I be without this smallest community? Who else could have told me so much about the short four years my family spent in Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca), the period when I happened to be born, if not my mother? Who could have imbued me with a sense of belonging

together as Hungarians, the joy of finding each other, and then the pain of separation, if not my mother? But for the stories she told me, how would I have ever learned about the Szeklers, and how would I ever have dreamed of Tusnád (Tu nad Sat), Lake Saint Anne and Békás-szoros (Bicaz Gorge), where I had never been, and of course of Kolozsvár, which I left when I was but five months old? (I was afraid for my dreams and I was very reluctant to visit these places until Sándor Csoóri, the Hungarian poet, writer and politician persuaded me to pose in a photo with him in front of our former house in Kolozsvár).

And what would I know, and, most importantly, what would I feel about the destiny, present, future, history and literature of the Hungarian people without the words, instructions, thoughts and feelings of my parents? Had my father not given me patient, clear and strictly logical explanations, what would I know about Europe and the world? What would it be like if I did not remember how he, late at night on the day the Treaty of Rome was signed, came into my room and told me that a very important thing had happened that day: the process of the unification of Europe had begun? Unfortunately, he added, we were missing out on it. He did not think he would live to see Hungary's accession, but he said that there would be a chance of it happening in my lifetime. Who would have given me an insight into the big picture of world politics (back then we did not use the term "geopolitics")? Who would have pointed out the definition of democracy and dictatorship and, above all, the difference between the two, or how and why things had developed as they had in Hungary, the Carpathian Basin, Central Europe, Europe and the world?

And what would have happened if our parents had not insisted that we attend English classes even in the most difficult times and Bible study classes in the summer? If I had not seen my sisters' diligence, sense of duty, their desire to learn foreign languages and, in general, to be educated? If their example had not shown to me that the family not only provides help and support, but also obliges us to perform?

I should continue by mentioning my wife, but that goes without saying, and, anyway, she asked me not to write about her. In any case, the story continues. The smallest concentric circle is expanding, and its contours are becoming more accentuated. The identity of a family, similarly to all

community identities, builds on the past, manifests in the present and has a meaning for the future. As a birthday present, our son gave me four bottles of wine. The first was a vintage from the year my father was born, the second from the year when he gave me this present, and the third and fourth from the years when he and his son were born... (I will not drink any of them. I will keep the bottles for posterity, together with the 1956 vintage I received a few years ago from the Hungarians living in Geneva.) The future is represented by our five grandchildren and the students our daughter teaches at the university. These young people live in a world that, in many ways, is different from ours. They live amidst different conditions, and most importantly use different technology. In every field, changes continue and are accelerating.

Will the young generation see that, in spite of all the changes, the crucial things in life and in the world are constant and their essence never changes? That time does not disappear, but one must follow it? Because there are things in life which are permanent and immutable. Above all, love is such a thing. Love, of which the more we give, the more we receive. The sense of belonging to a community, of gratitude and responsibility towards the community is also such an unchanging thing.

Yet we can experience permanence only if we keep up the experience and responsibility of belonging to a community, that is, a community identity which stems from the family and that can barely exist without the family.

Because family may take many forms, but its essence remains the same and is eternal.

The family is the basis on which the most important extended community – the nation – lives on, passes on everything it inherited from the past, and adheres to its identity, history, language, culture and soul, that is, to everything that makes it a nation.

The sense of belonging to a family leads to national identity, the sense of belonging to a nation leads to our European identity, our belonging to European culture and civilisation. And all this leads to the universal community, which then leads us back to the essence, because this community is best understood with *emberiség*, the Hungarian word for “humanity”.

Have we gone beyond the framework of the family? Maybe. Or maybe the word "family" has a broader meaning as well which we must see and feel to be able to understand the special role and significance of the "family" in its original, narrower sense. This connection is reciprocal. If we fail to decipher the essence of the family in the original sense of the word, we will not be able to preserve the cultural, spiritual and intellectual essence of the nation.

This is how community identities are built upon each other. This is how the concentric circles of small and large communities are intertwined, depend on each other and reinforce each other. This is why strong families are needed for strong national cohesion.

Yet in the centre of every circle stands the human being, created free, equal and responsible, whom the creator of all systems endowed with the universal, permanent and unchanging values and gifts that enable him or her to establish strong families and strong communities. Then it is up to humanity and the systems it creates to exploit this potential fully.

Prof. Dr. Emőke Bagdy

Prima Primiissima award-winning
clinical psychologist, psychotherapist,
supervisor, psychology PhD, professor
emerita since 2010, "healer of souls".
Mother of twin children, grandmother.



Recommendation

Work-family balance... when I first heard that phrase, I felt ashamed. Am I the only one who fails to find this balance? Do others manage to find it, is it possible to find a way to balance work and family? How do they ensure that the balance does not tip? Some time later, I read an interview which assumed that today the responsibility of female intellectuals is to balance family and career brilliantly. A see-saw, that's what it is. That is exactly what I felt: sometimes I have more time and attention to talk, hike or play with my children, and spend time with my husband and my parents, and sometimes I am overwhelmed by my tasks, and my mind is filled with my professional responsibilities which I am also happy to carry out. It is just like a see-saw: it is good to swing up, and it is also good to hit the ground and start again.

The interviewee was Emőke Bagdy, a talented teacher, and one of the most respected professors of psychology today. Even under attack, she stands up for traditional Christian values consistently and credibly, citing scientific evidence. She speaks and writes in an engaging and passionate way. Instead of presenting psychology in its scientific form which many may find distant, elusive or even intimidating, and shunning the attitude of self-proclaimed Facebook pundits, Emőke Bagdy approaches her subject in a manner that is both easy to understand and professionally grounded. Maybe this is why she is loved and respected by so many people.

In this piece of writing, Emőke once again invites the reader to sit back and think. This time she does not write about how she and her husband

have been happily married for forty-six years and had twin children, or that she considers grandmotherhood to be the greatest source of joy in her life.

Katalin Novák

The place of the family in the value system of our Hungarian reality

How can the notion of the “family” be defined on the basis of facts and experience?

Family exists as a necessity. The family is a formal social unit, an institution, endowed with rights and obligations. This is how social formations and governments show whether they attach importance to supporting an increasing population and the survival of a nation or not. The emotional bonds that bind family members together are the informal face of the system: they are its binding force, serving the human need to belong. The family is a factor that provides emotional nurture, serves as a cradle of cohesive relationships and is a factor that preserves health. It is a safe point for us to be accepted, for our importance and lovability. It is a social uterus, and, at the same time, a transmitter of social values and a stable basis that shapes human personality. When a couple brings a child into the world, the man has the creative potential, while the woman adds the nurturing, loving, life-sustaining power of love to the upbringing of the child that is born. Man and woman (like *yin* and *yang*) both represent the entity of the other as well: the woman has a creative masculine force and the man has the gentle, loving feminine force, albeit with different proportions. When a child is born, a family – a mother and a father – are born. These statements are not opinions, but based on facts, and corroborated by demonstrable, proven evidence.

Globalisation versus individualisation; the denial of common validities

Yet today in the so-called "welfare societies" (for example, in the United States or in Europe, which used to be based on Christian ethics) there are views increasingly gaining ground that arbitrarily change scientific and empirical facts about the concept of the "family" and related notions that were once regarded as axioms. Some of these views are seriously transgressive. By that I mean that they employ clearly defined concepts (e.g. marriage) in a different sense or that they extend the right and power to change to the evolutionary biological terrain of the female and male sexual entity. They violate the laws of evolution and, through interpreting such laws in a different frame of reference, take supreme power and "play God" (Murray 2020). Across Europe and even at a global level, in the so-called welfare societies there are post-modern nihilistic views (accompanied by newly constructed notions that serve them) which arbitrarily transgress the boundaries of conventional "normality".

We have to acknowledge that, due to two centuries of secularisation, today's concepts of the family have undergone a marked change. These concepts offer interpretations that are individualistic in the extreme and libertine in a way that transgresses legal boundaries, instead of defining the family, marriage and responsibilities of socialisation within the framework of scientifically unquestionable laws. Nothing is what it used be. Nothing is valid in the same way it used be. As a result of ethical relativism, we are witnessing how the idea of freedom is violated and how the interests represented by minority interest groups are making aggressive demands and pushing forward, against scientific facts. When boundaries are transgressed in the name of the demand for freedom, the consequence is libertinage. Yet freedom can only operate within the framework of order which, by turn, consists of social consensus and accepted norms, is guaranteed by legislation and regulated by public opinion.

Identity, respect for the law of life; issues of population and childbearing

The Hungarian nation is facing a major challenge.

This concerns what the family means to us. How we oppose anti-family sentiments. Whether we give way to minority violence. Whether we defend our own national, family and population concepts against the pressure of globalism. Whether we want to strengthen our national identity. As László Bogár put it clearly in 2020: do we want to survive as a nation, as Hungarians, women, men, mothers, fathers, individuals living in a family? Or do we prefer to become robots that earn money, individuals that pursue nothing but success, home-less and unhappy creatures that struggle alone, without a family? Are we courageous enough to face ourselves and reject any form of manipulation?

On the other hand, we must be consistent in our actions in harmony with our national, community and individual positions. We must support, strengthen and serve Hungary's family- and child-centred concepts at the level of the government, population policy, the family and the individual.

What needs to be done? Crisis points and options for prevention

The global trend, reflected in Hungarian reality and, at the same time, complicated by specific Hungarian aspects, necessarily draws attention to the following five factors or crisis points for which there is (or could be) scope for prevention. As for the question of how this is realised and "remedied" by Hungary's social reality, government and population, is answered in the final section of this paper. Are we doing our best to increase the number of families and children, to strengthen the nation or, as the great Hungarian poet Ferenc Kölcsey says, "thus your land will be reborn", to renew and avoid the impending death of the nation?

1.) Population issues. Reproductive age must be regarded as a special value. Myth busting is needed. Genetic and social processes need to be brought back into harmony. The myth of "there is still time" is false: fertility is only optimal till your thirties. There *is* a genetic time window.

We have a responsibility to raise awareness of the fertility time window. We must change the destructive attitudes of "there is still time to have children" and "I want to live a carefree life for a while".

A carefree life is the privilege of childhood. Adulthood is about commitment and responsibility. The obligation to shape the mind overwrites financial support and support aimed at improving living conditions. The main driving force for having children is the desire for motherhood. It is a spiritual longing, the achievement of completeness in terms of awareness of one's own value. For men, the driving force is the masculine awareness of power and sense of wholeness that stems from fertility. The child is a life's work and a joint creation. The drive behind having children is the instinct of self-reproduction and human desire. Desired children are born most safely and in the best health within the optimum fertility time window.

2.) Identity issues. There is a need to raise awareness of individual, gender, family, national and professional identity and to ensure their healthy and unhindered development. The family is the cradle of this process; a workshop that shapes personality. In the first year of life, the mother instils in the baby the pattern of attachment through breast milk. The roots of autonomy are linked to the second year of life when the social birth takes place.

3.) For every age, in education, training and everyday life there is an ongoing need for the instilment and enhancement of a value-based approach to the individual experience of a complete life ("happiness"). A general representation of the attitude and thought-forming messages of positive psychology are factors that counteract the Hungarian context of approaches to relationships that are characterised by pessimism, nihilism, hopelessness, rumination and sanguine instability, socialised for complaining and prone to depression. (Lyubomirsky 2008, Bagdy 2010).

4.) Representing the priority of the sanctity of life. The law of life provides for the survival of mankind, serving the inviolability of individual life, guaranteeing the freedoms of the individual, protecting bodily integrity, and safeguarding human dignity. Given that all of this

is our constitutional right and obligation, compliance with it should be translated into practice in the spirit of mutual interdependence and respect. (Undoubtedly, behavioural patterns and model-based behaviour play a major role in this.)

5.) A paradigm shift. Efforts to ensure that the government-level national family protection measures reflect a family-centred approach, so that the principles can be translated into life practice.

In Hungary, this paradigm shift has been progressing systematically for ten years now. Instead of a crisis of the family we can discuss the future of the family. This is a matter that determines the nation's destiny. Clearly, it is not the family that is facing a crisis, but our values, mentality and spirituality. The mindset change is reflected by the fact that dedicated help of families are denoted with the term "support" instead of "allowance". The guiding principle is that "those who raise children should be better off financially as well". Living in a family is a way of life to be prioritised and strengthened. At this point let me but mention the most important stages in this process. Population decrease has been halted. In 2010, three out of five planned children were born; in 2021, four.

Within the framework of the Family Protection Action Plan of the last two years, seven family protection measures have been implemented (Fűrész 2021). So far, more than one third of Hungarian families raising children have used the support for would-be parents or the car purchase allowance for large families. The paradigm shift in the theory and practice of Hungarian family policy is demonstrated by relief measures, mortgage relief, nursery improvements, the home creation programme, housing renovation support, the existing childcare fee and childcare support, the recently introduced, more favourable infant care fee, the waiver of income tax upon the birth of the fourth child) or tax reduction for young people under 25. Since 2018, a growing number of families who had moved abroad have returned. In 2020, the number of returning families was 4,000 higher than that of those leaving. A life practice that builds the nation and revolves around the family is an imperative public issue.

In conclusion, however, I need to emphasise that we must regard shaping consciousness, respecting the desire for having children, appreciating motherhood and elevating men to the level of creative values as public issues and personal responsibilities in life, and, at the same time, as an equal opportunities programme at the societal level if we want to move the deviations, feminist excesses and border transgression of the current digressions in the quest for equal opportunities back to the framework defined by the requirements of the majority consensus, behind the boundaries of normality.

Dr. Tamás Sulyok

Lawyer, President of Hungary's
Constitutional Court since 2016.
Honorary consul, university lecturer.
He has two adult children.



Recommendation

My paternal grandfather was a judge and my grandmother a lawyer, so, not only do I respect people who studied law, and defend the legality and justice of our lives, but I am also emotionally attached to them. They may offer points of reference, a handhold, a guarantee that the frameworks that serve security cannot be transgressed with impunity. They are watchmen who, as the Book of Ezekiel says, are responsible for deciding if they blow the trumpet or not. And then it is up to us how we respond to their warning. "...anyone hearing but not heeding the warning of the trumpet and therefore slain by the sword that comes against him, shall be responsible for his own death... for had he taken warning he would have escaped with his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the warning trumpet, so that the sword comes and takes anyone, I will hold the watchman responsible for that person's death, even though that person is taken because of his own sin."

Tamás Sulyok is the President of the Constitutional Court, which means that he holds a prominent position among the watchmen.

From the perspective of everyday life, Hungary's Fundamental Law seems very distant and abstract. It is not easy to grasp the significance of the principles, rights, obligations and frameworks laid down therein. This is why it is worth reading this piece of writing by Tamás Sulyok: it shows how the Constitutional Court can contribute to the security of families in specific cases. Tamás Sulyok does not mention this fact, so I am going to share with the Reader that he and his wife, whom he married when they were university students, are the parents of two grown-up children and the proud grandparents of two grandchildren.

Katalin Novák

Family protection as demonstrated in some specific rulings by Hungary's Constitutional Court

The family is the natural and, at the same time, intimate setting of human life. This is where we start, then long to leave behind and then actually leave so that we can find our way back to it within a new framework. In the absence of a family, we human beings exist in an incomplete, precarious environment. The memory of our ancestors, passed down from generation to generation either verbally or by experience, is just as much a part of our identity as the loving concern we have for the younger members of our family. This is one of the reasons why I am happy and content to live in the same family that I started as a university student with my wife.

“Given the key role the family plays in the structure and functioning of society, any decision of the Constitutional Court which directly or indirectly contributes to the protection of families and to making their lives easier or more comfortable has a special importance in the case-law of the Constitutional Court.”

I would say that those rulings are the closest to my heart that pertain to the situation of children within the family. I therefore decided to present three such cases in this brief paper.

Let me start with a case that is one of those to which I attach the greatest importance^[1]. In this case of child abduction, the Court passed a courageous judgement in the interests of the child. The Constitutional Court procedure was initiated on the basis of a constitutional complaint. After the marriage of the parents (who were living partly in Spain and partly in Hungary) had broken down, the Hungarian mother decided to reside in Hungary with her four-year-old son and two-year-old daughter. The father, of Italian origin, brought proceedings against her for the abduction of minors. The Hungarian courts assessed the evidence and eventually concluded that the mother had indeed abducted the children from Spain. The mother brought an action before the Constitutional

Court, claiming the infringement of her fundamental right to a fair trial. She argued that in the course of taking evidence, the court had made it impossible for her to prove her case, for example, the court had failed to appoint a forensic expert in psychology, had not granted her request for a hearing for her older child, and had wrongly established the habitual residence of the older child.

Moreover, she claimed that the courts had failed to assess whether the children, had they moved to Spain, would have been placed in an appropriate environment. The Constitutional Court ruled that in such proceedings the court is required, as much as possible, to use all means of evidence provided by the parties to ensure that the best interests of the minor children can be clearly determined. A procedure that makes it impossible to determine the best interests of the child does not comply with the constitutional requirement of a fair trial. The Constitutional Court ruled that in the present case the court had rejected the application for the appointment of an expert without meaningful reasoning and, thus, in fact, had deprived the mother of the opportunity to use what essentially was the only possible means of evidence. The courts had indeed examined in detail the circumstances the assessment of which is required by international and Hungarian law, but they had failed to carry out a sufficiently detailed examination of the (potential) psychological or physical consequences of the return for the children. This circumstance was an infringement of the fundamental right to a fair trial. Consequently, the Constitutional Court annulled the court decisions.

In the second case^[2], the Constitutional Court used the instruments available to it in order to help children with learning difficulties. The proceedings were initiated on the basis of a petition signed by 53 Members of the Hungarian Parliament. The petitioners challenged an amendment to the Act on National Public Education that limited the availability of exemption from being assessed with grades and from certain school subjects or subject modules (previously available to all pupils) to pupils with special educational needs. In its previous version, the Act allowed such exemption for all pupils for whom an expert opinion provided grounds for that. The petitioners argued that pupils who no longer had the opportunity to enjoy such an exemption were discriminated against,

given that they had to comply with requirements that they were not able to meet. The petitioners added that the contested provisions infringed the pupils' right to education.

The Constitutional Court ruled that – even though the two pupil groups were indeed comparable on the basis of the existence of special educational needs – the distinction between the groups was not arbitrary due to the differences in the degrees of learning difficulties. Determining whether the introduction of assessment is unfavourable or favourable for the particular student must be based on the assessment of the individual aspects. It was not possible to identify a unified group that would be adversely affected by the legislation. The Constitutional Court also ruled that the contested provision does not impede the students' right to education either, as no subjective right to be exempted from a school subject derives from the Fundamental Law. On the basis of the above, the Constitutional Court rejected the petition.

At the same time, it emphasised in its decision that the Fundamental Law guarantees every child the protection necessary for their proper physical, mental and moral development as a fundamental right. To ensure that children with learning difficulties can become active members of society in the future, a system of public education rules is needed that can cater for their specific needs. The Constitutional Court concluded that the current provisions did not adequately ensure that the development of pupils was tailored to their specific individual abilities. In the context of restructuring public education, the state must not remove a professionally justified advantage without providing for another equivalent advantage. Therefore, the Constitutional Court, acting *ex officio*, found omission on the part of the legislature.

In the third case^[3], the Constitutional Court granted legal protection directly to a pregnant woman and indirectly to her unborn child, annulling a provision of the Labour Code which stipulated that a pregnant woman or a woman undergoing an assisted reproductive procedure is entitled to protection from dismissal only if she informs her employer of her condition before the notice is given to her. In the proceedings, initiated by the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, the Constitutional Court ruled that pregnancy or participation in an assisted reproductive procedure are

circumstances which unambiguously fall into the intimate sphere of the woman, and that requiring her to disclose these facts to her employer constitutes interference with her private life.

The Constitutional Court pointed out that although it is basically down to the State's discretion to decide on the way it offers additional protection in the labour market for women with children, the conditions for such additional protection must not result in the unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions of the fundamental rights of the employee. In the present case, the disclosure of private information is required only if the event relevant to the exercise of the right for protection from dismissal (that is, the notice of dismissal) actually takes place. In contrast, the contested provision requires the employee to give the employer information necessary for the exercise of the right to protection on the day when the assisted reproductive procedure commences or as soon as she becomes aware of the pregnancy. On the basis of the above, the Constitutional Court came to the conclusion that the contested provision unconstitutionally restricts the right to privacy and the human dignity of women with children. Moreover, the Constitutional Court called attention to the fact that the legislature had made the exercise of the right for protection from dismissal subject to conditions impossible to comply with by women who had not yet become aware of their pregnancy. This constitutes an act of discrimination against such women.

Perhaps the substance of the three cases discussed above makes it clear that even the Constitutional Court, an institution which operates in the abstract world of law and protects the constitutionality of the legal system from above, can effectively contribute to the effective protection of our families and children.

[1] Resolution of the Constitutional Court of Hungary No. 3066/2018 (II. 20.)

[2] Decision of the Constitutional Court of Hungary No. 9/2019 (III. 22.)

[3] Resolution of the Constitutional Court of Hungary No. 17/2014. (V. 30.)

Prof. Dr. Balázs Schanda

Internationally renowned professor of constitutional law and ecclesiastical law; head of the Department of Constitutional Law and State Law of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University. In recognition of his work, he was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. Judge of Hungary's Constitutional Court since 2016. He is married, and the father of four children.



Recommendation

How can we ensure that the law serves us in our lives? How can we make the law serve families? What is the role of the Church and the State? How can legal norms be translated into practice? These are some questions we pose from time to time.

For many people the law is merely an abstract concept, while for others it is a guarantee, something to rely upon, a point of reference. Some people regard it as an obstacle, or incomprehensible world: a dense forest of legislation where they cannot find their way. Some people feel that the law protects them, while others feel that they belong to a group not protected by the law.

Balázs Schanda is a judge of the Constitutional Court, and renowned professor of ecclesiastical and constitutional law. His main areas of expertise include the constitutional protection of marriage and the family. He has written numerous publications on how the law can strengthen the institution of the family.

In 2011 Hungary attached constitutional guarantees to the protection of marriage and the family. Hungary's Fundamental Law offers internationally outstanding protection to marriage between a man and a woman, and to the family based on marriage and on the parent-child relationship, and provides for the requirement to educate children and care for parents. The Fundamental Law states that human life begins at conception and is entitled to protection. The question is how to translate the provisions of the constitution into practice, and how to guarantee that these values are observed in everyday life. Balázs Schanda provides an answer to these questions. Balázs is a father; he and his wife have four children.

Katalin Novák

Beyond the impact factor

“My most successful publication”, said my colleague, a professor at a foreign university, when she showed me the picture of her little son. Indeed, no monographs, impact factors, titles, positions, posts or responsibilities could equal the value of family life. All of our other responsibilities could be taken over by someone else. All of our titles could be held by someone else, even if the dignity of our work is unique and another person would certainly carry it out differently. Another sculptor would produce another statue, but it does not depend on the person of the sculptor whether a statue is erected on a square or not. In contrast, the position and responsibilities of a spouse and a parent certainly cannot be held or carried out by someone else. Your children could not have other parents, because if you had married someone else they would not exist. This is the only field where we are certainly not replaceable.

I often say that I have children from my wife’s first marriage, and some people react either with pity, or astonishment. But my wife’s first marriage is the one she entered with me. Being a father is a special challenge. When we bring a child into the world, we embark upon a beautiful journey, accompanied by worries and pride, hopes and joy. It takes years and decades of struggle, and defines our adult lives. The family is a setting where the value of micromanagement goes beyond the nappies changed, the lunch cooked and eaten in minutes or the routine of taking the children to school and a thousand other places. There is no master chef who could cook better than a wife and a mother. Somebody else could take the children to school, but it is the fathers who were born for that task.

“I can’t play by myself!”, complained my bored nephew when his brothers and sisters went to kindergarten and school, and he could not find his place in the house without them. Schools cannot substitute the dynamism between siblings, however noisy it can be sometimes. This dynamism is a kind of security that, within the order of life, remains with us much longer than our parents.

What can we expect from the state with regard to the family? The family is an institution of natural law that precedes state law. The law of its foundation is written in the hearts of us all, because (and here let me quote a one-liner by a professor of private law) family law begins where the family ends. What are the meaningful measures the law can take for the family? Is there anything it can do? It cannot make decisions about our personal lives. It does not assign us a partner (although there was a case where the complainant submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights demanding that his right to marry be enforced and a suitable wife be provided to him – but his application was rejected). Moreover, the law is not capable of restoring the unity of a family falling apart. In defence of the integrity of the family, we shun attempts that would interfere with the education of children or with the internal matters of family life. What can the state do, beyond supporting families? It can tilt the level playing field and, indeed, will do so if it is not an enemy to itself. By that, I do not only (or primarily) mean support, but an attitude: the formation of a social environment where, at least, the competitive disadvantages that stem from family responsibilities are offset. An attitude that recognises work done in the service of family members, which does not regard starting a family and having children as a hobby or a private matter. This attitude is not easy to represent in a society where the majority of people refrain from taking on the burden of "simple reproduction".

There is a general consensus that the state is not competent to interfere in the lives of its citizens. Yet at the same time, it is responsible for its underage citizens, and can meet this responsibility only if it properly makes sure that parents fulfil their natural obligations to their children, the young citizens of the state. The roles and responsibilities of parents are not interchangeable or replaceable. Typically, fathers throw their two- or three-year olds in the air and mothers shout at them not to throw the children so high.

Our roles are not interchangeable. Therefore, it makes a difference to the state whether children grow up in complete or single parent families:

divorce is not simply a private matter for two adults, but something that determines their children's health and social security. Nowadays, the absence of the model of a responsible and caring father affects all too many people. It is not helpful to deny that a damaged life situation is indeed damaged. This is a fact which is clear in the case of being widowed or orphaned. Similarly, the absence of a family member is always a wound that needs to be healed and must not be ignored.

“Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven,” (Matthew 23,9), Jesus warned. He too was born into a family. Today, his birthday is a family festival for everyone, virtually regardless of religious belief. But why do we often call our priests “father”? Because they too give us life. Not life in the biological sense of the word, but a life that is beyond earthly existence. Their existence is a sign. It is no coincidence that nowadays it is the Church that advocates most clearly the interests of the family: the Church is in a position where it is able to seek the truth without having to conform to any fashion or mood. The family community is the caring tenderness of the order of creation. Its function is to accompany us throughout our changing roles on our journey, until we return to our Father's house.

Barbara Czeizel

Degree holder in special needs education, head of the Budapest Early Intervention Centre, and formerly Ministerial Commissioner for early intervention. Awardee of the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. She has two children.



Recommendation

I am watching the professionals at work at the Budapest Early Intervention Centre. A little girl is lying on the ground, her arms and legs cramped, her eyes fixed on one spot, saliva dripping from her mouth. Next to her is a boy in a wheelchair, his legs secured to the chair, his head supported on both sides, and to the back of the special wheelchair rising all the way above him. In the other room, a mother is holding a four-year-old girl on her lap, gently trying to explain to her how to catch the ball that has been rolled to her. On the wall of the autistic children's classroom, colourful drawings show the daily routine: washing hands, eating, playing...

This is not my first or last visit to EIC, and I watch the parents, the children and the special education teachers with admiration. Somehow time slows down here, you have to be patient. You cannot rush, or be discontented, but rather have to repeat the same movement endlessly, and do everything possible to achieve progress and to accept what is unachievable. I have learnt a lot from development professionals in EIC and in many other parts of the country. As I have also learned from parents: attention, patience, acceptance and the ability to ask for help. How difficult it is to realise that you cannot do it alone, that you need help, that you have to ask for and be able to accept that help.

Barbara Czeizel is someone who can move mountains. She builds systems in a way that makes the people involved feel that it is about them and for them, that each and every one, and each family are important. She builds such systems by finding supporters, funds, and hard-working hands, while being steadfast in her determination. Barbara hears and makes

heard the voices of those who have neither the time nor the means to advocate for themselves. She is a true helper.

When I asked Barbara Czeizel to write about the family, she could have written about her beloved father, Endre Czeizel, the renowned geneticist, she could have written about her own children, of whom she can be justly proud. Instead she wrote about the families for whom she has taken responsibility beyond her own. After all, Barbara is their voice too.

Katalin Novák

Birth of a family, birth of a parent – Children with a developmental delay or disability in the family

Each person is different, and so is each couple and each family – unique and unrepeatable, with their external, internal, individual and inter-relational qualities, weaknesses, strengths, desires, plans and hopes for the future.

Through the mysteries of love and biology, a man and a woman create a child. Less obvious, however, is how a single child gives birth to two parents. For at the moment of birth, the woman becomes a mother and the man a father, and the formation of two new, fundamental identities begins.

A woman will be forever changed when she becomes the primary carer, as will the man alongside her, who will have to take on a whole new set of responsibilities.

In the majority of cases, the waiting, hopes, dreams and fears of the nine months – and the period, sometimes long years, before – are replaced by a feeling of immense joy at the birth of a child. But then, at the same time, everybody has to face many challenges while coping with this new situation and trying to fit their new role. These may include personal and societal expectations of the man-woman, husband-wife and father-mother roles.

While the birth of a healthy child makes a woman more fulfilled and stronger as a mother, and a man as a father, the birth of an imperfect child can inflict a deep wound and create a fracture in a person's self-image.

Studies have shown that when ranking their roles, men tend to put work first, being a husband second, and being a father third.

Women, on the other hand, most often see themselves first as mothers, second as wives, and rank work-related roles only third. However, this order may change for women who are staunchly committed to their vocation. The birth of a child with a disability usually "complicates", but does not fundamentally change the mother's expectations of her own role. Conversely, the father's image of himself as a problem-solving man and source of security may be immediately and significantly shaken. It is not enough that his heart is secretly broken to pieces by the pain, but he cannot solve the problem, and it is "inappropriate" for him to express his pain to its full extent.

When the problem arises, the man's role of providing strength, stability and averting danger may be called into question. The woman is so consumed by her role as a mother that it may become impossible or at least severely limited for her to fulfil her other two roles. The condition of the disabled child can divert her from her previously planned goals and prevent her from fulfilling her desires for life. In the majority of cases – 80% to 90%, according to studies – mothers give up their profession or job. Even if they go back to work, they never reach the professional standards of their peers in terms of career or earning power. Of course, this is not limited to women, since in our experience fathers can also be significantly, albeit not as much, held back in their career progression by a child with a disability coming into the family.

Their previous ideas, desires, expectations of themselves and of others, and plans for the future are suddenly thrown into disarray. The full extent of the problem is often not known, and no one, including professionals, knows how the child's condition will develop or what lies down the road for them. In a broader sense, a whole family is damaged and rendered fragile, unable to plan for the future, and made to feel isolated and confused. This emotional and physical state can make it difficult to bond with the new-born, which has implications beyond the child's medical difficulties and development.

In addition to the challenges of becoming a family, health, financial and organisational problems in accessing various benefits, the struggle

with a changed life situation, a changed, shattered self-image and social exclusion can just add to the usual difficulties. It is not only the birth of a child with a disability that can damage the family. The extra burdens and problems brought about by such situations can also bring the problems and insecurities inherent in a relationship to the surface. The behaviour and communication of the extended family, friends, acquaintances and professionals can leave additional unspoken scars on the new parents, but at the same time, a sensitive, accepting and reassuring attitude can of course provide support in this very sensitive and vulnerable situation.

The burden on the family often creates an internal imbalance. This imbalance affects the mother-child relationship, the couple's relationship with each other, and the relationships of siblings, grandparents and other relatives. The consequences of these changes may be a deepening of empathy and a sense of belonging, solidarity and tolerance, but in most cases more difficult family dynamics are more likely to emerge. The negative phenomena are intensified during the critical periods, which mark the late or missed developmental stages of a child growing up with a disability. Tensions within the family can be exacerbated by the pitfalls of raising a child with a disability, as parents are rarely able or willing to use the traditional means of parental control, thus increasing the risk of a segregated life. Parents' anxiety about an uncertain future is expressed relatively early in their lives, as society is not yet capable of offering reassuring and humane solutions to all individuals and families in need of long-term support.

It is rare that a person's faith in themselves is not shattered after such an event.

We hear more and more about the families concerned, but for the majority of society they are still seen as a closed world, outside the world of the apparently "healthy", even though the world of people with disabilities should not be seen outside of mainstream society, but only in and with it.

Anyone can be affected, including us.

According to Central Statistical Office figures and public education data, nearly 6.7% of the Hungarian population, or around 660,000 people, have disabilities.

If we consider that the same number of families, or at least three times as many people, are affected, we are talking about almost two million people.

Even we, professionals, sometimes tend to think of them and their families as living somewhere outside our "healthy" society, simply because they have a disabled child (or adult) in their family. As if they, the "outsiders", are the ones we, "insiders", are trying to help, or have been trying to bring into our midst.

To change such attitudes it is important to have real knowledge about them, and not just knowledge but experience of living with them. We need to get to know them: let them go with our children to pre-school, school, to the cinema, the theatre, on public transport, on holidays, and create opportunities to facilitate individual situations. After all, our existence is based on community, which the individual is a part of, the family is a part of, and children born into the family who may have different developmental needs are also part of. The fact that the expected child has a disability or health impairment does not change the social role of the family or of its members, or at least not immediately. However, their determining circumstances will be different. This change is caused by the emotional shock of the parents, the reaction and behaviour of the environment, including professionals, family members and friends, and the educational, care and social environment that accommodates or does not accommodate the child.

How a family can stay together in this situation depends very much on the social environment that surrounds them.

There is room for change in the way disability is perceived in society, and in the acceptance of difference in general. However, the quality of life for people with disabilities is also a function of social integration and inclusion.

We are all responsible for the way we approach the issue of "otherness", including people with disabilities and their families.

The family that has waited many months for the birth of a healthy child is suddenly faced with serious problems, blaming themselves and others, searching for the causes and then becoming resigned. How alone are they in this situation? Who can help them and how, and what is the earliest and most painful time to let go and ease this heavy burden? There are

different forms of help, over and above caring for the child. Are parents and family members also getting the attention they need?

Do we take in to account the development of secondary and multiple psychological damage that feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and vulnerability can cause? Who are the people who, in other roles and for other reasons, are involved in this area of life and who live with impaired and disabled people for part of their lives?

The person in question is the professional: for example, an obstetrician, paediatrician, nurse, psychologist or SEN teacher. Unlike parents, they have, for one reason or another, voluntarily and consciously chosen their caring profession.

Do these professionals look at the family members around the child in the process of diagnosis, treatment and development? I am positive that true social inclusion is best promoted by viewing and understanding the disabled child with the adults concerned and their environment as a whole. This is the way in which professionals can help and mediate the processing and acceptance of “otherness”, both for those directly concerned and for the rest of society.

We must insist on the principle of coexistence and acceptance, or not insist on it, but rather take it for granted. In our practical work, I often have the feeling that we professionals, with our expert knowledge and practical responsibilities, often see the family as a background. Inclusion, which can be understood in different ways, can only be achieved if professionals as well as actors in public and everyday life show greater empathy and understanding towards both people with disabilities and their families, and they take on the role of facilitators and mediators who do not allow people with disabilities to become alienated from the rest of society. I know that many people have this approach. It is good to see it becoming more widespread, but we are still a long way from being able to talk about real change.



HEALTH

Prof. Dr. András Csókay

Dr. György János Velkey

Dr. Péter Tóth-Heyn

Prof. Dr. Zoltán Novák



Prof. Dr. András Csókay

Internationally renowned neurosurgeon, chief of surgery, developer of innovative surgical techniques. Holder of the Middle Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. He is married and has three children.



Recommendation

Many people have heard about the separation of the Bangladeshi twin girls who were born conjoined at the head. We are proud that Hungarian experts elaborated the details of and performed this life-saving medical feat that has been admired by so many people all around the world. And many people doubtless heard the name of neurosurgeon professor András Csókay for the first time in connection with the story of Rabeya and Rukaya. But András is not looking for popularity or fame. On the contrary, he redirects the attention turned towards him to Jesus Christ. He believes and confesses that it was Jesus Christ, who through the power of prayer gave him the idea of how to perform the surgery, along with the strength to be able to carry it out. A lot of people may find it unusual or strange that a Christian scientist preaches the gospel so adamantly, courageously, and without compromise, even in the face of incomprehension or rejection. But this is exactly what András does whenever he has the opportunity.

Another reason why I feel that András Csókay's story is important is that getting to know about his life may lend support to a lot of people. András is a father of five children. His marriage and his private life have been full of struggles. He and his wife speak in an unusually frank way about how they had to fight for their relationship, for each other and for their family, and how they had to learn the true meaning of repentance, forgiveness and acceptance.

An acquaintance of mine once asked me if they would still qualify for the personal income tax exemption for couples with four children if they had lost one of their children young, and now only have three living. I assured them that they were still eligible, but it made me think about how we often tend to

be unaware of other people's burdens and tragedies. And they are not the only ones. There are many families in which parents have to carry the pain of losing a child throughout their lives. András Csókay's youngest child, Marci, died in a tragic accident on his tenth birthday. The parents survived, because they had to survive, and now, seven years later, they have the strength again to help others while confessing their faith and convictions. Many thanks to them.

Katalin Novák

The family teaches forgiveness

The importance of family in education is unquestionable. We have received the treasure of faith from those who were closest to us: our parents. For children, parents are the first witnesses of faith. Children learn by imitation; they imitate everything: words, sentences, even the intonation of sentences. When they are playing or daydreaming, when they cook, drive cars and do whatever they see their elders do. Children learn morality from their parents and loved ones. It is within the family's flow of love where they learn to be generous and faithful. They learn the true meaning of help and duties. In today's world, only the family can teach children, day by day, that human life begins not at birth but upon conception. Families need to unite to tackle the most serious problem of our time, which is not war or epidemics, but abortion. We can educate children by talking to them, and we can make them understand and feel all this from the depth of their hearts. So that when they grow up, it becomes natural for them to respect and protect life after conception. So that they have the courage to proclaim this and translate this into everyday life.

Naturally, children not only pay attention to what we parents tell them in the family, but also watch what we actually do.

Witnessing life, living up to our values in everyday life, experiencing forgiveness in the family, mutual respect, understanding and patience are treasures that are ingrained in the heart of the child, along with the experience of living faith.

Those children who receive the treasure of experienced faith from their parents will not find it difficult to understand and practice all of these values, which are permanent and indestructible. We can give only what we have. We can give peace only if our hearts are filled with peace. We can love others only if we love

and accept ourselves. We can forgive only if we forgive ourselves. Forgiveness is a key issue for the world and societies today, and, possibly, the greatest test of Christianity. As Pope Francis recently said, "I am always struck by an incident in the history of Cardinal Korec. He was a Jesuit Cardinal, persecuted by the regime, imprisoned, and sentenced to forced labour until he fell ill. When he came to Rome for the Jubilee of the Year 2000, he went to the catacombs and lit a candle for his persecutors, imploring mercy for them. This is the Gospel!"

Loving our enemies is the pinnacle of the practice of our faith. It is the summit of Eucharistic reverence. It is something we cannot achieve on our own: Christ lifts us up there, next to Himself. We cannot do more for our persecuted brothers and sisters than pray for those who persecute them. This is the Gospel. Let us pray for our enemies! For them "who are most in need of mercy." Let us pray with a brotherly heart, so that a spring may gush forth, cross the threshold and become a sea. So that the desire of Jesus' heart may be fulfilled even more.

Let us forgive without being asked to forgive. We will be able to do so only if we understand that God was incarnate in Christ until Good Friday so that even the most vulnerable person would understand that there is help if they repent, even if they have sinned. That person was the penitent thief. "Today you will be with me in Paradise", says Jesus dying. And the penitent thief, by faith of reason alone, repents, without yet having experienced the joy of resurrection. This is the main responsibility of the family: to give faith to children. That is a learning process too.

Little children quarrel, then reconcile almost instantly, and go on playing. "He who forgives loses nothing, indeed, he gains! He wins because he grows, extending beyond his limits. This growth will manifest later and will help the individual and others. Forgiveness is not a step, but a leap. I want to leap over the danger zone around my neighbour so that I can see him within that brilliant space of light whose existence I assume. I know that turning to him I will have stimulated the good in him, making it manifest. Forgiveness, at all times and in its totality, is an invitation to conquer ourselves. It endows us with the ability to embrace injustice within the depths and silence of our souls, where it ceases to exist. Through this, the transgression will be undone. This is the true meaning of Christ's cross. Annihilating sin through letting it cease in depths of love", says Henri Boulad in his book *Forgiving is like God*.

The family can also teach children that a hostile person does not necessarily intend to harm us, but, quite simply, cannot behave otherwise due to their temperament or upbringing.

Our nature, immanently good and created good, needs to be reinforced in the family. Family members must teach each other how to leave behind the state of superficial awareness, to delve deeper through the power of prayer and quietude.

We may be aware of the fact that forgiving love is within us, but all too often we fail to perceive or realise it. The core of our very being is goodness, that is, Christ himself. We own a “spiritual treasure chest”, so to say, but choose to beg rather than open it.

We thirst for truth and love, like a wanderer in a desert thirsts for water, but we do not realise that source or the spring is within us.

It is the family which serves as a context for the revelation of these secrets. We can leave ordinary awareness behind and reach deeper levels if we teach our children to pray with true inward attention and ongoing awareness. This is a skill that can be mastered in the family, during the evening prayer of all family members.

We teach our children that Jesus made his name so powerful through His obedience to the Father. The result of all this is a primordial trust in God and complete freedom from fear, which will make the family happy, no matter what happens.

We can be witnesses to the kingdom of God only if we have experienced Heaven in ourselves, in our families – even if only for a few moments. If the light, i.e., Jesus Christ himself, shines upon our family, then we can be the light of others. Jesus Christ, for whom we are willing to die.

This is why it's said that if there is nothing in your life that you are willing to die for, then your life is not that precious.

There are realities, values and ideals that stem from our life in this world. Yet there is also Heaven, from where Jesus descends to us and to where he wants to lead us. It is *here* that we can decide to choose Heaven. The time granted to us is like an empty vessel which we must fill with good deeds, sacrifices, generosity, love and faith. And this is what our family teaches us to do, if it tries to follow the footsteps of the Holy Family.

Dr. György János Velkey

Paediatrician, paediatric anaesthesiology and intensive care specialist, health manager. Director General of the Bethesda Children's Hospital of the Reformed Church in Hungary. Awardee of the Officer's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. He has five children.



Recommendation

The job description of a paediatrician does not include the obligation to have children. Nor is it a prerequisite for the director general of a children's hospital to have personal experience of what it means to be a parent. There is certainly no requirement to have five children in addition to medical and managerial responsibilities.

György Velkey is a paediatrician, paediatric anaesthesiologist and intensive care specialist, director general of the Bethesda Children's Hospital and vice-president of the Hungarian Hospital Association, father of five children and proud grandfather. All of these tasks and responsibilities are almost too long to list. Yet it is easy to see how closely linked they are, how logically their different mandates follow on from one another. No doubt, paediatricians choose their profession because they love children, and therefore want to have a family themselves. And when you have your own children, especially five of them, the weight of responsibility for the future is even greater, and this is followed by the responsibility of leadership and advocacy. This is also true in reverse: if you are bringing up five children with your spouse in a loving environment, you will certainly feel more empathy for someone who comes to you with a sick daughter or son. Such a person is more familiar with the worry, the protective love, the vulnerability, the anxiety, the longing for security, the impatience, the acceptance and rejection, the pain, and the loss. In this way, he or she has a deeper insight into the perspective of mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters – in other words families when making decisions about the organisation

of work in a health care institution. At the same time, a paediatrician is familiar with the sacrifice, the on-call roster, the sleeplessness, the difficulty of coping with absence, the sense of the indescribable pain caused by the serious illness or loss of a child, all of which is part and parcel of the work of paediatricians and nurses.

György Velkey is a father, grandfather and leader. At the heart of his healing work is the family with all the attention, presence, respect and love devoted to them. This is how he organises healthcare at Bethesda and how he treats his staff. This is why not only have thousands of children left his institution cured, but their families also take with them the attention and love they receive here. Our respect and thanks!

Katalin Novák

Family-friendly health care

Talking about family friendliness today is a brave and outspoken thing to do because the term and its meaning are not really trendy. Questioning the family is part of the zeitgeist. However, the basic cell of the human community that has been unshaken over the course of history is far more obvious and irreplaceable than passing fashion might suggest. At the boundary of health and disease, the family is particularly important in the course of the disease and in the logistics of care. Health care is more efficient and effective if it focuses on this essential community and builds on its resources.

I suggest that anybody who questions the role and importance of the family spend a few days in a children's ward or hospice. Directly or indirectly, the question of family, its joy or lack of it, its strength or weakness, its influence to make somebody ill or heal them, are vibrantly present around patients at almost every moment. It is professional evidence that a loving and caring family prevents much harm and makes recovery speedier and more effective. As a paediatric anaesthesiologist, I have clearly seen the difference in the risk of complications when children are anxiously awaiting surgery alone or when they are prepared for anaesthesia together with a loving mother.

Family-friendly health care is a notion which, in the "anointed halls of the medical profession", is dismissed by many who suggest that it is a mere slogan in communications to make heavy-duty health care more "sellable". But it is more than that.

The family is a protective factor, because technology and money increasingly muscle in among people in the health system.

On the one hand, modern, innovative health care can produce admirable professional and financial results, but on the other hand, it also alienates and creates resentment in the abandoned person – which undermines its effectiveness. Today, it has become an elementary societal expectation that health care should be freed from vulnerability, time constraints and humiliating communication situations. But besides a family-focused approach to care, supporting the families of health workers at risk of burnout in a sector suffering from staff shortages is also a recognised human resource policy challenge. Multi-shift and on-call working patterns, physical and mental stress can take their toll on spouses, children and parents – so the other leg of family-friendly health care is caring for the families of the staff.

It is no coincidence that in the last decade the medical and nursing professions, the hospital system and families as well as health policy have found their way to family-friendly health care almost simultaneously, reinforcing one another, but following their own logic of pathfinding.

In recent years, professional work in various fields of medicine, primarily in obstetrics, and in neonatal units as well as in infant and childcare institutions, has focused on families. The baby-friendly hospital accreditation system was kept alive through the issue of breastfeeding by the dedicated work of the National Commission for the Promotion of Breastfeeding in the less sympathetic years. Nineteen hospitals and clinics have managed to meet these criteria that are in fact principles of family-friendliness. Blossoming for a few decades, the science of social paediatrics has made paediatricians aware of the importance of the family surrounding the child. The psychosomatic sensibility of modern child health care has deepened this approach and methodology, leading

to a succession of family-friendly initiatives in children's hospitals and clinics around the country.

In 2017, the primary aim of the Hungarian Hospital Association was to improve the working and living conditions of nurses, while at the same time keeping in mind the interests of the patients, and seeking ways to function in a more humane fashion.

Drawing on its experiences acquired in other areas, the Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement has become a partner. This is how the Family-friendly Hospital Department Award was created, and has been won by 52 hospital departments over the past three years. Every year since 2019, a hospital earns the prestigious Family-friendly Hospital Award. In 2021 seven hospitals were among those rewarded through a competitive scheme that invited applicants where family-friendly innovations had been established in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

Our hospital, the Bethesda Children's Hospital of the Reformed Church in Hungary, was the second health care institution in the country to become a family-friendly hospital. Even before that, our burns unit, intensive care, infant, neurology and rehabilitation wards had received the Family-friendly Department Award.

What are we doing for families? Just a few examples: we organise family camps and weekends for children with serious illnesses (e.g. epileptic children, wheelchair-bound children, and children who have suffered severe burns), together with siblings and parents; we provide family pastoral care along with accommodation and board for parents of children who need to stay in hospital for several weeks; we communicate on an ongoing basis in social media and through mainstream print and electronic media to promote health awareness; and we have published our own hospital storybook to acquaint children with staff and care facilities. No less important are the family days open to the children of our staff, the running and rowing races, the hospital school we set up for the children during the pandemic, and the popular day camps that we organise every year. But perhaps even more important is the joint search for flexible forms of employment that are sensitive to family situations.

The Government has conceptualised family-friendly health care in the context of obstetric practice. In its Decision 1059 of 2017 (7 February), the Government states its commitment to creating a family-friendly environment in the healthcare sector. The Decision put forth the idea of a mother- and baby-friendly systems organisation based on the new spirit of obstetric care in Church hospitals. While it contained radically new and family-friendly elements, it was still in keeping with the prevailing spirit of the age and international nomenclature. The furthering of this process has led to a new measure mobilising considerable resources, embodied in Government Decision 1098 of 2018 (19 March), which sets out a firm action plan and "family-friendly" government actions in various fields including health, as well as announcing the restructuring of obstetric and neonatal care. In light of this, the considerable financial and intellectual capital provides hope for a transformation of mindset.

A family-centred approach opens up new perspectives for the entire health sector. Synergic processes are underway in obstetrics and paediatrics, as well as in hospitals and public administration. There is also a huge potential in this area in terms of prevention and treatment of common and widespread diseases: health communication and public health can be more effective if a family-focused action plan is developed. A family-centred approach embraced by the health sector could perhaps also help family members to reach out to each other.

Dr. Péter Tóth-Heyn

Deputy Director of Pediatrics Clinic No. I., Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Diabetology. In 2019, he was awarded the Pro Familiis Prize for his outstanding work in his personal life and in an NGO for families with children suffering from diabetes. He has five children and five grandchildren.



Recommendation

"Your child has diabetes." This is the sentence a family hears every week at Bókay Children's Clinic. Most of them do not know (how would they know?) what this diagnosis means, and they do not even think that their lives will change radically. They feel that something is wrong. They see that their child, who until then has seemed perfectly healthy, is not functioning normally. These parents cannot ask for time to think about the new situation, they cannot say "thank you, I need to go to home now, digest this information and I'll come back when I feel ready for the job". There is absolutely no time for that. They have to learn to measure blood sugar, calculate carbohydrates, give doses of insulin and who knows what else. In the meantime, they must make sure that their child does not see their anguish.

When the family goes home after a week in hospital, most parents feel lost. All of a sudden, even everyday things appear to be complicated. They fear high and low blood sugar levels, the reaction of the nursery or school community, the use of complicated equipment and the occurrence of unexpected situations. They do not know who to rely on, or who to turn to with their questions.

Péter Tóth-Heyn is one of those paediatric diabetologists who will sit down at the bedside of a newly diagnosed diabetic child at the clinic and explain calmly what is wrong. Listening to Péter, little patients and their parents start to feel they can cope with these new challenges. When they go home, they are given the doctor's mobile phone number, so they know they can call him any time if a problem arises.

Professionals at the clinic support NGO initiatives. They dedicate their free time to attending conferences and participating in weekend and evening activities. In the summer, they organise camps for children with diabetes, and work day and night, while also fulfilling their roles as parents and grandparents in their own families.

Katalin Novák

Family – we are built on each other

A Christian friend of ours from a country in the Middle East told us that in his country when grown-up children get married, an extra floor is added to the family house as a home to the young couple and any future children they may have. Although the cohabitation of several generations may not be regarded as a part of the modern way of life, it is nevertheless safe, and not only in financial terms but also in regard to the transmission of values.

For me, the family is like a tree which cannot be considered complete without its roots or branches growing to the sky. The present generation, “our generation” is the link: we follow our ancestors’ footsteps to make sure that our children will reach even higher levels.

The family is a *creative unity* – and both these words have pivotal connotations.

I am perfectly sure that, millennia ago, our ancestors experienced the very same feelings of unexplainable and incomparable strength and momentum which now we call *love*. We know it. We experience its power as it gives us wings and opens up infinite perspectives. Love is a gate to unity and serves creation.

Another mystery, the awesome miracle of a mystical experience I had many times as a doctor and a father, is *the arrival of a new life* into the world. A tiny life which carries all the possibilities of the development of a complete life, and which moves similar energies in us. This is contemplation over the miracle of creation. This is where we can become companions of the Creator.

These deep and formative spiritual experiences constitute the basis of the natural unity of the family. And although they may fade over time, fortunately one can (and must) always return to it when looking for the family roots.

Our children and grandchildren take old family photo albums in their hands with a very special fascination – and we always select photos that represent our deepest shared memories and connections. A family's shared memories are best captured not by glamorous photos of five-star attractions but by recollections of shared moments, holidays, games and celebrations that forge family unity. There is also creation: the creation of a joint memory that can hold us.

It is good and important to go back to memories that shape the family's common consciousness. It is good to call children's attention to these memories to make sure that they realise the significance of family unity.

When I was a child, I used to dream of a warm home full of children. Our family grew out of "nothing", out of our dreams. It came from nothing, and then became everything that was important to us. This is a most tangible manifestation of the miracle of Creation. This very close community of life, which came into existence out of nothing, permeated our lives with such power that in the absence of it we could hardly speak of *our survival in this world*. We want to leave a mark on the world. We want to leave a world behind that is different and better. The best way we can possibly achieve this is through our children's successes and moral victories. The family is the most important setting to *pass on values*, a context where we can see how our children strive for the infinite good, the beautiful and the just. What would exist without this?

When it comes to passing on values, it is worth highlighting some values that no school, no master, no community whatsoever can represent, only the family.

In our family, even though we experienced the greatest harmony, there have been and still are low points, crises and conflicts, just like everywhere else. As a child, I too was terrified to see such situations, until the image of a safe nest appeared before me. The unity and forward-looking

reality of the family conveys the same message to children and adults alike: everything will be alright if we do not let each other go. This is an authentic and constructive experience. I say constructive, because it offers a working model for other human communities, a model that our children take forward in their lives. Through the renunciation of selfishness and putting community interests before our own, we will be able to overcome even the most difficult situations.

Sometimes there was the greatest harmony between our children, but sometimes there was competition and struggle. Yet evening reconciliation always brought peace, shedding light, once again, on the the primary value of family community even against all other perceived grievances. The family is the context for *unconditional acceptance*. Human beings cannot learn it anywhere else.

Our children were very good, in the conventional sense of the word. Still, as in all communities, falsehoods appeared sometimes. Obviously, the family is a place of education and nurture, but in such cases, even more importantly, the setting for learning and practising *mercy*. Where one must be able to say the most important sentence, even after a serious transgression: whatever you have done, my child, you are and will remain my child. This is how the family becomes the medium of experiencing the Love of the Creator.

In our family we like celebrating all the holidays together. These are the occasions when we can give thanks for each other, individually and collectively. That is where, possibly, we can have a most direct experience of the sustaining power of the family. Such celebrations are not easy to find elsewhere. Indeed, the family is *the place for true celebration*. We celebrate our wedding anniversary as our family's birthday, and we try to celebrate it in a dignified manner. It was an unforgettable and uplifting occasion when, on the 25th birthday of our family, we gave thanks for all the gifts we have in the company of 120 friends! Thus the family is not only a place to celebrate, but also a subject of celebration.

It is much easier to preserve and utilise family values and the role of the family as a medium for handing over values when there are families that can share values with each other. It is not necessarily self-evident what we do well and what we do wrong; therefore, the role of communities

bringing families together is an important example to follow for adults and children alike. Isolation is not good. Our community, the Monostor Family Association, has organised several Monostor Family Celebrations over the years, where hundreds of families have come together to celebrate and give thanks.

The safety of a nest, unconditional acceptance, mercy and joyous celebration – these are things we adults may find difficult. Perhaps we did not listen closely enough when we were children. But if a family is able to do all this, then it will work as a magnet for all those who surround it.

The family is a unity of creation:

a tree with deep roots, a context where we create community and create the true self of our spouse, and where we are companions in the creation of our children. Marriage is a unity, community is a unity. It is unique and unrepeatable. And it is a necessity.

Prof. Dr. Zoltán Novák

Paediatrician and paediatric pulmonologist, full professor, awardee of the Korányi Ring. President of the Hungarian Society of Allergology and Clinical Immunology. He has two children and five grandchildren.



Recommendation

Should I write our story too? – I was thinking about this as I received a succession of high-quality writings from the authors invited to contribute to this book. I felt that it would be too much of me to bring our own lives to the reader. At the same time, I also thought that it would add to authenticity if our family were to be included in some form. So I chose the proverbial folktale approach: to bring a gift and not to bring a gift. I asked my father to be the author.

Dad is a paediatrician, so from the very beginning an integral part of his job has been about connecting with and helping families. At the beginning of his career he would also go out to visit sick children, and my brother and I would spend time in a nearby playground while he was seeing a patient. More than forty years ago, Mum and Dad started a private practice, so for as long as I can remember, sick children have been brought to us, and I got used to the fact that everyone in Szeged knew my parents. We had our Christmas on the day when neither Mum nor Dad was on duty, and we would visit the children who were in hospital or the university's teaching clinic. Growing up as the daughter of physician parents also meant learning that our parents were responsible for other children too.

Reading the contributors' personal stories gave me the opportunity to take a look at our own family. I am grateful that we were able to have a close relationship with our four grandparents, that all four of them passed away after serious illnesses with us caring for them at home until the last moment. I am grateful that the union of our parents has

endured for forty-seven years. I am thankful that I have a brother, that I was able to grow up with my four cousins, and that I can be close to my aunts and uncles. I am thankful that our three children have been able to have regular contact with their grandparents, and I am also thankful that we can still experience the tangible reality of family togetherness on a regular basis.

Dad will tell you the rest...

Katalin Novák

The greatest success in my life is my family

In the early days of my career, there were extremely cruel and stupid visiting rules in children's wards in hospitals and clinics for hygiene reasons. Parents were not allowed to enter the ward; they could only communicate with their sick child through a window. Can you imagine how they felt? Families, parents and children separated from each other – children in the ward, adults in the corridor, sobbing, unable to touch each other. How can you explain to a sick child, who is only a few years old, that he can see his mummy and daddy through a glass window, but they cannot go up to him, having left him in a strange world full of tribulations? I decided there and then that if I had the opportunity to do so later, I would break with this rule, as I was convinced that the closeness of family and the power of touching nurture and heal not only the souls of the sick, but their bodies too. My beautiful profession has been linked in many areas to families, to their formation or, unfortunately, sometimes inevitably to their disintegration. I have personally witnessed many times the greatest miracle of all, when as a paediatrician I assisted in the birth of new life and could see the stages of expectation and fulfilment on the faces of parents. A few years ago I experienced the ultimate professional joy that can hardly be surpassed. I received an unexpected phone call from a dad. After introducing himself, he told me that his daughter had been born very premature weighing only 1000 grams and we had struggled to keep her alive. When we discharged her from the hospital, I allegedly told the parents that I would only relax when I found out the child had survived

without any harm when she was 18. Well, now he called to tell me that his daughter had grown into a beautiful 18-year-old young lady, and he would like to invite me to dinner and introduce her to me so that I could "finally relax". This encounter and similar experiences are worth more than any professional recognition. But unfortunately, I have sometimes had to assist in the most painful, essentially inexplicable tragedies, when parents had to bid a final farewell to their sick child. In such cases, I always rushed home to my own little community, our little family, so that I could continue my work, armed with the energy they gave me.

I think I was extremely lucky from the start. My sister and I were brought up in a very close-knit family, in a loving and caring environment. Here is a typical example of the very close relationship I have with her. After the birth of their first child, they had been considering for several years whether to have a second one. She said her decision was mainly

motivated by the fact that she could not deprive her son of the feeling that was so important to her – of having a brother or sister.

Of course, the storms of history have not spared my family. One of my uncles, a lawyer, was beaten to death by agents of the Hungarian secret police in the 1950s, another uncle was imprisoned without trial for political conspiracy, and after being released after five years of internment including time in the death camp in Recsk, known as the Hungarian Gulag, he had to leave the country after the revolution of '56 to escape retribution. My father, who was a judge, was appointed to try political cases after the failure of the revolution, which he refused. He could not keep his job, but he got off lightly, because thanks to his professional reputation he was employed at the County Court in Kecskemét. For nearly ten years he commuted every day between Szeged and Kecskemét, riding the train four or five hours per day. So I often met him only at weekends, because when he left early in the morning I was still asleep, and when he got home by the evening train I was already asleep. Whenever I got a bad grade or a teacher's warning at school I had to leave my report book on his bedside table. (When we next met after this he had long forgotten the whole thing, so he never told me off for this.) Of course, life brought lots of funny experiences too. When I was preparing for my first communion,

my parents wanted me to wear a little white suit for this important occasion, which of course was not available anywhere. The president of the county court, a devout communist and staunch atheist, ran around Budapest in the court car to get me the suit for my first communion.

My mother, herself a lawyer and a highly erudite and versatile person, was always the family's cohesive force, whose company and closeness everyone longed for. And I don't just mean our small, close-knit family, but also the cousins, uncles, aunts, distant relatives and later grandchildren, who gathered around her, listening to her family anecdotes or enjoying her stories and piano playing. I thank the Lord my own children had the chance to enjoy her colourful personality and charisma, and they are now trying to step into her shoes and hold the extended family together. My daughter in particular has become an adept disciple. It is not uncommon that they have 30 or 40 people at their house to celebrate a family event, a birthday or a name day, or just to have a garden party, a barbecue or a chat. In short: to have a family get-together. I am infinitely grateful to fate that my daughter and son have enjoyed a very close relationship with all four grandparents, each of whom gave them so much. Unfortunately, of my four grandparents, I only had a really close relationship with one grandmother and never knew or was too young to remember the others. But I was fortunate to spend the summer holidays at Mamácska's, as my Grandma was known not only to us, her children and grandchildren, but to almost all of Csongrád County. I had complete freedom every summer, except for the River Tisza, which my grandmother, who could not swim, had designated as a forbidden zone.

Talking about family gatherings, I must mention the great Christmases we had together, accompanied by a lot of singing, laughing, and of course, sometimes sadness and "wandering". The beginning is perhaps easy to understand, but "wandering" needs explanation. It was our custom on Christmas Eve to wander from place to place in the family, usually four or five places, and see how Little Jesus would arrive at each place. After the carol singing, when we heard the bell ring from the locked room – thanks to crafty fathers – the youngest always went in first and the rest of us, filing in, were delighted to see the Christmas tree, of different sizes and decorated in different ways, but all shining and sparkling, with presents

underneath. Everywhere, the host family gave presents to everyone, often just token presents of course, focusing mainly on the children, and then we wandered on to the next place. The big, communal Christmas dinner was where the youngest child was. I was delighted when, a few years ago, my godson, a father of four, called me and said, "You know, it's a lovely Christmas with my wife and children, but I always miss the old, big Christmases."

I am often asked what I consider to be the greatest success in my life. I have a cliché answer to that, but I can never say anything else: my family. My wife and our two wonderful children. My wife, with whom we started out as college sweethearts and have been together for over 50 years, and I were recently talking about how trouble-free our children have always been. Of course, time probably embellishes everything and makes us forget their childhood pranks, but looking back, I know that to this day we have always been proud of both of them. They have a really close bond. When my son was trying to get a place of his own in Budapest, one of the most important criteria was to be close to his sister. Both of them are successful in their professions, they have beautiful families and have given us fantastic grandchildren. At the same time, they do a lot for families. As a gynaecologist and a tumour surgeon, my son's work mainly involves helping families not to have to break up prematurely and lose the mother. My daughter? Allow me to say that what she does for families is not for me, an admittedly biased father, but rather for you to decide.



ARTS

Erika Miklósa

Ferenc Rófusz

Attila Vidnyánszky

Zsuzsanna Vincze Zsuráfszky and Zoltán Zsuráfszky

János Balázs

Ági Szalóki

Gergő Oláh

Katalin Kokas and Barnabás Kelemen



Erika Miklósa

Kossuth Prize, Ferenc Liszt Prize
and Prima Primissima Prize winner
coloratura soprano,
member of the Company of Immortals.
She and her husband have one child.



Recommendation

Our friends waited years for their baby to arrive. We'd had all of our three children, but they were still waiting for a miracle. After a lot of struggles and unsuccessful IVF treatment, they decided to adopt a child. After years of careful consideration and the necessary paperwork, years of waiting came again, until one day their phone rang: a baby had been born, and they were invited to see her. I was attending a meeting when my friend called. I felt it was an important call, so I left the meeting and picked my phone up. Hearing the news, I wept for joy with my friend. The seemingly endless years of waiting was over, and the next day we went to a shop to get the essentials. This was eight years ago. Since then, they have adopted another child, and we give thanks every day for the miracle brought by these two children into our lives.

In the past people tended to keep the fact of adoption secret. In most cases, even the adopted child did not know that they were not being brought up by their biological parents. Then attitudes changed. Now we are aware of the potential damage inflicted by being lied to while growing up and of the importance of the trust the parents show from the very beginning when they relate a child's story honestly. I am sure many of you are familiar with Marie-Claude Monchaux's book *Bébé année zéro*, a children's book about how a child is conceived and born. When I was a child, it was one of my favourite books, I think I must have read it a thousand times. The author later wrote another book, *Aurélien, je suis un enfant adopté*, which tells the story from the perspective of an adopted little girl. Well worth a read!

Erika Miklósa is a famous opera singer and a wonderful person. Her direct, kind and selfless personality makes her very likeable. On stage, she is a diva. But in everyday life she is as natural as any of us: she works hard and embraces difficult causes, organises and helps wherever she can. She is a true community builder, who is able to remain in the background but also to step forward when needed. She is a founding member of the Women for Hungary Club and one of the instructors of the STIPI scholarship programme. She takes up leading roles in fights for many good causes. She is the mother of an adopted daughter, Bibi. She talks about their story with the utmost naturalness and openness, and, at the same time, protects Bibi. Erika gives hope to those who are about to adopt, people who have been waiting for a child for a long time. I heartily recommend her piece of writing for reading.

Katalin Novák

“Here is the family. Together. A real cause for celebration.”

My husband and I have recently realised that you will really only know what you have received from your parents when you have children of your own. Perhaps this is a natural recognition of inherited situations, passed down from generation to generation without even being noticed. But for us a very special thing happened only recently. The protagonist of the story is our little girl, Bibi, who started school in the autumn. I was away from home, because we were filming the fourth series of the Hungarian cultural television series *Partitúra*. My husband told me later, very moved, what was going on at home at the time. It was just the two of them, my husband and Bibi at home. It was Saturday. Bibi got up in the morning and, without asking a single question, started to perform my weekend routine at home. She was very active, did a little cleaning, made breakfast and then lunch for her daddy. She took the butter out of the fridge, and spread it on the rice puffs she found in the kitchen. Poured water into a glass, and when it was time to eat, she took the snacks to her dad on her little tray. She took over my caring role. She saw what I did and took note.

She wanted to express her love so she did. At the age of six, she can think in the context of the family. Amazing.

When my husband told me the story, I could not help crying, also because I felt so sad that I could no longer tell my father how well they had done everything, that I could no longer reassure him. Bibi's caring behaviour included my dad and my mum as well – and, fortunately, I can still thank my mum for all this.

I believe that the essence of the family is a never-ending cycle where, if everything goes well, you can pass on what you have received from your parents and siblings. And this strong bond is not necessarily one of blood. My maternal grandmother was a foster parent, not a professional, but she did it as charity; her caring stemmed from her faith. She wanted to adopt the world, and she had the greatest patience in the world. She helped those parents in the neighbourhood who could not take care of their own children because they were working so hard. So my grandmother raised a lot of children, and they grew up happy. When new children arrived, she used to say, "Look, our family is growing."

Raising a child is a miracle. It makes human existence easy and ethereal. We adopted Biborka when she was born, and never made a secret of it. We told Bibi, "We adopted you and will love you forever." And now she has started to say, "Mum, Dad, I adopted you and will love you forever!"

It is this joy, happiness, attention, sincerity, this empathy of the child and the adult, this unconditional and unbiased love and affection that truly forms the interpersonal links into a family.

This is my mantra. Family members never give up on each other. They always offer refuge, support and mutual protection. If I have a problem, it is enough to return home, and look at my husband's smile and at Bibi's little mischiefs, and the tension is gone.

Without a home, everything is fragmented. One day Bibi, seeing that something was bothering me, suddenly said, "Mum, I'm with you!" She had no idea of what my problem was, but she did feel there was something. An infinite calm came over me.

For me, living in a family is an uplifting feeling. It is perfect, because we are together.

Our family is always expanding as new relationships are being formed, and the newcomers take over our rituals and customs. The cycle I was talking about is kept in motion, among other things, by the continuation of family traditions. As I write, I have vivid recollections of the atmosphere of Sunday lunches from my childhood and from my rebellious adolescence (yes, I did rebel, like all teenagers, and through my rebellion my parents taught me how to make compromises). My mother used to bake a cake for lunch every Sunday. It was so natural that for a long time I did not even ask why we were having cake even when nobody had a birthday. Then, when I was a bit older, I asked. And she said, “Here is the family. Together. This is something to celebrate.” Nowadays, the family gatherings are often held in our house. My sister Timi told me once, “You are like Mama. You love harmony and you love sharing it with others. It is time that you brought the family together.” So now “Cake Sundays” are held in our house. The term itself has become a symbol, although sometimes I prepare something else. But I promise, I will start making cakes soon.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation was hard for us, just like for other families. I had to go without my mum’s hugs for a long time. When there was a small gap between the waves of the epidemic and the restrictions were lifted, she was the first person I visited. Just one hug from her was enough to set my whole unbalanced world right. I will carry that hug on, and then Bibi will carry it on, I am sure of it.

And just as a mother can be her daughter’s best friend, or a father his son’s best friend, so a friend can be family. We have many such friends. Because friendship implies the same unselfishness as “being family” does. Both stem from the same deepest feeling: the need for each other. We care about each other. When a problem arises, we look for solutions. We do not close anything off in our personality, we are completely open to each other. Family and friends are alike, and almost identical inasmuch that their absence fills me with the deepest sense of lacking.

Ferenc Rófusz

Kossuth Prize winning animator,
holder of the title Artist of the Nation.
He won Hungary's first Academy Award in 1981,
in the Best Animated Short Film category
with this film *The Fly*.
He has two sons.



Recommendation

I never thought I would ever have the opportunity to hold an Oscar statuette in my hand. Every year, I watch the Oscar nominations and the selection of the winners with excitement (which is somewhat diminishing over time). I try to watch the films that get the highest recognition, and keep track of the winning actors and actresses. I am proud when a Hungarian film is nominated.

Ferenc Rófusz, the creator of the first Academy Award winning Hungarian film, *The Fly*, relates with resignation that he heard about the award from Radio Free Europe. An officer of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was delegated to the award ceremony, who even gave a speech of thanks, only to have the statuette he was given illegally confiscated by the police in his hotel room on the same evening. Forty years have passed since then, Communism has fallen in Hungary. Now it is the committee that decides on the Awards that increasingly restricts the freedom of creators, imposing ever new conditions for nomination.

Ferenc has not succumbed to the Zeitgeist. Over and over again he has demonstrated that he can wait a long time for the right moment. The script for his film *Gravity* was written ten years before the release of the film. The completion of his last animated masterpiece, *The Last Supper*, took forty years. It is a symptom of the Zeitgeist, that several festivals rejected the film for the choice of subject matter – in 2019. But *The Last Supper* then won the Best Animated Film award at the International Christian Film Festival in Argentina, and in Hungary, and as decided by the industry, the Hungarian Film Award 2020 for the Best Animated Film.

I heartily recommend it for you to watch.

Ferenc Rófusz lived in Canada from 1988 until 2001, when he moved back home. He has been living and working in Hungary ever since. Although I never thought I would ever have the opportunity to hold an Oscar statuette in my hand, I could do so thanks to Ferenc. And now I have the opportunity to get to know him and make it possible for you to learn something about his family history with his piece of writing below.

Katalin Novák

My family

During the decade of the Second World War, a total of four sons were born into the Rófusz family, one every two years. It was a difficult time, but my mother, Mutti, forged us into a close-knit family based on love.

In the years after the war we had a happy childhood, regardless of the fact that the family was displaced. Our happiness was mainly the work of our mother: a strong, strict, but wonderful woman who put family first. She taught us everything, including tasks traditionally performed by women (washing and ironing clothes, sewing, cooking), so we were never embarrassed when we had to do housework. She also made sure that our masculine feelings were never hurt. Later, when we were grown up, women were particularly impressed, because our shoes were always shining. We could always count on my mother for advice on courtship. We could always rely on her in anything.

As children, we did a lot of sport, we were outdoors all day. I still do not understand how our mother was able to feed so many hungry people – and with exquisite food that I still crave. She had an incredible imagination for cooking. The five (sometimes six, because we have a nephew) men were always well fed. Sometimes she made a hundred dumplings, while having a job to go to. She had an incredible amount of energy.

She went to a school run by the Congregation of Jesus and, like many people who had religious upbringing, she had amazing abilities. The almost 100 years she lived were far from being without tragedies, or deprivations; the difficulties she had to face are impossible to count. I am sure it was her

faith that gave her optimism and strength, and it was positive thinking that helped her overcome even those problems which seemed insurmountable.

In the Zugliget church of Budapest, we all attended masses as altar boys. We did not think about it as a duty; I have only good memories of that time. Even today, I remember the fragrances, the sounds and the silence in the church – a place where you can always think about where you are in your life at a given moment...

Now there are only two of us: my younger brother and I, but we can still always count on each other. We often reminisce about old family memories. My wife and I often ask him how Mutti used to make a meal that we would like to reproduce, because I am still looking for those flavours, I miss them.

I have two sons and I think I have managed to pass on to them some of the values that I learned from my parents. My sons live in Canada. The distance is huge, but it reassures me to see that they are very good brothers who always support each other in times of need. That is a strong bond that will stay with them throughout their lives. For me, the greatest gift is that they both call me regularly. They are genuinely interested in what I have to say about their work and their plans, and they are happy to learn about my work and our daily life.

For me, these family ties and attention are a greater recognition than the Academy Award.

Obviously, an Oscar is the highest, the most prestigious and significant award in my profession, but as a father I think that the real positive feedback is that for my sons, who are over forty now, my opinion still counts.

My younger son and his wife will become parents this year. I am sure that they too will pass on to their child the importance of and need for family cohesion. My son's wife says sometimes that, for her, it is amazing to see from time to time how much her husband has learned from his father.

Today, it is very difficult to be a parent. Although parents are facing different problems now, my advice remains the same: try and pass on to your children as much as possible of the cultural traditions of the family and of the home country. Those who fail to preserve and cultivate traditions, will lose something precious. It is like love: the more love you have, the richer your life will be.

Attila Vidnyánszky

Stage and film director from Transcarpathia, winner of the Kossuth Prize and the Mari Jászai Prize.

Since 2013 he has been the director of the National Theatre, and since August 2020, the president of the Board of Trustees of the foundation operating the University of Theatre and Film Arts.

He was awarded the Hungarian Silver Cross of Merit in 2005. He is married and has six children.



Recommendation

My uncle is an actor, I would even say an acting giant, a two-time Kossuth Prize winner, an Actor of the Nation, and one of the most talented people I know, so theatre was a natural part of our lives from childhood. We went to every opening night in Szeged including the open-air theatre, I felt at home in this environment. When I moved to Budapest as a university student, I was tremendously excited by the wide range of theatres, and I was surprised to see so many people in ordinary street clothes at a performance. It is mainly thanks to my actor cousin that I continue to be a regular theatregoer.

Gradually, I came to understand the differences and, in many cases, the serious conflicts between actors and institutions of cultural life. As cabinet chief to Minister Zoltán Balog for two years, I also gained a close insight into cultural governance. It was then that I met Attila Vidnyánszky, whose talent only began to be questioned when he became director general of the National Theatre. *De gustibus non est disputandum* – let the reader decide for themselves how they evaluate his art.

Despite its brevity, the following text reveals a lot about who Attila Vidnyánszky really is. His values, his worldview, his Hungarianness, all come through in his productions, but now he shares them with us through his own story.

Someone once asked me indignantly, "How is it that this man comes here from Ukraine and wants to create a national theatre for us? He should have stayed there, among his own people, the Ukrainians!" I am a peaceful woman and I kept calm, but I hope this indignant person will

get hold of this book, read Attila's writing and feel ashamed – perhaps even for those who have still not understood the unending pain of the Trianon Peace Treaty and have not experienced the healing sensation of national belonging.

Katalin Novák

In a family – we are staying!

If we surface from the waves of everyday toil, take a deep breath and look at our times with generous and serene eyes, we may be able to turn to our own advantage the otherwise saddening phenomenon of a (pre) dominant worldview questioning every custom and norm that is held by nature and tradition in the permanent cultural revolution of our times. Nothing remains untouched. We have become accustomed to many people mocking the Holy Family, but until now we have chalked it up to the anticlericalism of the communist regime, a long shadow of the ideological dangers of the 20th century. Progressive spirits may have been happy to mock the Holy Family for the sake of some forgettable artistic or public gesture, but with the emptiness of this irony they are now attacking the sanctity of the family. What are they mocking? What is sacred? What does family mean? Simone Weil's beautiful work *What is Personal and What is Sacred* is right. Questions about the sacred can only be answered in a personal way.

I grew up in the Transcarpathian village of Nagymuzsaly, today's Muzhiyeve, where my late father and mother brought us boys up. As young children, we were not too keenly aware of the Soviet dictatorship, although something of that stifling atmosphere still seeped through the walls of our home. But even with the cautionary parental gestures we were able to experience, for example, my mother's drive and daring when she was organising a Nativity play on the fringes of the communist superpower. We also experienced the freedom of the Bereg countryside: endless football matches, swimming in summer, adventures in the fields, and after a successful school year, the well-earned Freedom (with a capital F) of children. But of course there was always a sense of absence: we knew that our little family was part of a big family. And we were separated

from our relatives by imperial borders. One branch of the family had immigrated to America; my poor grandmother saw her brother last when he was sixteen. After that she could only follow his life from photographs. No wonder she would often say that we were cursed.

The other part of the family moved to Eger, and our branch moved to Transcarpathia as Szekler newcomers. If we had moved from the Bereg region to the mother country, we would have had to leave my granddad behind in Ungvár (Uzhhorod). The impossibility of family reunification is a deep and fundamental feeling; our love for each other is experienced in a state of disunity. Some of our ancestors were forced by Trianon into Ukraine and others into the motherland, as far as Szombathely, a remote corner of what remained of Hungary. Every two years we received permission from the Soviet authorities to cross the border and visit our relatives in Vas County. It is not a short journey even today (the requisite waiting at the border in Záhony, for example, has not got much shorter since then), but as a child the Beregszász (Berehovo)–Szombathely distance was epic. As we bumped all the way across Hungary in our Lada, our mother cried all the way home. This is what I learned from my mother:

the family is this tear-soaked love that crosses countries and borders.

And of course a few stolen hours in the Fun Fair in Pest halfway back to the Soviet Union, for our sake, to please the children.

Apart from the beautiful family memories, I got a lot from these childhood pictures. Take these: My mother's Nativity group, which was the source of inspiration for Illyés Gyula Hungarian National Theatre established later in Beregszász. When I was a theatre director in Transcarpathia, then in Debrecen, and from 2013 in Budapest, I was accompanied by several actors who had featured in the old Nativity plays as children. We grew up together. What started as a folk play decades ago is now a National Theatre production. When I think about it, I wonder if I would be leading the nation's theatre without my family.

Then there is the love of freedom. Once we had done our chores as children, we were let loose in the fields and free to run wild. Then we grew up, and what do I experience? An unquenchable desire for freedom.

I did not follow the director's practice of interfering with the rehearsal of a guest director by virtue of my managerial authority at any of the theatres I was head of. The Madách International Theatre Festival is a celebration of free artistic expression and diversity, where the most varied aesthetic approaches are presented. Even our most ardent critics do not doubt this. My own directing is based on freethinking. It stems from the belief that the theatre is a playground, where the director and the actors can enjoy the freedom of childhood, if they take their work seriously. I have never allowed anyone to interfere with my directing: not out of hubris, but out of respect for freedom – which, in retrospect, is also a family legacy.

Finally, one aspect of Hungarian destiny is always inevitable: history. In the 20th century, our family was torn apart by wars, by Trianon, by communist rule. Since the fall of communism, it has been tested not by force of arms, but by the compulsion to speak in a politically correct language, i.e. by the restriction of free speech, by the proliferation of irony, by questioning the ways of life and roles that have ensured our survival for thousands of years: the zeitgeist has turned against the family. Outdated, substitutable, non-viable – these are the labels that have been attached to it recently. No doubt, it is difficult to live in a family. There are many challenges, trials and tribulations, and our human frailty makes our life together difficult. Yet we stick to this form of community because we find it keeps us together and strengthens us. My wife and I are bringing up our children in such a way that we can pass on to them the values we have learned from our parents and grandparents through our personal example. We trust that this will also keep and strengthen them.

The zeitgeist encourages us, or rather forces us, not to stick to our old concepts, but to move our whole thinking to an exciting and unknown place. Let us forget our traditional ideas of the family. There are many divorces, they say gloating. But the implication is not that the institution of marriage is in crisis – when in fact it is our age that is in crisis. We stay with marriage, we stay with the family. The rhetoric is so familiar.

I was perhaps no coincidence that I included the chorus of one of Tamás Cseh's most famous songs I particularly like in our performance of *Rocco and His Brothers*. The play is the story of a family and the song *Budapest* goes: "Tell me where we will live. / Will we stay here or will we move on?"

History has forced us to move, and the spirit of the times encourages us to leave our traditional ways of life behind. Let us not remain in the family model of our ancestors. After all, if we are not stuck in a rut, we can live with the promise of a vibrant, colourful and fun life. Eternal promise. However, to go back to Simone Weil, I prefer to think that it is not the promise but the reality that is the ground on which we should plant our feet. What we need is not an infinite extension of our desires, but "to learn to desire what is ours". The family is ours.

Lastly, I would like to explain what I mean by permanence. Maybe it is my family's Szekler roots that remind me of this example, but I see it as symbolic. In Gyergyószentmiklós (today's Gheorgheni in Romania), in Freedom Square, there is a very beautiful carved grave marker with the inscription: *We are staying!* A family residence to my liking: we will stay in Freedom Square!

Zsuzsanna Vincze Zsuráfszky and Zoltán Zsuráfszky

Zoltán Zsuráfszky is a Kossuth Prize winning dancer and choreographer, managing director of Honvéd Ensemble, and member for life of the Company of Immortals. His wife, Zsuzsanna Vincze Zsuráfszky is a Gyula Harangozó Prize awardee, Meritorious Artist of Hungary, and the artistic director of the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble. Besides being a scriptwriter, dramaturg and choreographer, she is also active as a costume designer. They have four children.



Recommendation

My parents were always fascinated by folk dancers. They loved the way the girls dressed, the tightly braided hair with ribbons, the straight posture, the dancing and singing so full of the joy of life. They admired the dashing boys as they clicked the heels of their boots or danced the lads' dance. So when I was a little girl, they enrolled me in folk dancing and I went dutifully, but I had neither drive nor talent. Fortunately, after a personal visit to the folk dance class, they also realised that I was not cut out to be a dancer. So I joined the ranks of spectators to cheer along with the enthusiastic fans, and only my two tightly braided pigtails remained for long.

When I watch folk dancers perform at the inauguration of a kindergarten or a city celebration, a conference or cultural programme, I feel reassured that there is a continuous supply of new talent, that the children's enthusiasm is still unbroken, and I feel proud of the richness of our mother tongue, the playfulness and beauty of our folk culture, and the eye-catching folk costumes.

I hold Zoltán Zsuráfszky and his wife, Zsuzsa Vincze, in the highest esteem for the high quality of their artistic work in leading Honvéd, the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble. Their performances radiate national pride, respect for Hungarian history and culture, humility for the art of dance, and vitality. Anyone who has seen the two of them dance together

will have understood something of what it means to be a creative couple. Zsuzsika and Zsura will leave a legacy not only through the four children they have brought up together but also through the many young dancers with whom they have enriched us.

The writing in this book is a personal confession about dance, family and marriage. It also reveals that the authors fought for each other and for their love, which has spanned forty years.

Katalin Novák

Side by side 24 hours a day

It is thought provoking that we are at a time in our history when we need to raise awareness of the importance of family and family support. What for us is an obvious and irreplaceable way of life, nowadays means something different to almost everyone. It seems that years and experience are in vain, and it is difficult to convince those who regard the “institution” of marriage or the creation of a family, this small community of love that is indispensable to us, through the lens of bad memories or with contrary convictions. Of course, we are neither hypocrites nor naïve, and we know that not everyone will find the “right one”. It may take luck, but one thing is certainly needed for this particular “miracle”: the grace of God. We often feel that we can never be thankful enough for our lives.

We brought up four children, we had our difficulties and probably made a lot of mistakes, but we can say from the depths of our hearts that we wanted the best for them and for our spouse, and we never wavered in our love for each other. Now that we have watched our children grow up and start families, we are at peace because they have all become decent, honest people, a joy to watch bring up their own children.

It has been almost four decades since we found each other (true, it is the second relationship for both of us), but we made a vow then and there, before God, that “in sickness and in health...” and we still live by that vow today. It is not as difficult as we might have imagined when we were young, or as some young people might think today. Of course

in harmonious coexistence the same interests play an important role; in our case, our irresistible desire to learn about folk culture from a young age, and our love of folk dance and folk music. This does not mean that we sing Transylvanian folk songs together all the time, but that we accept and understand each other's "passion" for our wonderful culture. This acceptance, or agreement, is also there when, for example, one of us takes a stand on a serious moral issue; there is never any dispute between us. These things may seem small, they may even seem ridiculous to many, but life is made up of all these little things. It can be very difficult to live with someone of a completely different persuasion – it can poison a relationship.

It so happens that our work, professional lives and private lives have marched hand in hand for decades. Those who do not know us often wonder how we "put up with each other" twenty-four hours a day. On the one hand, it is natural for us, a "tried and tested" way to work together effectively as artists; and on the other hand (and perhaps this gives confidence to those young people who do not believe in the success of long cohabitation), we are happy to say that after all this time, it is not necessarily the case that you get tired of each other. Humour and of course a never-ending enthusiasm for each other's achievements and talents play a large and positive part in this. A family is based on listening to each other, even if it means arguing and fighting; but we believe that taking an interest in each other's lives is a must.

Wise old men say that marriage is like the Hungarian csárdás dance:

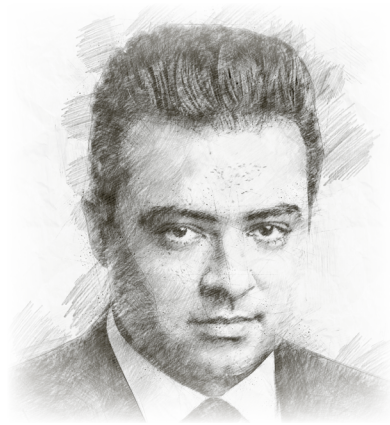
it needs a strong and determined man to lead the dance, but just as important is the woman, who "gives herself" and provides support so that the man can "soar" alongside her, but it is together that they decide on every movement, and she also "fulfils herself" as an equal partner. That is what makes their dance so beautiful.

Over the years we have worked with many young people in the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble; we have had many students over the decades, and we know and feel that a personal example can mean a lot to them. We have recently been talking to our young dancers who are about to get

married, and it was very good to hear them say that they too would like to do something similar, that our marriage is an example for them to follow, and that it might give them the belief that it is a possible and worthwhile way for their future.

János Balázs

Kossuth Prize and Ferenc Liszt Prize
winning concert pianist, associate professor
of Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music.
Meritorious Artist of Hungary.
He has one daughter.



Recommendation

My brother, who is blessed with absolute pitch, was a gifted piano player. For me as a child, this meant listening to him practising for hours every day in the room we shared, and a large part of that practice was scales. So by the time he got to the actual pieces, I had pretty much lost interest. However, hearing music on a daily basis planted a deep-rooted fascination with piano playing in me.

I first heard János Balázs play at an event abroad. It is typical of his concerts that when the listener feels that the experience cannot be enhanced any further, he adds something extra. This time again he was a resounding success, and I was honoured to meet him in person after his performance. A few years have passed since then; Jancsi and I have become friends, and he has often delighted me with his virtuoso playing. But his outstanding talent is just one of his assets. Jancsi is proud of his Roma origin, and despite becoming our youngest Kossuth Prize winner, he has not forgotten the difficult background he came from. He helps talented young people, teaches in the Snétberger Programme, he is on the panel of judges in the Hungarian Television Company's talent spotting programme *Virtuózok (Virtuosos)*, has been an instructor in the Stipendium Peregrinum Scholarship Programme STIPI, and knows what a blessing it is to have a mentor.

When Jancsi and I were discussing the future prospects of a Roma girl we both knew, who came from a very poor family, and I complained that she was rather apathetic, Jancsi replied, "You know, the thing is, when you

are a kid and you don't know if you will have enough to eat the next day, apathy tends to get to you..."

János and his wife Szilvi became parents a few months ago, so their everyday life – besides music – is about taking care of their new child. And I know how important it is for them for Szofi to grow up safe and loved.

Katalin Novák

Love encapsulated

For a performing artist, whose life is a series of constant changes and journeys, the warmth of home, the peace, the stability and unconditional love of the family hearth are priceless treasures. A stable point, the origin from which we start and to which we return. We find sustenance from it, we do what we must for it and what our hearts and our God-given gift dictates. The family where mother, father and children live as one can bring joy, happiness and of course sorrow and loss every day. The natural process of human existence is one of development and experience – and the same can be said of the family unit, since as time goes on, needs and life rhythms change, but the roles played in the family form a system, provide security and create a peaceful, intimate and ideal state for everyone. We must work for it every day, and sometimes this requires sacrifices, but I feel that it does worth it if it means that we lay the foundations for peace of mind, the future and the family.

I grew up in a big family, and although at the time I did not know what a treasure it was, I can now really appreciate the environment I was brought up in. It gave me a rock-solid set of values, a sense of security, care, belonging and responsibility. Visits from family members were a daily event, time spent together at the long table on holidays, talks well into the night, delicious meals made by my grandmother, and of course the joy of playing music together as a family.

We experience and learn many things in our lives, but childhood experiences, and family environment cannot be replaced, they are burned into our minds and influence us throughout our lives. The cure for all difficulties is to know that whatever happens, your family will support you.

The need to preserve and pass on this idea has perhaps never been greater today, at an age when the individual and self-reliance are increasingly at the forefront. It is a danger brought on by global trends and fads that people may forget true values, ancient and biological standards, the absence of which poses an unforeseeable threat to future societies at large as well as to our own families.

For me, this year has brought the greatest miracle of my life, as God blessed us with our first child. Since the arrival of our baby girl, we have been grateful for every minute we have together. I have often imagined in my mind what this feeling would be like, but the human imagination, no matter how powerful, cannot predict this feeling and state. Love is encapsulated in a baby. In today's fast-paced world, we are constantly on the go and are almost oblivious to what is happening around us; but the arrival of a child, though not slowing down these processes, but gives meaning to all the slog and work.

All the pain, difficulties and stress are forgotten when we see the smile, happiness and health of our child.

Of course, the moment when a couple becomes a real family also affects our thinking. We start to think about the kind of world we will leave behind, the principles we follow in raising our child so that our values are not compromised, and at the same time our child can be integrated into society. For me, as in my art, the choices guided by sincerity, love, faith and goodwill have always proved to be the right and valuable ones in the long run. The new songs of new times may often suggest otherwise, because the world is going this way or that, but the quest for eternity will neutralise any harmful phenomena that appear glamorous at first glance, and leave harmony and happiness in its wake. All these feelings, thoughts and principles are what my wife and I wish to pass on to our children, in the knowledge that our grandchildren and descendants will also share a real, human, wise and forward-looking legacy.

Ági Szalóki

Singer and songwriter, awardee of the Ferenc Liszt Prize, Artisjus Prize and Fonogram Prize. In 2020, she received the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. Her first child was born in 2021, after a long wait.



Recommendation

When our children were young, on long car journeys we used to distract them by listening to a CD over and over again. We sang the songs together, and they seemed to calm down. We quickly learnt to tell commercial, "cheesy" children's songs and quality music apart, and we were grateful to the artists who produced children's albums of musically and linguistically high-quality pieces.

Singer Ági Szalóki respects Hungary's traditions, keeps an eye on quality and sings from her heart. Her concerts are popular with young and old alike. Ági is an artist interested in public life. She embraces and represents the causes of her small and extended communities, stands up for justice and refuses to be silenced. She is willing to reveal problems, but also to share her happiness. She has the courage and ability to appreciate what has been given to her.

In the difficult months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ági took on community duties: during the enforced break from performing, she read out fairy tales and gave singing lessons online. It was during that period that her son, Áron, was conceived. She made no secret of the fact that at the age of 41 she conceived her child in an assisted reproduction programme, and that her doctors had warned her that, due to her age, the chances were slim.

Ági Szalóki has been working with children as a musician for 20 years. Now she can sing to her son as well. She passes on to him the family stories she heard as a child from her parents and grandparents.

Katalin Novák

Reflections on the family and nation

When I think of the family, a childhood memory comes to my mind. My brother and I are curled up next to my paternal grandmother. She is taking old photos out of a paper box, showing us who is who and telling us family stories.

We are familiar with the women in headscarves, the men with strong hands and big moustaches, the chubby babies, the merry company on a picnic, the grinning teenagers, the elegant ladies and the gentlemen smoking pipes, the happy young couple at the church gate and the wedding guests from the black and white photos. Still, we love listening to their stories, like fairy tales, again and again. They are our relatives: our father, mother, grandmothers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, great-grandmothers and great-great-grandmothers. Their stories build and teach something; they offer a model and bond us to a close community. We belong to the same family, we belong together. They have carried us within themselves, we are of them, and we carry them in our faces, gestures, memories, actions, behaviour, reactions, value choices and our general attitude to life. Hungarian poet Attila József writes in his poem *By the Danube*:

"I am he who has gazed a hundred thousand years

On that which he now sees for the first time.

One moment, and fulfilled all time appears

In a hundred thousand forbears' eyes and mine.

I see what they could not because they must

Drag hoes, kill and embrace, for this enrolled,

And they, who have descended into dust

See what I do not, if the truth be told.

We know each other as sorrow and delight.

I, in the past, they in the present live.

They hold the pencil in the poem I write.

I feel them and evoke what they now give."

Translated by John Székely

I love our family stories. The more I listen to them, and the more stories I know, the stronger my attachment is to the family.

*I see with the eyes of my ancestors; I feel with their hearts.
I honour their blood, sweat, suffering and sacrifices.*

I am lucky because in my family I have things and people to love. I have a lot to learn from them; they are my role models in many ways. I am proud of my roots. This is healthy pride and unconditional love for my family members even if I do not follow them in everything. I was born into a caring, actively loving family. I cannot be grateful enough, because I know that not everyone is so lucky... But it is not just my family that I am attached to so much. The respect and gratitude I feel for my ancestors is extended to the known and unknown great persons of the Hungarian nation. I feel respect and gratitude for the Hungarians who, for a millennium, have cultivated and defended the Hungarian land: simple peasants, poor manual labourers, leaders governing the nation with responsibility and wisdom, and those noble minds who lived in harmony with the message that Hungarian poet Ferenc Kölcsey expressed in his poem *Huszt*:

*"Compare the present with the distant future carefully;
Act, create, increase: and your homeland will prosper!"*

Translation by Watson Kirkconnell and Ádám Makkai

I am attached to my family and to my larger family: my nation. I deeply appreciate its thousand-year-long efforts, will to live and faith. I am attached to this great family, with all its faults, misfortunes and bad decisions. Even when I criticise it, I do so with the unconditional love of a good parent for a child, a good teacher for a student. Because progress never comes from mocking, belittling, humiliating, or abusing another person. Instead, it calls for active love, compassion and unconditional commitment in the family – and the same holds true for the love of one's country. Still, not every family is based on love...

There are all too many Hungarian families whose members fight all the time: brother turns against brother, son against father, daughter against mother, husband against wife, grandchild against grandparent. So many elderly, sick people are abandoned by their children and grandchildren. So many children are neglected by their parents. So much silence, spite and envy, so many decades or centuries of unresolved and suppressed trauma burden Hungarian families... The twentieth century, full of trauma, only

exacerbated conflicts and tensions in them. The already traumatised Hungarian nation became further fragmented by intimidation. Under Soviet rule, Hungarian politicians did a great deal to loosen family bonds and undermine trust between spouses, siblings, friends and colleagues.

*“Sorrow, grief, bitterness – even brothers turn into enemies.
Even my brother is a stranger, having turned against me.”*

So goes the song from Gyimes, and indeed, in 1956 we were forced to accept that there are Hungarians who are willing to attack their fellow Hungarians. God save the Hungarian nation from them!

Stalin and Khrushchev, Mátyás Rákosi, János Kádár, Ferenc Münnich, Béla Biszku and their comrades were very much aware of the fact that if roots capable of sustaining a community are weak or do not exist at all, then cohesion, healthy confidence and a healthy desire for freedom are replaced by discord and small-mindedness. The Hungarian nation, infiltrated and intimidated by informers and agents, could not breathe freely. No wonder it fell ill. The fall of communism brought along hope, but, by then, many of the victims had already died. Some committed suicide or escaped into alcoholism, or were silenced for good, hiding their immense pain...

I remember when my parents divorced. I was still a child, and I felt as if the whole universe had been shaken. I lost my footing, it was as if I had been torn apart. Knowing that the unity of my parents' love had been broken caused me such a deep pain that it took decades to cope with it.

*“...something hurts that is not there. Someday you will hear
about a painful miracle of life: that someone whose hands and
feet were cut off still feels his ache in his fingers that are not
there any more. When you hear ‘Koložsvár’ and ‘Transylvania’
and ‘the Carpathians’, then you will see what I mean.”*

(Frigyes Karinthy: Letter to my son)

And just as most children are traumatised by their parents' divorce, so the Hungarian people were traumatised in the 20th century by the Treaty of Trianon, the horrors of the two world wars, the Holocaust, the deportation of hundreds of thousands to the Gulag, the Soviet occupation, the confiscation of property, the revolution of 1956, the tortures, the mass

executions and imprisonments, blackmail, the surveillance, intimidation and the inability to act... And the grieving process could not take place. In the communist era, generations of adults were never told that Attila József had written a poem like this:

*"Beautiful, wealthy Kolozsvár, the pride of King Matthias,
no, no, never will be an ornament of Wallachia!
Bánát shall not produce bread for the Rascians.
A Hungarian wind shall blow over the Carpathians."*

Nor could they have heard about what Imre Kertész experienced as a child in a concentration camp, or what the Benedictine monk priest Olofsson Placid experienced in the ten years he was held captive in the Gulag, or about the lifelong pain of thousands of Hungarian women raped by Russian soldiers, or how Hungary was systematically robbed between 1980-2010 when hundreds of billions of dollars "emigrated" from Hungary. Masses of people live ignorant of their past, without knowing the history of their families or their nation. And there are painfully many who buy into the slogan of "leave the past behind", who believe that it is possible to think about the present and the future without knowing and facing the past. There are many who work to ensure that the grave sins committed against the Hungarian nation and our families are trivialised and ignored.

Yet the ice seems to have been cracking for some time now. More and more people speak out and confess that they do feel unconditional love for their nation and their family. Some may mock, belittle and relativise what we hold sacred. Some may even slander us or stab us in the back. Yet let us be strong and proud, let us have the courage to familiarise ourselves with our past and draw the consequences from it. Let us dare to remember our ancestors, teachers, masters and heroes. And let us not forget the names of those who have committed crimes yet have never been called to account. Let us have the courage to take responsibility for our loved ones, our family, our nation. Let us have the courage to plan, to have children and raise them in love. Let us be able to care, to honour our parents and grandparents, and if necessary, to have the infinite strength to help and care for them. Let us have introspection, the ability to forgive, to repent and to be reconciled, because as long as we do so and exist in this way, there *will surely be a nation in this land...*

Gergő Oláh

Singer, winner of the third series of The X Factor talent show. In 2016, his work in the field of Roma inclusion was recognised with the Award for Ethnic Minorities. In the same year he received the Spark Award, Hungary's award for Christian pop music.



Recommendation

I have mixed feelings about talent contests. On the one hand, I think they offer an important opportunity to compete for people who would otherwise not meet experts who can assess their talents; on the other hand, I feel that such shows are all too often faked and staged. We used to watch the first series of the selection rounds of various shows on various TV channels. We got to know the competitors, we had our favourites; but then, somehow, the programmes ceased to be a novelty. Still, even today, talent shows sometimes help to reveal real values.

Gergő Oláh was born in Karancslapujtő, a village with a population of 2,500 in Nógrád County, northern Hungary, from where the family moved to Salgótarján, the county seat. In 2012, Gergő was discovered by the whole country at a talent contest; his popularity has continued ever since. He is one of those persons who have shown that high achievement is indeed possible, even if you come from a Roma family living in very difficult circumstances. Gergő Oláh uses his fame to communicate the values he believes in. He sings about loyalty, lifelong love, family, God and faith. He is proud of his Roma origins, and hopes that those who hear and love his songs will reflect on whether it is right to have prejudices against the Roma. Gergő's story can lend strength to those who are still looking for their way and struggling with negative stereotypes. Gergő is proud of having married at a young age and having children soon after. He wants to and can give their five children the opportunity to become successful, happy people, who are proud of their origins, culture and family.

Katalin Novák

For me, the family is all

I feel lucky because I had a wonderful childhood.

By that I do not mean that I got the best designer shoes, the nicest toys or the latest mobile phone... On the contrary, as a family we went without a lot. Sometimes I could not go on school trips, let alone holidays, because my parents could not afford it.

Still, my childhood was wonderful, and I was lucky to get from my parents and my family all that money cannot buy: love, attention, guidance, direction and motivation. My parents also taught me to believe in God and in myself.

I remember that, at the age of sixteen, I was working as a labourer on building sites with my father. On a very cold winter's day, as I was carrying the bricks to him, he told me that I would not earn my living like that, but that I was going to have a much better life.

What he said reached the depths of my very soul.

My mother always encouraged me to study. She always had time to pay attention to my soul: when I needed her as a teenager, we would talk until dawn. With these actions and words, my parents planted in me resilient seeds which they then nurtured as much as they could. Without my parents, I would not be who I am today and who I will one day become. I received good things at home that I want to pass on. And, as for the things that were not good, I am trying to avoid them in my own family.

I believe these are the foundations that will orientate a child. Without such foundations, there is a good chance that a young life could be ruined. That is why it is so important to have a secure, devoted family as a background. And this is not about money.

My wife and I got married young. She was twenty-one, I was twenty.

That was a conscious decision on our part. We wanted to have children when we were still young; we wanted a harmonious, strong, big family.

Life was not easy at all at the beginning because we started our life together in poverty.

Before having our first child, we wanted to have everything: financial security, a house, a car... But we also felt that it would take a long time.

Before we were married, we made the decision to live with faith in God and in harmony with the Bible. One day at a service we were taught that a child is a blessing, no matter what the circumstances. And that was a message specifically meant for us; that is when we decided not to wait any more.

After a year, we had our first child, Karla. It was her birth that made me understand the true meaning of life and gave my life a major purpose: to be a good father and a good husband, to bring up good people: good wives, good mothers, good husbands and good fathers.

Originally, we had planned to have three children, but God found us fit to lead five children on the right path. Life is not easy, and sometimes there are some very hard days, but I love it all the same, with every fibre of my being.

If the family is OK, then everything will be OK. It takes a lot of work, but if done right, family is the best, safest and most rewarding investment in the world.

For me, the most beautiful word to hear is "father".

For me, the family has become everything. My security, refuge, source, support, comfort, joy, love, pride, motivation, the beginning and the end!

Katalin Kokas and Barnabás Kelemen

Katalin Kokas is a Ferenc Liszt Prize winning violinist and violist, Meritorious Artist of Hungary. Her husband, Barnabás Kelemen, is a Kossuth Prize and Ferenc Liszt Prize winning violinist. They have four children.



Recommendation

A Sunday sermon I once heard taught that there is no separate private life and professional life, this life and that life. Human beings have only one life, with its different scenes, actors and aspects. Our life is one and indivisible, it cannot be fragmented. Katalin Kokas and Barnabás Kelemen remind me of this. When I watch them, I cannot tell where the boundaries between family and work lies. I cannot tell private life, art, music and personal space apart. They seem to operate in enviable harmony, where everyone is doing their part: living, playing music, paying attention to each other, helping, complementing and correcting each other, and thriving.

Kati and Barnabás both come from a family of musicians. Barnabás' grandfather and ancestors were gypsy Prímás (first violins and leaders of musicians). Kati's parents worked in the orchestra of the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár. Perhaps it is not surprising that Kati and Barnabás also chose this path. Their son Gáspár is also a very talented young violinist. Katalin Kokas has often been seen on stage while expecting a baby, performing until the very last moment until the birth of all four of their children. And, from a very early age, their babies were around them when they were performing. I remember their Christmas concert, where their daughter Olga was listening to the violin solo from her baby carrier on the stage, quietly and calmly. When you watch the Kokas-Kelemen family perform, you enjoy not only their wonderful play, but also the attentive love as they look at each other while performing, or the humility

as Gáspár turns the pages of the sheet music when needed. In addition to raising four children, Kati and Barnabás also organise festivals. They teach and educate talented children, and commit to responsibilities at the community level. They have won numerous awards for their work. Still, they feel that the greatest gift of all is that their daughter Hanna is a happy, successful model and young actress, their son Gazsi is a virtuoso and musically talented, and Olga and Zsigmond are happy children for whom it is natural to be with the family members, no matter where they are touring or performing.

Katalin Novák

The past, the present, the future

Twenty-five years, husband and wife, four children, grandparents and great-grandparents, brothers and sisters, cousins. When everyone is together, we easily number a hundred.

Love, affection, sanctity, bonds, weddings, listening, belonging, responsibility for each other, common goals, leading by example, showing the way, playing, being hurt, forgiving, touching, cuddling, gaining energy, sensing, hugging, kissing, daily blessings, eternal curiosity, attention, warnings, sense of security, walking on the road, protective gazes, flowing emotions, long distances, ups and downs, culminations, home, the secure sense of coming home, everything that's worth..., true-untrue, unity, tolerance, tactfulness, loyalty, keeping the fire burning, openness, discussing taboo subjects at home, constant change, disagreement, reconciliation.

The meaning of life.

Birth, death, health, sickness, fear, worry, hope, prayer, fear, faith, swaddling, nursery, kindergarten, school, career, stage, violin, marriage, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

Will we both live to see them holding hands?

Grandparents, great-grandmother, authority, passing on ancient knowledge, guidance, conversations about past and future, helping,

criticising, understanding, accepting, rejecting, belonging, talking back, calmness, distance, respect, approaching, showing love all the time.

The need for each other.

Our children, for whom we must protect our land, our country and preserve our faith in the future.

Pride.

Flying time. The time spent together, which is never long enough. Dissatisfaction with the lack of time, the need for self-fulfilment, time management, discipline, diligence and never losing purpose. Respect, supporting each other's withdrawal and introversion. Creating the opportunity for quietude and calm amidst chaos and turmoil. It matters to me, because it matters to others. It matters to all of us because it matters to other people. And that "other person" could be anyone: the four-year-old child, the six-month-old baby, the teenager, the mother, the father or the grandparents.

Cooperation and tolerance.

Letting go, sacrificing for each other, fighting. Holidays, breakfasts, lunches and dinners together, the important moments when we just chat. Support, when we have someone to tell what matters to us. Honesty, where we can be ourselves. Laughter, jokes, weeping, pain, sighing, proud joy for each other, judgement, mirror. Jealousy, competition, overcoming ourselves. Bedtime stories, I hold their hands, they hold my hands, they do not fall, I do not fall. If someone falls, we help them up. When there is a low point in their lives we pull them out of it. When we get beyond ourselves they bring us back to earth. Reality, dreams. Our roots, our flowers, sunshine and rain, sprouts, foliage, seasons, good soil, wells with clean water, may there be enough food for all.

Preserving and passing on tradition.

Catharsis, sounds, joyful music-making, stage presence, joint tours, family travel, concert halls, quartet competitions, orchestras, recitals, applause, excitement, cheering, development, practice, our children on stage and rehearsals instead of the playground, teaching, the organisation of festivals and international competitions, promoting primary and secondary education, master classes as a constant theme at home.

Education is the key to the future.

Skiing, running, a healthy lifestyle, relaxation, walking, fresh air, the warmth of a tiled stove, the parents' country home as a centre, grandpa's cooking and garden, grandma's clever family organisation.

It is good to go home.

Freedom, a framework of security, encouragement that gives you wings, that garden, that house, that apartment, that street, that stage, that concert, that trip, the unrepeatable multitude of memories that holds a family together. Similarities, differences, qualities, talents, hearing, hands, colours and shapes, tones, grimaces, like father, like son, like mother, like daughter, the preservation of values, education, learning, imitation, stagnation, development, presence and gratitude.

Past, present and future.



FAMILY MOVEMENT

Katalin Gyurkó Kardos

Fruzsina Skrabski

András Székely

Tünde Fűrész

Anna Nagy



Katalin Gyurkó Kardos

President of the National Association of Large Families; economist and business manager.
Holder of the Hungarian Gold Cross of Merit.
Mother of five.



Recommendation

My sister-in-law and I were pregnant at the same time: I was expecting my second son, she her first. Soon it turned out that she was expecting twins. Our children are the same age, so I got to experience first-hand what it is like to care for twins. While my husband and I were struggling with the challenges of having a baby and a toddler, my sister-in-law and my brother had to figure out how to keep a schedule with two babies, how to go for walks, how to manage feeding.

With all this experience, I can only imagine how much hard work it must be to have twins in a family with three other children, as was the case with Kata Gyurkó. Parents who look after five children day by day are capable of things most of us can only envy. Besides carrying out her family duties, Kata is the president of a large non-governmental organisation, the National Association of Large Families. From personal experience she knows what a great resource it is to have a lot of children in a family. She is also aware of the fact that keeping a family together and bringing up children require creativity, patience and financial resources. Living in a large family is a way of life. Many people approach it with reservations, because they do not believe that love is not diminished when you share it, or that it is possible to manage your attention, time, financial resources and strength properly.

Kata Gyurkó contributes greatly to ensuring that in Hungary it is good to live in a large family. She participates in organisational work and planning, collects and represents the comments the organisation receives, and writes recommendations. Thanks to her and her colleagues, the large

family has become fashionable again. More and more people envy those who are surrounded by a lot of children. It is good to live in a large family, because there is always someone there for you when your child is in need of care, a parent is in need of help or a grandparent is in need of support.

Katalin Novák

Real life

Children somehow always know if something is good or is the way it should be. For them, harmony, where their parents love each other, and where everything can happen that makes life better and beautiful, is essential. What they give us parents is a miracle: again and again, we find out what their opinion is when they are happy or when they are crying. They reflect an ideal state of being which is sometimes hidden from us adults by our everyday worries, tensions and sorrows, even if we long for that state. I am convinced that it is no coincidence that children, knowing what is right and beautiful, choose the family, a father and a mother, sometimes only with a glance, with their first words, a hug, their questions and even when they rebel. We are born with the innate need and desire for a family. And if we are deprived of it or have it only partially, we carry a lifelong pain. Then we become disappointed and discouraged, because we tend to believe that if our parents failed then surely we will too.

Yet all of us have the potential for joy, family and success, and even as an act of rebellion, we can do better than our parents did. No-one is responsible for our lives but us. What is more, when we feel that something is wrong we do not necessarily know the reasons. Unfortunately, this may sometimes lead to resistance to or the denial of the family and family values, especially in adolescence, but in later stages of life as well. As perhaps you can guess, I am talking about my own life as well. When I was eight, my parents divorced in an age when divorce was not widely accepted. My peers teased me about it. But patterns do not necessarily come from one's own family. At my mother's suggestion I started to attend a church community where I met the Czövek family, a family of 12. As an only child, I was happy to watch how the elder siblings looked after the little ones, how they cared for them. That was something missing

in my life. Once I saw how gently Aunt Klári turned to Uncle Olivér. It was just as written in the Bible. I was very much looking forward to this relationship of love, and to the intense life of a large family. I longed to be among many, and that is how my desire for a large family evolved. In my opinion, when we talk about the family, we must not conceal the fact that the idyll is not continuous. We must warn others against looking for it all the time, because that will bring only disappointment. If the idyll were permanent, we would not be able to appreciate it fully.

*Real love is not always idyllic, but it is always meaningful.
That is its very essence.*

Once you realise this, you will be able to partake in the moments, hours, and days you long for, you will experience life and the small moments of love that make life worth living. The family is the miracle of life, where selflessness always overcomes selfishness, discord is always overridden by trust, and kindness always wins over anger.

In December 2013, I was reading a book by Hungarian Franciscan monk and humanitarian Csaba Böjte, and I was deeply moved by a thought expressed by him: "in our hearts God awakens a burning desire for what we must achieve". This holds true throughout the different stages of our lives: in a romantic relationship, in marriage and in bringing up children. Facing a decision is always a little scary. We are uncertain, perhaps even afraid. These feelings are in fact signs to show us that for us it matters a lot who our partner or spouse is, how we stand by each other in difficult situations or whether we will decide to have children. This is one of the sources of the strength of marriage. Marriage is a union of love and life between people, men and women, who achieve the most important goals in their lives together. This union is constantly renewed and changes as the family develops. For them, one plus one equals not two, but one. They arrive at their true selves when they can partake in this unity and enjoy together the fruits of it: children. They are not dismayed by these uncertainties. They trust themselves and each other, and their actions are not driven by fear of failure.

When I saw my husband suffer (because unfortunately I had to when he was undergoing a stem cell transplant), I felt that I was ready to die

for him. I experienced divine love: I was willing to take on his pain to save him from suffering. For me, he, along with our children, is still the main argument for marriage. After his recovery, we wanted to have more children, because “in our hearts God awakened a burning desire”. He supported me. So the twins were born, and now I cannot imagine our life without them. One day, when I was very tired and worn, my daughter Lizike came up to me from the carpet covered with Lego bricks, hugged me and said, “Mummy, I love you”. I asked her why. “Because you play with us a lot,” she said. “But sometimes I get stroppy,” I said. “But we love you all the same even if you are stroppy,” she replied. I think we do not need more than that... Yet, on second thoughts, we do. Because the family always entails some kind of miracle. Watching a young tree develop, grow and bear fruit is a most wonderful feeling. When I look at the big ones who are going to leave the nest soon, I see them as newborns, then as babies, then I remember the times when they no longer had the smell of babies, and started to talk and talk, and then went to school. I see how the children my husband and I brought up together are growing in knowledge, in spirit and in body.

I was an only child myself, but I wanted to have lots of children. Quite simply, I liked large families. I enjoyed seeing that there are so many of them and they are so different from each other. I liked the fact that there is always someone you can count on, someone to cheer you up, someone who can solve problems and fix what is broken, and there is always someone ready to pay attention to anyone who needs it. As Bishop Áron Márton put it very beautifully and insightfully, “Troubles and worries are shared, and joy is multiplied among the members of a large family.” As we often say in the National Association of Large Families: more kids equal more love. When in the Association we say that value representation is our core task, we do not mean abstract argumentation, a line of thought or an ideology. We mean tangible, authentic, direct experiences which have been with us human beings since our creation and remained with us throughout history. And I believe that they will so remain in the future. This is something we should tell everyone, so that they can see and hear: marriage and the family are eternal human values. And although they can be subjected to attacks, they will not be defeated, because as long as

two people love each other, and want a common future and want to have children together, there will be people who will say "I do" to each other.

Life often brings difficult situations; indeed, pain is unavoidable. This holds true, no matter if you are childless or live in a large family. Yet life in a large family gives much more joy, strength and energy, because we can share joys with others, our spouses and children, and we can only experience that personal fulfilment in life with them, in the family. Having a family and children is the real fulfilment for the human being. A professional CV is only a list of titles and jobs. Only our private life is our own, that is what we really live. Let us try to live as we imagined it as children: a miracle that we have to work for.

Fruzsina Skrabski

Hungarian film director, producer and journalist.
Head of the Three Princes, Three Princesses
Movement, founded by her parents, Mária Kopp
and Árpád Skrabski. Her parents are also founders
of the Kopp-Skrabski Prize. She was awarded the
Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit.
Mother of one child.



Recommendation

For me, it is a great loss that I did not have the chance to meet Mária Kopp in person. She had passed away just before I became Chief of Cabinet at the Ministry of Human Resources in 2012. I remember, it was one of my first duties at an event to read out a text written by Minister Zoltán Balog in memory of Mária Kopp and her husband, Árpád Skrabski. Even these indirect accounts conveyed her dedication, strong personality and passion. Besides leaving a lasting legacy, Mária Kopp and Árpád Skrabski, both sociologists, launched a movement in academia and in everyday life that continues to have an impact to this day. It is no coincidence that KINCS (the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families), a research institute dealing with demographic issues and family studies, was named after Mária Kopp.

Their daughter Fruzsina Skrabski works on enriching the oeuvres of her mother and father. Easy for her, one could say, because it is indeed a joy and a pride to extend and enrich the legacy of such parents. It must be hard work, one might say, because following in the footsteps of such parents entails a major responsibility. Fruzsina bears this responsibility with perseverance, serenity and courage. There is a growing awareness of the Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement; many people take part in its lovable initiatives scaled to everyday human lives. Besides being a member of the board of trustees, Fruzsina works as a director, scriptwriter, producer of documentaries, and journalist. In social media, she is an outspoken person, ready to initiate and engage in discussions.

I found her writing important, because – besides promoting a family-friendly way of thinking – she speaks openly about the difficulties they faced while trying to have children, which may be encouraging for those who had to experience the struggles and travelled a similar long road of pain and relinquishment.

Katalin Novák

We are all ‘very-much brothers’ !

I grew up in a huge extended family: my mum had seven brothers and sisters, and I had 25 cousins. At the same time, our “nuclear family” is small indeed with one sister and one child. There is a story to that.

As a little girl, I dreamed that a heroic prince would come for me and marry me. Then we would have lots of children and live happily ever after. That was my career plan. Of course, I was also planning to be a poet and give food to the poor. I was not worried. I hoped that somehow I would survive my difficult school years and then would come the happiness I was dreaming about.

Obviously, as I was growing up, I realised that it is not enough to desire such an ideal future. The princes I knew shied away from marriage, children or responsibility. Then, when I finally found my prince, we had to accept that wanting children does not necessarily mean that one would actually have them. I have not become a poet, and it is not easy to feed the poor.

So this is the life I was given: twenty years of happy marriage; a fantastic child after ten years of assisted reproduction programmes; documentaries; journalism; and the Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement. That is good, I am happy.

Hungarian Franciscan monk and humanitarian Csaba Böjte says that happiness is not a destination, but a journey, and we can either support or trip each other up on the way. We have childhood dreams, innate abilities and activities we enjoy.

And there is an ideal life, and it is good to describe it in words, because then we will have a goal. But we cannot expect to have this ideal life either from ourselves or others, given that it is difficult or even impossible to achieve.

I have always wanted to have lots of children, but I have only one. This is good and I am happy with it; still, for me, the ideal life would have been to have lots of children, since the greatest joy I've ever experienced was giving birth to my daughter and seeing her every day. Starting a family is a miracle, a transcendent experience in this profane world.

The Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement simply verbalises what is obvious: the scientifically proven fact that you are the happiest, most productive and healthiest when you have a loving spouse and children. With such a team, you can survive all hardships: unemployment, illness, bereavement, whatever may come. We can only support people on this journey. We can help those who come to us. For those who wish to have a happy marriage and children, we can offer inspiring examples, role models and a community of like-minded people. We can offer encouragement. We can show them how to overcome difficulties and achieve happiness. We know what suffering is, as I too suffered when I was looking for a partner and later was struggling with infertility. The path to having a family is difficult, and everyone can get stuck at some point. Princes will not appear, children will not be born just because we want them. Everything can collapse; there are many divorces. Still, the number of happy families can grow only if we refuse to give up, if we help each other. We may have failed, but it does not mean that others cannot succeed. If I have one child, I can still help others to have more.

Family is a centre of power for me where I can always snuggle up to.

Sometimes I feel as if I was fighting on a battlefield and then go home shattered. That is the place where everyone is waiting for me and loves me, where I do not need to pretend or hide my real face, a place where they say: it is good to have you.

A favourite fairy tale of mine is the story of the *very-much* brothers by Ervin Lázár. The brothers sit around a table and scold each other because they can literally feel each other's pain: one fell into a river the day before, so all of them were gasping for breath, another one got lost in the forest, so all of them were starving, and now another one is bringing some wood home alone and it is heavy for all of them.

“Just then Arnica spoke from under Poor Johnny’s arm:

‘You should be ashamed of yourselves!

(...)

But you could actually be the happiest people in the world,’ Arnica told them. ‘If one of you, no matter which brother he was, happened to fall in the river, he could be sure that the other eleven would jump after him and pull him out. If one of you, no matter which brother he was, happened to get lost, he could be sure that the other would set off straight away to look for him. There could be so much trust and love in your hearts!’

‘There’s an idea!’, said the oldest brother, and they all stared wide-eyed at Arnica. ‘Why didn’t we think of it before?’”

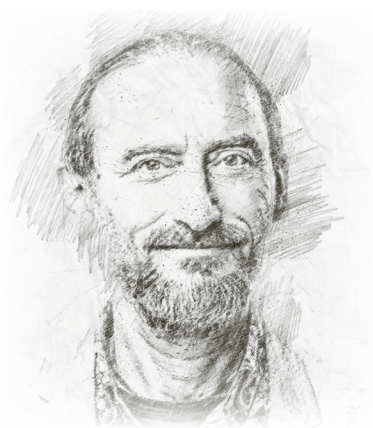
Ervin Lazar: Arnica, the Duck Princess (Translated by Anna Bentley)

So this would be the magic of the Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement: to remember to help each other, not just in the family, but in the neighbourhood, at the workplace, anywhere. If everyone behaved like this, many more people would find a partner, have the courage to have children, and stay together even in the face of marital conflicts. As my mother, Mária Kopp used to say, the most important tool of communication is praise. With praise, you can achieve everything: you can make the other person happy or strong, or can even make them change. Scolding will only intimidate the other person. But if you praise what is good in them, they will open up that very world for you.

We are all very much brothers and sisters: we feel each other’s pain, and, as Arnica says in the story, this can be either a tragedy where everyone suffers or it can be source of the greatest happiness!

András Székely

Economist, religious education teacher and mental health professional. One of the founders of the Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement, Secretary of the Demography Roundtable, and staff member of the Mária Kopp Institute and Végeken Mental Health Foundation. Father of eleven.



Recommendation

Anikó was my best friend in upper primary school. She was born in California to Hungarian parents, which, in the late 80s, was exciting in itself. But there was something even more special about her: she had eight brothers and sisters. I would spend the afternoon at their house as often as I could. There was always someone to play with, there was always something going on, there was always noise. I had a great time with them. Even today I remember all the names of her siblings; she had elder and younger sisters and brothers. What a privilege!

Ever since then I have regarded very big families with respect mixed with admiration. Thanks to my work, I regularly meet people who have lots of children or who have grown up in a big family with lots of siblings. I find that they all have vitality, creativity, modesty and respect. As proven by studies, children brought up in large families have similar plans for the future: they rarely choose not to have children or just one or two.

András Székely is the father of eleven children. When I read his book *Jöttek, láttak, legyőztek* ("They came, they saw, they conquered"), I was captivated by the cavalcade of love he described his family, with a sense of humour and self-irony, free of any sentimentalism. András is an economist and RE teacher, and takes an active part in civic initiatives. He knows and professes that we must take care of our mental and physical health to an equal degree. He participates in the work of the Demography Roundtable and of the Three Princes, Three Princesses Movement Foundation, and contributed greatly to the support of mental health first aid services. Below, he shares some of his thoughts on what he receives from his big family.

Katalin Novák

Why is the family important to me?

On my part, living in a large family was not a conscious decision. I do not remember how many children I wanted to have as a child, or if I wanted to have children at all. Most probably I did, but my first son was born before I had time to consider this existential question. I was born into and I grew into (and, as a father, had a son in) an environment where every member of the extended family either had more than one child, or if for some reason they did not, they still did not stand out, given that everyone supported the other. When the family came together, nobody cared about these uninteresting numbers – especially we children. There were many of us and that was that. There was nothing strange about it. Then, when I had more children, I asked myself: do I really want this? What does the family mean to me? Exactly in what way is it part of my everyday actions and my identity? Why is it important to me?

As a thinker, I cannot just say that this is the way life is, this is the order of nature and that is it. Though sometimes it is enough just to look at my children with pride, but there are many moments when it is not that easy. I feel good when I am aware of the fact that without them I would not be the person I am, when I am aware of what they give to me and how that makes me who I am, and not just in family life, but how they shape me or help me even in my profession. Because we often discuss what a child gets from a parent, or a sibling from a sibling, but when it comes to what a parent gets from a child, we often just refer to pride and love, saying that this is enough for us. But, in my opinion, it is not enough, and nor does it have to be enough, because we indeed can get much more than that. I made a list of a few things that my children taught me, hoping that others may find it inspiring or helpful. And even if they do not, I enjoyed thinking about it all the same. It even made me feel even more about how important my children are to me.

Let us live life there and then. There are justly popular training courses where we can learn how to be truly *there* in the moment and to experience our feelings, not letting our thoughts distract us from where we are. But this is something we can learn from children as well. We should just sit down with them, play with them, build a sand castle, draw a picture,

play board games, or, with older children, solve a difficult maths problem together. Do we need more than that? In the blink of an eye we will be pushing a toy ambulance trying to free the dragon trapped under the collapsed building. The dragon, once rescued, throws himself on the little house which we have just built, to devour the princess (a rubber doll), who, by the way, only a few minutes ago was held in a dog's mouth because while skiing she had been buried by an avalanche of cubes but, luckily, was rescued by a group of hunters. All our worries and the next day's deadlines disappear. We are *there*, really and fully, and we solve the maths problem that as children we had found impossible to solve, but now as parents we try to solve them in anyway, mustering all the help we can get, even from the Internet. Now it is not about the mark we will get at school. It is a task and a solution that's needed. Nothing else matters. At some later point, when we are overwhelmed with daily worries and are concerned about the future, and we lose contact with the present, we sometimes manage to recall the feeling, the attitude. And it is better.

Fashion, dresses, appearance. Whether we are among young people in our work or not, we still bump into them here and there in everyday life. We are probably interested in how they see us, and, at the same time, we should project an image that is appropriate for our own age group if we want to remain authentic. I am used to being called “uncle”, but still, it would be nice if young people did not look at me as if I were an archaeological artefact from another age. In this case, nobody can give us more honest help than our children. In a clothes shop, the shop assistant does not necessarily tell me when something does not suit me; by contrast, at home I am blatantly told if I am beginning to look like an old guy. They also warn me when I try to wear something that they would, but I'd look silly in it. I cannot even count the times they have laughed at me. And the comments they made on a pair of shoes or a shirt of mine... But they will also tell me if something looks good, if they like something I'm wearing. Obviously, sometimes it's hard to take honest criticism, because it is coupled with a strong vocabulary – no swearwords, but you need to strengthen your self-confidence to take it. If we accept this, we will find that the same works for speech: there are some expressions I only understand and some that I am “allowed to use”.

Communication. The family offers the best context for the development of our communication, which includes listening to others, accepting and dealing with criticism, and communicating and asserting our thoughts, goals and intentions. At work or simply in a social setting, conveying messages, defining tasks or formulating objections will be effective if we are able to apply the rules of listening and assertiveness alike. This is something very much needed in a family. And even if we have not read textbooks or attended specialised training sessions, but simply observe how we have managed in this very difficult and often hostile environment to get the dishes done by the time we want them done, and by the person to whom we have assigned the task, then we can easily apply the same tricks anywhere. If you are able to get a teenager to do something he or she does not want to do, then you can achieve practically anything in life. As well as this, our children can teach us tricks which we would never consider using otherwise. But when we realise that we have just let for the third time our child go somewhere we did not really want them to go and, what is more, we have given them an extra hour to be there, then it is worth considering what it was that convinced us, and perhaps acquiring the right techniques of persuasion.

Contemporary music, social media. Our children broaden our world, be it films, music or anything they find important. Sometimes we should let them choose the film we watch or the music we play in the car or in the living room. It can be equally informative to sit down with them and ask them who they like to watch on popular social media platforms. They may be surprised at first. Or they may not even dare show it (in fact, we can be sure that there are some things they will never share with us), or if they do, we will find it difficult to bear what we hear and see. But it is worth putting ourselves in their shoes and trying to accept that it can be good. After a while, I indeed got quite fond of some of those music tracks, which at first irritated me to the extreme. And although I was often disapproving when my children showed me whom they followed, at least now I understand a little better why they are the way they are. At such moments, the hardest thing is to refrain from criticising what we see, because if we do, our children stop communicating. We do not have to like what we see, but then we do not have to say so. It's better to simply accept it, and we will realise that some things are quite likeable. We can

give ourselves a chance to get to like something which we have never heard of before. Then we will grow and our world will be more colourful.

This is just a short list of a few things to show that when it comes to dealing with everyday joys and difficulties, how useful it is to practice such skills in the family. I have deliberately written only about children. Many people have already mentioned why our relationship with our spouse is so important. But it is less often mentioned that we not only educate or teach our children, but can also learn a lot from them – especially if we do so together with our partner. For all of us,

it is important to continue learning and growing until the end of lives. And on that journey it is our family that gives the most help,

provided that we can take the opportunity. It is worth it!

Tünde Fűrész

President of the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (KINCS).
Former Deputy State Secretary responsible for Family Policy and Demography and then Ministerial Commissioner.
Holder of the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit. Economist with a specialisation in law; married and mother of three daughters.



Recommendation

When someone has a child at a time when no tax credit is being paid, there are no home creation programmes available, hardly any places in crèches, childcare support is paid for a period of only two years, there is no more support for the older child and even the financial support for childcare is lost upon returning to work, they tend to complain. They regret having to bring up a child at such difficult times. And there are others who, in the same situation, feel a sense of urgency. They are convinced that they have the sufficient knowledge, experience and courage to be part of the change. They decide to make things easier for future mothers and fathers; they gather ideas, organise themselves and, when they have the opportunity, translate their ideas into practice.

Tünde Fűrész is one of those people who are not content with just saying that something is not good, but decide to make a change. This why, among other reasons, she accepted the leadership of the Family Policy Department offered to her by Miklós Soltész, the then State Secretary for Social Affairs. At that time, Tünde was bringing up her daughter, who was then very young. The Department later became a Deputy State Secretariat, then a State Secretariat and, eventually, a Ministry, as the issue of families became an increasingly important aspect of governance.

As an economist, Tünde knows that good decisions call for careful assessment, proper planning and precise implementation. As a mother of three, she knows how much help parents need to be able to balance their family responsibilities and their professional lives successfully, which is perhaps why she devoted so much attention to the improvement

of Hungary's crèche network. As President of the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families, she promotes national and international cooperation, and channels research data to policy-making. She wants to ensure that her three daughters have everything they need to start a family of their own at the right time, without having to give up their vocation.

Katalin Novák

The family is a priceless treasure

A properly functioning, harmonious family is an asset, a real treasure. Happy are the people who have the privilege of living in a family whose members can always count on each other. The family, even if it does not work perfectly all the time, is a safe haven or a bulwark. Its value only becomes apparent once we lose it, are distanced from it, or we suffer the loss of a family member. I am grateful to be able to feel and know the sustaining power of the family not only in my personal life, but also in my professional one, where I have been promoting the prosperity of families for more than a decade.

Living in a family is a priceless treasure;

working for the family is one of life's greatest gifts.

As a mother of three daughters, as a wife, a sister, a child and a grandchild, I know that nobody is more important in my life than the members of my family. They were, are and will always be at the forefront of my attention, and, at the same time, provide a constant and secure background. But for them, I would not be who I am now. Our unconditional, devoted love for each other is what offers us security and certainty. Even in my professional work, they are my main support: a safe backdrop in the absence of which it would be much harder to perform. They give me strength. They encouraged and supported me when I started working on family issues, back in 2010, when I became Head of the Family Policy Department, then in 2014 Deputy State Secretary responsible for Family Policy and Demography and then Ministerial Commissioner, and from 2018 onwards, Head of KINCS, the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families. Working in these positions in the service of families,

promoting their protection and representation is not only an honour, but also a vocation and, to some degree, perhaps a mission. It is a vocation that is at least as much (if not more), important for me as a mother than as a professional.

The family cannot be ignored, put aside or bypassed. We are all members of a family. “The family is the basis of socialisation”, said Professor Mária Kopp, founder of the Demography Round Table, from whom KINCS receives its name. The family is a community, the smallest of all, and is influenced by the past, shapes the present and determines the future. Moreover, it is the foundation of our Christian culture: the very history of Christianity began with the birth of a child and, thus, with the birth of a family. Yet these days we often see attempts to weaken or relativize the institution of the family. Fortunately, for the vast majority of people family is obvious, something that needs no explanation, given that for millennia the family has been the community that has defined our lives through its values, culture and norms. Very rarely (or possibly never) do we experience elsewhere the kind of trust and love we give and receive in the family. The family is a value that, in itself, conveys and creates value.

Protecting and supporting families seem obvious, but it is not. You would think that everybody agrees with simply formulated objectives such as that “we should ensure that the desired and planned children are born”, or that “harmonious families are indispensable for a properly functioning society”. But the situation is far from being that obvious, because the family and family values are under attack. Some fear that families threaten the fulfilment of the individual or what they erroneously call freedom (but, what is in fact libertinage), or put the natural environment in danger. Those who live in families and have children do not understand this ignoble series of attacks. That is why it is important to ensure that childbearing and child rearing is not a private matter of the individual, but a most personal public issue, something we defend for the sake of the individual concerned and, at the same time, of our extended communities and of the survival of our nation. This is one of the pillars of Hungary’s family-friendly approach and its family policy, which, since 2010, has provided stability, freedom of choice, a better reconciliation of work and family, and economic benefits for parents. The very basis of this family-friendly

construction is the traditionally pro-family and pro-child attitude of Hungarians. For us Hungarians, the family is a sanctity and the child is a treasure. This is something we can build on. And we cannot have any other goal than helping young people realise their plans of starting a family, while ensuring an even closer cooperation between generations and the respect of work. If this family-friendly attitude can be passed on from parent to child, then we need not worry about our future – or our present. Mária Kopp's wise words show why: "responsible child-rearing is the most important investment in the future", which, importantly, is also "the basis for a positive quality of life" for parents.

But what is responsible child rearing? Many say that for our children to feel safe and surrounded by supportive love, we do not have to be perfect, just good enough parents. As Martin Luther said, this kind responsible and loving child rearing in itself is "the most perfect way for parents to salvation". I wish that our children may become mothers and fathers, and tread this path to salvation, which (although sometimes bumpy) is still the most exciting and most rewarding path in life and a lifelong adventure.

Anna Nagy

Journalist, communication professional,
former spokesperson of the Government
and Deputy State Secretary.
Currently she is the head
of the Centre for Single Parents.
She has one son.



Recommendation

I am curled up in an armchair, laptop on my knees, writing the recommendation to Anna Nagy's thoughts. I can do all this because I know my husband will make dinner tonight, he will help the kids think through tomorrow's homework, he will take the dog for a walk, and he will even do the dishes. There are two of us, two of us who have taken on the tasks and joys of family life, and we have shared them from the start as the situation requires. Sometimes he does more, sometimes I do more, sometimes we do an equal amount. I often wonder what it must be like for people who have no one to rely on. What must it be like to bear the responsibility of raising children alone, to be where we are needed, to be there for family and work, to allocate financial, time and spiritual resources, to worry without a partner, to be proud, to love?

Anna Nagy knows what it means to replan. She knows the difficulties and riches of single-parent families, and she knows exactly what they need. Having been left alone with her son, and experiencing first-hand the challenges a mother (or father) faces in this case, she set up a foundation and started working to make life easier for people in the same situation. She has been representing the interests of single-parent families at every forum, and did not rest until she created an internationally unique centre in Budapest that offers a real meeting place as well as legal, professional and spiritual support, childcare, a rich programme of activities, a place to take a break from the burden, and even a summer camp. Planning is also underway for the Buda centre to be opened to single-parent families next year, and rural sites will also be gradually added.

Anna is not waging this struggle alone. She has a great team of people around her, ready and able to take action. And today Anna has a partner who has helped her find the time to write the following thoughts.

Katalin Novák

Family means love and happiness

“Mum!” The spoon clattered against the edge of the plate as I suddenly turned back hearing the cry. Then I smiled: the kid who had called me like that was hundreds of miles away, another small child looking for her mother. But the reflex that had by then become part of my soul was stronger than distance, facts, and reality.

This was the scene that first came to mind when I began to think about what family meant to me – and then memories crowded in one after another, and I realised that there was not a single event, not a single experience that was not connected to my family. Even if they were not there, even if it was not about them, the most important thing was seeing the events of my life through their eyes. “The most important reference point,” science would say, which in everyday life means a thousand little threads that weave through life. Even if I try to disconnect the family from my life, I cannot because by the time I was born, they had already surrounded me with the love, care and security that I have built on ever since. I do not know a world without them in it, so I cannot think about it either.

It is like thinking about water or air: they frame the days and form the basis of life.

When we are born into a family, we have only one role: we are the children. As time goes by, it's as if more and more chairs are put around a table: we become brothers and sisters and cousins, godchildren and nieces, until another table is brought in, a table “of our own”, where it's our job to sort out the chairs. We will be parents, wives or husbands, daughters-in-law and sons-in-law, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law if that is what life brings us; breadwinners – maybe all in one, if our lot turns out otherwise; and if we are lucky, we will be grandparents and great-grandparents. Lots of chairs, lots of roles, and all ours – our places and roles in the

family, and we have to master them, and in each new role, we try out the opportunities and make the mistakes that are our own. Being proud and banging our heads, depending on what comes.

Before I started building my "own" family, I thought it would be like in American movies: a man and a woman holding hands, watching a baby quietly breathing in the dimness of the nursery, or all sitting in front of the fireplace in their holiday finery, waiting for the Christmas photo to be taken. And then it turns out that the family, the real one, does not even remotely resemble a Z-movie: the real family is much better and much deeper than that. It is not so much about Christmases, birthdays and holidays, but about the simple everyday life in between. Watching my husband sleep, watching my child's face and never getting tired of it, holding my father's hand or remembering the caresses I could only get from my mother...

I am exceptionally lucky: for years, my vocation has been about families. Tens of thousands of people who trust me and make me part of their family in some way here at the Centre for Single Parents – there is no greater honour. It is about children who often do not know you, yet are happy to tell you when something good has happened to them, because they feel the strength of the community, our community. They are my adopted family. In the days leading up to this writing, I asked them what family means to them. Surprisingly – or perhaps not so surprisingly – the picture was unanimous and the children, who had never read family sociology, were very precise in their definition of the parameters of the family.

1. Family is a community

"A family is people living together in a house. There is a husband and a wife, they have children and they are together for better and for worse."

"A family is people together, it depends on how many children there are."

"Family means that there are many people together. A mummy, a daddy and two children. And they live together."

2. Family is love

"A dad, a mum, a child and even a baby sticking together."

"Family is about love and cohesion."

"People who love each other – that's what the family is to me."

"Family is love, trust, and perseverance."

"There's a mum, there's a dad, there's peace, there's no fighting, there's no divorce and there are children."

3. Family is togetherness

"Family is about sticking together, always helping each other, always supporting each other, no matter what the other person is thinking, it still matters, because family members always support each other in everything."

"I think a family can be five or six or seven people, but they don't exactly live together, there are relatives and people who live elsewhere. Parents, children, godparents, relatives."

4. Family is sometimes a difficult task

"Family is a lot of people who usually love each other."

"You grow up, have a new family, wife, kids, work – it's boring."

5. Family is a shell that surrounds you

"Family is mummy, daddy, brother, sister"

"Family is love... family is relatives."

"Family is love and happiness"

So it is as simple as that, the children say, and we adults, with our sure knowledge of everything, just shrug: what do they know? But they are the ones who do know, who have already experienced in the few years of their lives that a family can be more than harmony, that chairs can disappear around the table, and that you have to rebuild, reconstruct your family, your ordinary days, your life. But the picture, the deeper knowledge of family, does not change. They know the essence.

Facing a new phase of life, preparing for an empty nest, sometimes I still find myself jerking my head when a small child calls to its mother. But in the meantime, I learn my new roles, arrange my chairs around the table, and day by day I learn that everything else is secondary: career, success, the fireworks. I look at them, but they are less and less visible behind those who surround me and those who really matter, whether they are a hundred miles away or farther, even as far away as one cannot get in this life. Because they are the most important: they are my family.



ECONOMY

Éva Hegedüs

Ágnes Hornung

Zsófia Laposa



Éva Hegedüs

Economist, banker, Chairman and CEO of Gránit Bank, member of the Board of the Hungarian Banking Association. She is Secretary General of the Hungarian Economic Association and Social Chair of the Hungarian Water Polo Association. She has two sons.



Recommendation

Businesswoman – the word conjures up an image of a tough, determined woman in a dark blue trouser suit, thick-rimmed fashionable glasses, six-inch heels, and a mobile phone over her ear. She comes and goes, arranges, negotiates, makes decisions and assigns tasks in clipped sentences. She probably has no children, or if she does, she has a driver to take them to school in the mornings and a babysitter in the evenings while the parents work. The businesswoman is obviously busy with her business, she only talks to her child about school, and gives instructions at home and strictly demands their execution. Some businesswomen and businessmen may be like that, but Éva Hegedüs is certainly not one of them. True, she is determined and tough when she needs to be, she wears fashionable glasses and high heels, and I have even seen her on the phone in a trouser suit, but in addition to her managerial duties, she is also a devoted and attentive mother, who is very much present.

For years, Éva has topped Forbes Magazine's list of the most influential women in business, which is no coincidence, as the bank she runs and owns a majority share of has a strong track record. Éva Hegedüs is justifiably proud of her professional achievements, but she is even more enthusiastic about her grown-up children, whose upbringing she considers the most important achievement of her life.

We founded the Women for Hungary Club a few years ago to give Hungarian women encouragement. Let us show how many women there are among us whose achievements we can be proud of. How many work shifts in addition to their family responsibilities, how many bring up

sick children, how many care for elderly and sick parents, how many do voluntary work besides their many responsibilities. Éva is one of the founding members of the Club, and I hope that a lot of women will find her story empowering.

Katalin Novák

For me family is life

When I think of the family, all the positive feelings of life flow through me:

unconditional acceptance, love, support, intimacy, honesty, togetherness, responsibility and care.

That is what the family means for me.

I was born in Eger and lived there with my parents and two brothers until I started university. Ours was the last house in town; there was a large meadow opposite. We played football there, climbed trees, picked flowers, played hide and seek, rolled down the hillside, we had lots of fun. At the end of our games, we often continued playing tig or played with a ball or spun around in the yard of our house, and the other children were happy to come over to our place, even though we only gave them simple food because we did not have much money. More important than expensive clothes and food, however, was the attention and care we received; the conversations we had with our parents, the love of reading, the intimacy of the family nest my parents created for us. Sadly, they are gone now, but I can always feel them around me. They are my eternal role models.

My father was a very strong man, he taught me that nothing is impossible, and if you work hard you can achieve your goals. He was a truck driver and often took on extra work. He and my mother raised chickens and pigs so that all three of us children could study. I never heard him complain, he never said he was tired; whatever he did, he was happy to do it. It was a natural part of life to work for the family, to do whatever he could, but he always had time for us. He taught us how to ride a bike and how to play cards.

My mother was a real mother hen who stayed at home with us until I was 15. As the eldest child, I looked after my siblings, I babysat them, and of course they supported me in everything. Obviously we had our little quarrels, but we laughed a lot.

I can still recall many fond memories of my childhood, and of course the traditional family holidays stand out: Easter, the fêtes, and of course Christmas, which always brought a lot of snow.

But I also have a vivid memory of a very different kind, of when I received the notification of my university admission. My father held the envelope in his hand and said something like "well, you've messed it up". He meant it as a joke, hiding his pride behind the funny remark, because my parents considered it a huge success that I would be a first-generation intellectual and the first in the family to go to university, so all the studying and reading made sense to the entire family.

At the same time, this moment also marked the first big separation in my life. I left my family and moved to Budapest, to the university residence hall. It was the first time I experienced the importance of family ties. Before that, it was natural that my parents were always physically by my side in every situation, and the lack of this was often painful. But the experience of learning, going to the library, a growing circle of friends and academic achievements gave me more and more confidence.

While I thought it was important to learn as much as I could about the world and absorb as much knowledge as possible and thus prove myself in my work and in my positions, I also had a strong desire to have my own family and children. This dual urge has constantly accompanied me throughout my life and influenced everything I have done in my role as a mother. My professional work as well as my position as a mother have been imbued with the ambition to create value. I want to live my life in such a way that I put something lasting on the table in every aspect, so that what I do in my work can serve as an example to my colleagues, and the way I have brought up my children can serve as a model for them to follow when they start their own families. Even though I have taken it for granted since I was a little girl that one day I would be a mother, it did not come easy. My husband and I had to wait a long time and did a lot for it to happen, so it is understandable that perhaps the most important

moment of my life was when I found out I was expecting a baby. After eight years of marriage, my eldest son was born, followed by my second two years later.

Many people still wonder how come I ended up staying at home with them for five years. It was not a foregone conclusion, as I was already working in a managerial position. But I could not have imagined my life any other way.

I wanted to be with them, I wanted to love them, bring them up and watch them, to give them everything I knew, including what I had received from my parents. It was also important to me to ensure respect and equality in the upbringing of my children, I always listened to their opinions, and they could disagree with me. I even apologised when I realised afterwards that I had been wrong. We talked a lot and I always tried to listen to how they felt about what was happening around them. I also often worried about them, although I knew it was wrong (I'll try not to make that mistake as a grandmother), and any letting them go was hard for me. Looking back, I feel that I may not have always been able to live up to my own expectations as a mother, but I tried to do the best I could at the time. Needless to say, my adult children were, and still are, critical of me, but I get a lot of love and attention from them. For example, on one of my birthdays they gave me an Oscar statuette with the inscription *Best Mother*. On another birthday, a big O, they gave me a booklet in which they had painstakingly and scrupulously collected quotes from friends and acquaintances close to me, and of course they wrote down their thoughts themselves. This is how it began:

"We have so much to thank our Mother for, but we think that apart from the love and support, perhaps the most important thing is the unique way she approached life and passed on her values to us."

It is wonderful to experience the conversations, excursions and travels with them; to feel the meticulous care they take in organising these activities together.

I feel it is important in family life, as indeed in other areas of life, to strive for balance, for each family member to be an independent, inimitable, separate person, influencing, helping and making an impact on each other so that they get stronger as individuals and as a family.

You need a lot of attention, understanding and willingness in order to achieve this.

So what do I see as the core value of the family? As a child and a mother of two grown-up boys, I see it as both a strong protective shell and a small community that gives us the feeling that we are capable of doing anything if we do it together.

Ágnes Hornung

Lawyer-economist,
former State Secretary
for Finance; currently chairperson
of a bank's supervisory Board.
She is a mother of two.



Recommendation

At the age of twenty-five, my husband and I had to make a very important decision: should we accept a four-year contract for a foreign posting and postpone having children? Or should we have children first and then see? How right we were to settle on the latter. Now we can clearly see that we made the right decision; however, back then it was difficult to give up working as a diplomat, with the attractive life abroad, the professional challenges and the opportunity to move up the ladder. I felt that I might be missing out for good, although I did not know exactly what I would miss out on. We were not aware of the joys and sacrifices of having a child, but we did feel that if we postponed it for four years then we might miss out on something very important in our lives.

As far as I know, Ágnes Hornung is the first and so far the only Secretary of State to go on maternity leave from such a high government position. She is now a mother of two, and has devoted the last few years entirely to her family. I recall that when the two of us were having our first serious conversation and we got down to personal matters, she asked me how I had been able to take such a long break from work, because, as far as she knew, I was a person who loved her job and hard work. I told her that I would not give up the years I spent at home with my children for anything, and encouraged her not to be afraid to make that decision if it came to it. I saw doubt in her eyes. The world of politics is tough; maybe she thought I was talking to her as a rival. Later, after her son Erik was born, Ági called me. She remembered our conversation and wanted me

to know that she now understood what I meant. Her voice was relieved, and tired, but happy as she told me what a joy it was to become a mother.

Ágnes Hornung is an exceptionally intelligent woman. She has degrees in law and economics, speaks several languages and has experience of working abroad. She has integrity, straightforwardness and courage; she is an able leader, a reliable colleague and a valuable employee. As State Secretary, she has performed her duties excellently, and I was proud to see that the financial sector is represented by such a talented woman. Still, she has chosen to commit to the role where she is truly irreplaceable.

Many young female graduates harbour doubts: “can I do it? Is it possible? If I have a child, must I give up my profession and career? Will I lag behind other people when I go back to work? Will caring for a baby be completely fulfilling for me?” Perhaps they too can draw strength from the story of Ági, who has already answered these questions. And when she feels she wants to return to work, she will have lots of options to choose from – I am absolutely certain of this.

Katalin Novák

On the family

For as long as I can remember, I have felt privileged to have grown up in a loving family. Due to a chronic illness, my mother was at home on a disability pension with us children. My father worked day and night to support us. Yet both my mother and my father were there for me in the big moments of my life and whenever I needed help. I have one sibling. In my childhood, we were always together through thick and thin, no matter what happened.

For me, the family is like a shell. It protects me from external harm, it holds us together, it helps us.

Not every day is perfectly happy. Quite often, it is difficult to preserve unity. There have been many difficult situations when every family member wanted something different. But it has never happened that someone wanted to leave the family, because we were perfectly aware

of the fact that every difficulty was only temporary, and that everything would be worse without each other.

My family has given me a lot: love, hugs, opportunities, strength, perseverance, attention, discipline, rules, boundaries and so much more. When a successful person, standing on a podium, says they want to thank their families, these are not empty words, because without the values we receive from our family achieving anything worthwhile would be very difficult.

I have always wanted to extend my family, and have a family of my own. I feel that I was able to keep up my privileged situation, because I have been blessed finding a husband with whom I share values and whom I can love every day. I am also privileged because we have a wonderful son, and because I am expecting another baby whose arrival we are looking forward to very much. Everyone told me that having a family of your own, having a child is the most wonderful thing in the world. And I am grateful to be able to experience that it is indeed true. Nothing compares to the feeling when my little boy looks at me, gives me a hug and in his sweet voice says, "I love you Mum". Then the whole world ceases to exist around us, everything is quiet. It is just Us.

For me, today my family is All. I feel it gives me something every single minute. When I first held my child in my arms, I was enchanted. I felt and still feel that we are on a wonderful journey. In the beginning, I or we represent the whole world for a baby, because he is defenceless. It is we who can show him, month by month, what the world is like, because we are there for him as he experiences the little things in life. Indeed, it is fantastic to see reality opening up for a child. I loved being with my son when he learned to notice things, smile or move. I loved being with him when he would lie in the grass for minutes on end and watch bugs marching by. I loved watching him pick up seemingly identical pebbles and marvel at how beautiful each one was. I loved watching as he learned how to fill a bucket with sand. I loved being with him as he learned to ride his plastic ride-on bike, and figured out how a tricycle works. And I could go on and on about how he saw and experienced with the deepest wonder things that seem so uninteresting to adults. Every day something new, every day one more thing. This process continues until a child becomes

an adult, and the cycle starts again when he or she becomes a parent and will be able to experience these wonders through the child's eyes again.

I think that these experiences cannot be imitated or brought back. And they are worth all the hardships. Because not every moment is easy. Life can be tiring, monotonous, annoying, yet I am grateful for every minute I can spend with my family.

I am aware that for some people life is so difficult that everyday hardships may sometimes obscure these small miracles. Still, the arrival, the touch, the hug and the love of a child is always the same. For children the family is everything, and they need nothing more than to be loved.

All my life, work has meant a lot to me. I studied very hard so that I would be able to work a lot. But it never crossed my mind to choose only career building, because I knew that life cannot be complete without a family. I am glad that my work gave me the opportunity to think about the possible ways of helping families. It is not possible to solve every problem at once, but many steps have been taken that make everyday life easier for those who face difficulties and help many people to enjoy the privilege of starting a family.

Zsófia Laposa

She is a second-generation young winemaker, who returned from abroad to Badacsony in 2013 enriched by valuable experience to make wine in the family business.



Recommendation

I know nothing about wine. Perhaps that is why I admire those who live in the vineyards, follow the winemaking process, serve their guests from their own bottles and barrels, and even have their winery labels on the shelves of shops.

I know a little more about the world of family businesses, so I also know how challenging it is to change generations, how many great businesses go bankrupt or are taken over by new owners because there is no one in the family to carry on the legacy from grandparents or parents. And I also see what a blessing it is when one of the children is willing to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and continue to run and expand the business with fresh eyes and enthusiasm.

Laposa wines are known and loved by many, who perhaps know that like many Hungarian wineries, it is a family business where the second generation has taken over the responsibility of management and decision-making. And there are a lot of decisions to be made when making wine. It is not enough to have knowledge, experience and good taste – you also need plenty of determination and courage.

Zsófia Laposa is a smart, cheerful woman and a well-educated, competent winemaker, who ran the family business with one of her brothers between 2013 and 2020, and then founded her own winery in 2021. They are also one of those families where, in addition to close ties of blood, there is also a business and professional connection between family members. They share tasks, responsibilities, burdens, expenses and worries, but they also share success, joy and pride. Zsófi is a cosmopolitan person, who has

brought back the experiences she gained abroad and found a home on the shores of Lake Balaton. It is still an open question whether the Laposa children's children will carry on their parents' legacy. We hope so!

Katalin Novák

Wine family

On my father's side, my grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather made barrels. My grandfather was the first who was more interested in what actually went into the barrel. My maternal grandfather made wines and violins in Badacsony. Forty-four years ago, my parents met "by chance" on the train between the Balaton highlands and Budapest. Later they received a small cellar in Monoszló as a wedding present. So our family's love of wine has been with us for generations.

I was the third child of my parents, so I was already surrounded by a "big" family at birth. As a third child, I had to work for parental attention, as there was no time I would spend alone. I became persistent and hardworking, and thanks to my brother and sister I learned and developed quickly. Of course it took me rather a long time to realise this and to learn to be grateful for them. But I now know that it is not just by chance that I have made my choices so far the way I have.

I guess everyone has some family-related memory, even people who did not have the chance to grow up in a family, because the absence of a family itself is a memory. The concept of family is therefore something for everyone, but it is not easy to define, because it cannot be linked solely to a genetic link or a set of economic rules. The word *family* is easy to explain and describe, but it is still difficult to give a precise definition of it. I am happy to have been invited to contribute to this book, because it has given me the opportunity to reflect on what family means to me and why it is important.

The family has economic, biological, sociological and psychological definitions, and they are all different. Each has a different emphasis. However, no one disputes that the family is essentially a dynamic, self-regulating system that functions well or not so well, that seeks to achieve equilibrium in which primary socialisation takes place.

As this is the first and narrowest circle, our core values, our patterns of attachment, our sense of identity come from here. Family members and the emotional bonding with them play a significant role in how children experience themselves and the people in their immediate and wider environment. Each family has its own unique and recognisable characteristics, rules, structure and functioning. The patterns that emerge whilst living together affect the emotional relationships of family members. Moreover, the actions of each family member have an impact on the others; each member's behaviour is both a cause and a consequence of the others' behaviour. The story of our family follows us throughout our lives, just as the first chapter of a book sets the storyline for the next chapters.

Due to external circumstances, each child has different experiences in the family from the time of foetal development and birth, and each child reacts differently to the world because of their uniqueness. The development of our personality depends to a large extent on family relationships, the number of brother and sisters, and the individual emotional state of each family member at any point of time. Presumably, if we asked the different members of a family to tell their stories, they would focus on surprisingly different events and life situations. We might not even recognise that they were talking about the same family. Thus, each family's story is unique and special, and has lessons for others.

The family business has always been an important part of our family history. It has been present in the problems of everyday life and at Sunday lunches. Working together, the family mechanism often overrides how people operate professionally. In my experience, this is perhaps why it is more difficult to work in a family business. It involves a lot of sacrifice and compromise, both in your personal life and at work. Often, subconscious issues from childhood have to be resolved at company meetings. Thanks to our family's Italian-like temperament, we have experienced the joys of shared success and emotional ups and downs over the years.

The impacts of my family environment and my childhood experiences have always been with me. I think that as the third child I was the freest, because, for example, there were no longer any expectations about my choice of profession. My parents involved me from a very young age and showed me not only the daily sacrifices but also the attractive side

of viniculture. They gave me the space I needed, while sharing their accumulated experience. The decision was mine and not a foregone conclusion. I am now certain that I would not have travelled and studied so much in the world, or moved from Budapest to the countryside, or become a winemaker without my parents.

As we grow up, we have the opportunity to start a new family and bring up children. Starting a family is a decision and a responsibility. In our new family we can choose to leave behind the patterns of behaviour that we have inherited over generations (and which affect our daily lives, our present and our future), so that we no longer pass them on to our children. Understanding ourselves, examining the reasons for our actions and discovering the history of our family within ourselves can be very helpful. Each generation influences and to some extent determines the destiny of its descendants, but this does not exempt us from consciously shaping our lives. The opportunity for change is in our hands. A well-functioning family provides the space for individual development and takes into account the personal needs of its members. The stability of the system can be maintained through constant, conscious work in the face of ever-changing external and internal circumstances. A balance between stability and change is therefore a prerequisite for smooth functioning.

I want a family where we can experience unconditional love, where we can feel safe and we look out for each other, where we can make mistakes and forgive, where we can learn from each other, be honest and hold a mirror up to each other, where we can get the closest to our natural selves and also to our fellow human beings through our family members. These things are not obvious or automatic, and are also applicable outside the family. Each of these conditions must be created and consciously guarded. Perhaps this is one of the meanings of being human.

I have learnt a lot from my parents and brother and sister, and I still learn from them. My dad passed on the value of knowledge, my mum taught me the importance of Sunday lunches, my brother taught me that nothing is impossible, and my sister taught me that sometimes keeping quiet is better than speaking up. In a different family, I am sure I would be a different person, but I am grateful for who I have become. Now it is

my turn to make the decision as a mature woman to start a family and have a child. And even though

the family may seem like an old-fashioned, outdated institution, I see it as an opportunity.

For me, the question is not whether to start a family, but how to do it. How to use the knowledge and experience of previous generations, how to look after myself and others, and how to love. It is important to have a family so that we can understand each other and thus be richer and more receptive.



PUBLIC LIFE

Katalin Makrai Schmitt

Rózsa Zsigó and Róbert Zsigó

Dr. Mária Schmidt

Dr. Katalin Szili

Gábor Bányai



Katalin Makrai Schmitt

Olympic silver medallist Hungarian gymnast, wife of Pál Schmitt. In 1963, she was made Hungarian Youth Female Athlete of the Year, and in 1964 Hungarian Gymnast of the Year. She has two children and four grandchildren.



Recommendation

"Everyone needs a little exercise, so get up from your armchairs! It will take only a few minutes, don't be afraid, it will do you good." In Hungary everyone remembers this silly little song that introduced the five-minute home exercise sessions on Hungarian television in the 1980s. In our apartment in a housing estate, we had the TV set in the bedroom, but the double bed almost filled the room, so my brother and I would try to imitate the exercises on the screen every evening while standing on top of the bed. That is where I first saw Olympic silver medallist gymnast Katalin Makrai Schmitt, who, with her three daughters, was trying to get Hungary moving.

At the 1964 Tokyo Olympics the whole country cheered on Katica, as she was lovingly called, and after her retirement she was welcomed on TV. From 2010 onwards, as the wife of Pál Schmitt, President of Hungary, she showed how a first lady can be a community-focussed person, willing to withdraw into the background, but, when necessary, willing to step forward. She is a supportive partner with an unwavering system of values, a person easy to respect and love. Her subtle elegance, attentive nature and accessibility enabled her to establish connections in an instant. She was never arrogant, and never behaved as if her position had placed her above others. She took a genuine interest in others' problems and was keen to champion important causes. Her kind smile was full of hope.

Katica Makray has three children and six grandchildren. She remains an active, tireless member of the civic community; her presence encourages everybody. Her openness and attentiveness have not changed over the decades. Now she tells us about her family.

Katalin Novák

God, Homeland, Family...

God, Homeland, Family. For me, these beautiful concepts are closely intertwined; I cannot interpret them separately.

Together, they mean EVERYTHING in my life.

If it were possible, I would say and write the three words at once, because I feel all three at once, as a unity. Were it possible, I would merge them into a single word.

GHOFAOMELANDLY

God gave me the privilege to live in a big family all my life. When I say “family”, I mean my three daughters and six grandchildren, my siblings, my cousins and their relatives. The past generations are our roots, and even distant relatives are points of stability. At home, besides acquiring faith and love for my homeland, I also learnt how to live everyday life in a way where listening to each other and helping each other is a perfectly natural thing. That was the way we lived after the war and then after 1956, in great poverty, but united in love. And that is how we live today, no matter if we live far apart because of our work or live closer to each other. For me, it is most natural to be in daily contact with my family members. My mother lived with us until the last day of her life. She was very attached to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they loved her, Ídes, as we called her, very much.

After fifty-five years of marriage, I must say that we mothers and fathers have a huge responsibility to pass on what we have received from our parents and grandparents: love, faith, legacy and roots. Let us create a loving home our children can return to any time so that they feel free to grow new shoots which, in their time, will bring new healthy fruit.

Our eldest daughter lives in the United States with her family, but we talk every day. We know everything about each other. Every summer, they spend two months with us here in Hungary. Those are always intense periods of being together. Our grandchildren, born in the United States, speak Hungarian perfectly. For my daughter Alexa it was very important to bring them home regularly, from the earliest age, so that they feel at home here, too, and get to know the Hungarian environment. They are proud of their dual identity; one of them has a job in Hungary.

If a young person wants to go abroad to study or work, we must let them go. A few years abroad will teach them a lot: they learn languages, get to know new cultures, become independent and, most importantly, they become able to adapt to and accept new situations. They will learn to accept the fact that not everything is the way they think it is, and they will understand that they must adapt to so many things and people. If we have managed to plant values in their hearts, they will come home anyway, to their parents, grandparents and home. They will bring home everything they have learnt abroad, which will promote not only their personal success but will be to Hungary's good as well. They will do as our ancestors did when they returned after their apprenticeship years abroad. Travelling abroad, guild members established professional contacts and learned new crafts and languages. When they returned, they made a masterpiece to obtain guild membership and become masters of their craft.

When Alexa turned eighteen and completed her secondary school studies, we invited every family member to celebrate. Since then, it has become a tradition: for thirty-six years, we have come together every year in our weekend house on a small island on the Danube. As time passes, our family keeps extending: there are brothers, sisters, grandchildren, cousins and their partners. This year, fifty-eight of us celebrated on a plot of 300 m². Organising the reunion gives something to do all year round, it inspires connections, which, in itself, is the engine of the family. When we come together, we not only enjoy each other's presence but also listen to those who live further away and tell us about what happened to them in the past year. We rejoice at good news, and discuss problems which we may find easier to solve together.

I tell my daughters that no matter what happens in their romantic relationships, they must keep their unity intact, and make sure that they never become alienated from each other. Although their temperaments are very different, they were good sisters as children and, thank God, they so remained. It is a great joy to see how close they are. This sense of belonging comes naturally for their children as well; they organise small get-togethers and events. We grandparents are very glad to see that they are so important to each other.

I often think about what an unpleasant experience it would be for me if, for example, sitting on a tram and chatting with the person sitting opposite me,

I found out that we were, say, cousins. This is why I urge my grandchildren to look for each other, to reach out to relatives and keep in touch. We have relatives not only in Budapest, but in Debrecen, Érd, in the United States and even in Australia.

In Hungarian culture children have always been important. They are the future. Hungary was the first European country to introduce childcare allowance in 1967. I was happy to be able to stay at home with all three of our daughters. That was a very important period, we had time to be together. These are the years when the foundations of children's attachment to the family home are laid, almost invisibly.

The current government places an exceptionally strong emphasis on helping parents. The support granted to parents with young children is clearly effective: wherever I go in the city, I am delighted to see young people pushing babies in prams, with one or two older children toddling along. I am proud of the active national policy of Hungary's government, which is an example to follow for the whole of Europe.

It is the cohesive force of millions of Hungarian families that sustains the nation, and our family is just one of them. This is a feeling of belonging to a nation that only poets can describe. As for myself, I can only feel it, treasure it and pass it on to my children and grandchildren. For me, love of my homeland is like romantic love, it never ceases, even if my country hurts me.

God, Homeland, Family – each of these concepts profess love, are moved by love, believe in love. Let us weave a web of love, and should it break, let us repair it again and again. Let us make it big so that it forms a single big protective net over our nation. This is the mission of every family. Let us give each other much joy and faith. Life is often very difficult, but it is the small joys that we can build on, and so can the nation. Love, happiness, beauty and good news lift our spirits. A beautiful national thought, filled with faith, or the national anthem always fills me with national pride and warmth, and gives me goose bumps.

And sometimes it occurs to me that hatred never gives anyone goose bumps.

Rózsa Zsigó and Róbert Zsigó

Róbert Zsigó is a politician;
Member of Parliament since 1998,
Mayor of Baja from 2010 to 2014,
State Secretary for Food Chain Supervision
from 2014, and Parliamentary State
Secretary to the Minister without
portfolio for families from 2020.
He and his wife Rózsa have three children.



Recommendation

Since I started working in public life, I have received countless greetings and postcards every Christmas. I make sure that I read each one personally, even if I cannot reply. Between Christmas and New Year's Eve, I usually go to the ministry and spend a few hours reading the postcards collected by my colleagues. A few years ago, I received a greetings card with a photo of my colleague and his family. It took me a few moments to realise why the photo of those smiling people was so unusual: two of the three adult children were in wheelchairs.

By then, I had known my colleague Róbert Zsigó for years. Or, to be more precise, I thought I knew him, because we had met many times and collaborated as State Secretaries. Still, I was not aware of the basic fact that two of his three children have disabilities and are wheelchair-bound. On that lonely December afternoon, with the postcard in my hand, I realised how little we know about each other, and how superficial our human relationships can become if we fail to pay real attention.

Since then, I have had a personal relationship with Robi and his wife Rózsa. I got to know their children, Eszter, Tamás and Bence, and learned a lot from them about love, attention, patience, acceptance and dignity. They contributed to the process when we were elaborating the regulation of the allowance for parents caring for their chronically ill children at home.

I am proud that Robi has joined our team as Secretary of State. I think of Bence fondly when in my kitchen I put the hot pie plate on the crocheted orange hot pad he made. I had the privilege to see what a blessing it is

for them to be able to rely on the stable support of their son Tamás, and I shared the pride of the parents when Eszter graduated this year.

The story of Rózsa and Robi inspires us to give thanks for our own family and to reassess the difficulties we face, and perhaps helps those who are carrying heavy burdens like they do. They deserve respect and appreciation.

Katalin Novák

Father, mother, children... and God

Over the past thirty-plus years (that is, since we have been married), my wife and I have often talked about how as children and young people we wondered who we would marry. Would we find “the one”? And we agreed that we were both grateful to God that we’d found each other and were able to link our lives together.

After our marriage, we started to plan our family life. We were sure that we wanted children.

And we were also sure that

we would accept and raise in love all of the children God would give us, just as they are, because “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Cor 13)

Our “story” started in a perfectly ordinary way. On our second wedding anniversary, we received a beautiful gift: our first child, Tamás was born.

Wonderful weeks, months and years came. We moved into our own home, Tamás was growing and developed beautifully. As boys do, he explored the world, and soon learned that sometimes it was better to take his parents’ advice.

After three years, my wife was expecting again, and, as it soon turned out, this time not one child but twins.

There came a period of joy, anticipation and excitement. We were planning how to transform our home and lives. And then, on doctors’ orders, Rózsa had to be admitted to hospital on the 20th week of her pregnancy.

At home, we boys did our best to make it all work. We did the chores (with the help of the grandmothers). We visited my wife every weekend. Three months went by...

In December, Eszter and Bence were born, two months premature. Due to oxygen deprivation at birth, it was not certain for weeks that they would survive. At that time, we had no idea what lay ahead. This is a life situation that only those can truly understand who, in some way, have first-hand experience of the life of such a family. It was our love and faith that kept us going while we were struggling with all these hardships.

We wanted our children to grow up in a family. We tried to make sure that our elder son, Tamás received the attention and love he needed, even if the two "little ones" needed much more care and attention.

The early development sessions started, followed by physiotherapy, massage, equine-assisted therapy and swimming pool sessions. My wife explored everything; when, where and to whom we needed to go for the appropriate treatment and therapy.

As we did not live in Budapest, we decided to continue the development of the twins (who were then of kindergarten age) at home. We did not want them to go to a residential institution, we wanted them to grow up in the loving environment of our family. We wanted to take care not only of their physical development but also of their souls.

We were convinced that for their later life, a loving family environment would matter just as much as the development of their ability to move. And it is now clear that we made the right decision.

Our eldest son, Tamás, is over twenty-nine. He is about to become independent and have children of his own. The "little ones" will soon be twenty-five.

Eszter received her Master's degree this summer, she had studied and worked hard for it. Bence is studying his second profession. He has become an attentive and kind young man.

We are very proud of all three of our children. They love each other and what they do, and they help each other every single day.

When my wife and I got married and were thinking about our future together, this was not our plan. Yet life has proven that our future does not depend (or, rather, does not only depend) on human will. As my wife often says, *“God is a great director.”*

Our family life is different from what you might call “average” for two reasons. In addition to the fact that two of our three children have disabilities, I have been a member of parliament for the town of Baja and its region since the children were small (since 1998), and have always had other public engagements as well.

Neither of these two circumstances make life easy. Bringing up three children needs all of your attention, and in our case this is all the more true.

Despite my busy work schedule, I help a lot with caring for the twins. I am the one to call when there is a problem; the family can always count on me.

When I deem it necessary, I go wherever I am needed, or, if this is not possible, send help. Sometimes my advice suffices to solve the problem.

Rózsa takes care of the family in three shifts. She looks after me, because, when working very hard, I forget to eat sometimes. She supervises the children’s daily life. She is the selfless love in our family. She tolerates, hopes for and endures everything.

Throughout the years, we have come into contact with many different people and families. Most of them felt sorry for us when they heard about our “story”.

Of course, we have to overcome a lot of difficulties in our daily lives, because the “little ones” need constant care day and night, even today.

For us, it is important to show them everything that their condition allows. We do not “hide” them. On the contrary, we want people we meet not to be embarrassed, not to turn their heads.

People often behave this way because they do not know how to relate to people with disabilities.

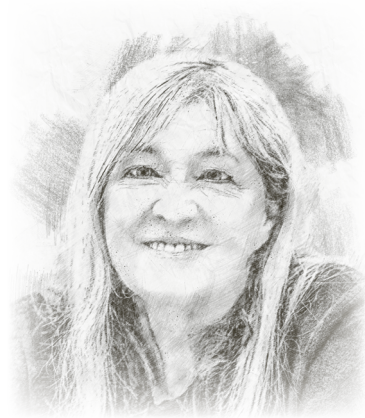
We often say that our job is to teach people to be brave enough to ask our children a question, and then they will see that it is easy to communicate with them.

Many find it strange when we say that we are very grateful to God for our children. Despite the difficulties of everyday life, they have become smiling and loving young people. The grandparents (while they were with us), our brothers and sisters and their families, and our friends were and are here for us.

Our "story" is one of those which prove that "... *Love never fails.*" (1 Cor 13).

Dr. Mária Schmidt

Széchenyi Prize laureate historian, university professor, Director General of the House of Terror Museum, founding member of the Women for Hungary Club. Her professional work has been recognised with numerous awards, including the Order of Merit of the French Republic and the Republic of Poland. She has two children and four grandchildren.



Recommendation

People who are capable of thinking on a historical scale often come to different conclusions in life than those who do not have such an extensive knowledge of our past – or they come to the same conclusion in a different way. When I was a child, I did not see why it was so important to learn where we came from. I did not see what we could learn from the experiences of different times and people. I did not understand that without a knowledge of history, our history, it is difficult to make the right decisions. Later I realised all that, and perhaps that was what made me appreciate people who look not only forwards but backwards as well. When I was a child, the kind of family one was born into was decisive in this respect as well. It mattered whether the grandparents or parents were able to (and, if yes, whether they were willing and had the courage to) show us the pieces of history that were deliberately hidden from us in schools, whether they were able and willing to correct the distorted and falsified interpretations.

Today the world is different, and we are facing difficulties of an opposite kind. Children have free access to different interpretations. When they hear something, they check it on the basis of multiple sources. They can decide what or who is authentic for them. Obviously, the kind of family one is born into remains a decisive factor.

Mária Schmidt is a historian who knows, researches and interprets history, particularly those periods which have not been discussed at all or have been regularly lied about. She is aware of the fact that if you want to understand the present, you must know the past. Like Jacob Burckhardt,

Mária Schmidt is convinced that debates on the truth of history always serve our present and our future. She prefers to express her thoughts and insights in a manner that is understandable to all, openly, sometimes even bluntly. She arrives at conclusions that others may at first find shocking, even frightening; some people may even find them offensive. But it is with this “working method” that she is able to break taboos that we tend to accept without thinking. If we do not challenge such taboos, we are bound to ignore new and old historical insights that would bring us closer to a better understanding of our history, and thus of ourselves.

This piece of writing is not personal in nature, but rather a treatise to raise awareness; still, let me mention a personal aspect. I have known Mária Schmidt for many years, and I also respect her, in addition to her qualities discussed above, for the way she and her son show that it is possible to live in a family in love, even if the family members have seemingly irreconcilable political views. Mária Schmidt and her son respect each other's opinions. They may disagree on many things, but, above all, they respect and love each other, which is good to see these days when all too many friendships, families and communities are divided by different political beliefs.

Katalin Novák

On the importance of the family

“Our house is getting bigger and our family is getting smaller.”

(The Dalai Lama)

In Hungary, post-war sovietisation brought about fundamental changes to family life. The communist occupiers emancipated women and forced them to enter the world of work. They eliminated the middle class and an intrinsic feature of it, the single-earner family model. The socialist state regarded children as a public good and, therefore, supported childbearing and child rearing.

This equality of women, the sexual revolution and the growing number of women in the workforce led to a huge increase in the number of divorces. The general availability of contraceptive pills decoupled reproduction from sexual pleasure, ensuring that people could have active sex lives

without worry or guilt. The responsibility and the pressure to have children that comes with childbearing were removed. Once young people had the opportunity to have sex without marriage, the average age of couples at the time of marriage significantly grew. This encouraged women to refrain from sacrificing themselves for others and, at the same time, relieved men of responsibility.

The number of divorces grew and is still growing, leading to the break-up of families. The single-parent or multi-parent family model is gaining ground at the expense of the two-parent family model. An increasing number of children are growing up in broken homes, that is, single-parent families, typically without a father. The school performance of children coming from such families is often worse, and, as adults, they face more problems when integrating into the world of work. The reason for this is that they were deprived of family support, safety, comfort and positive models.

The responsibility of the family is to ensure permanence, establish habits, pass on family rituals, or in other words, pass on a living tradition.

In this secular age of ours, human relationships are increasingly based on utilitarianism. But, in reality, it is the community of love where we learn to understand and interpret one another, where the sense of belonging and of interdependence, the notion of *us* overrides material considerations. Individuals who do not have a family have no one to share their joys, sorrows, successes and failures with. They feel empty and useless, and, sooner or later, they will lose their zest for life. Because loneliness eats away at your soul. If you have a family, you are not alone. It may often happen that we feel ashamed of our family members, but, much more often, we are proud of them. The family ensures that belonging will prevail over hopelessness.

For a hundred and fifty years, Marxism has been waging an incessant war against the institution of the family. It wants to shake its very foundations and destroy its prestige. In the 20th century, people made repeated attempts to create a new society. Their most daring attempt – national and international communism – proved to be an abject failure. The 21st-century neo-Marxists wish to recreate not only society but

people themselves. Paradoxically, this process is championed by the fact that half of the Western world that did not have to suffer the construction and then fall of communist society. While Hungary turned its back on Marxism as early as the 1970s, the neo-Marxist elite of 1968 hijacked Western discourse to become increasingly committed to Marxism, to become atheist, anti-family and anti-national.

God was replaced by man. It is said that humans are able to recreate themselves in any form they wish, thanks to the progress of science and technology, cloning, genetic manipulation and plastic surgery. That was the starting point of a straight road to gender ideology, which denies (or proclaims transcendence of) not only the traditional family but also of the biological sex of the individual. Sex, once seen as a self-liberating act of giving and getting pleasure, has been reduced to an identity-forming construct. The neo-Marxists expect the abolition of biological sex and the re-interpretation of the concept and role of marriage and the family to bring about a society of “equals” as promised by the communists. In their attempts to redefine the traditional concept of family, they use pretext slogans such as “family is family” or “love is love” (?). As if these pompous statements meant anything at all.

So far, Marxism has bought about only destruction. It has failed to create anything. Instead of addressing 21st-century challenges, today’s Marxists flood us with useless, out-of-date substitutes and pseudo-problems that create fragmentation and atomisation. They have revived racism. They deny that there are men and women. They lie that everyone can be whatever they want, it is just a matter of determination, medicine and surgery. They provoke conflict between men and women, between children and parents. The right of parents to decide about the sexual and ideological upbringing of their children is increasingly being challenged.

Neo-Marxists try to rely exclusively on arguments, but, at the same time, have become infinitely credulous. They have forgotten that neither life nor human beings are rational. We are emotional beings. We make decisions based on emotions, impulses or mood swings. We have become obsessed with security, although we can never know when an unforeseen event may occur that affects our lives drastically, or even puts it on a completely

new track. We are fragile and vulnerable beings. We have lost our faith in God, and therefore we don't bother to have children.

Those who have children know that they will live on in them and their children. Our children give us strength and consolation. It is like a pebble thrown into water: our life forms extending rings of ripples and gets connected to the universe. We need faith, hope, love. And if we have faith, then we have something to hope for. The COVID-19 pandemic, which was unleashed on us so unexpectedly, once again made it very clear to all that the first and foremost source of support, love and joy is our family and our loved ones. Those who were alone during the long periods of lockdown were hit harder by isolation than those who survived the monotonous and nerve-wracking months spending precious time and having meaningful experiences with their loved ones.

Let us protect the family. We need it.

Dr. Katalin Szili

Lawyer, human ecologist, politician,
former Member of Parliament,
Commissioner of the Prime Minister,
and Speaker of Parliament.
Decorated with the Order
of the Legion of Honour of the French Republic,
the Báthory and Bocskay Awards.
She and her husband have two children.



Recommendation

One of the defining memories of my childhood was at my grandmother's place with the big family, spooning up the Sunday chicken soup. Initially, there were polite questions and answers, and the conversation could be sustained while eating roast chicken and mashed potatoes, but by the time we reached the pudding, either a loud exchange of words had unfolded or the company around the table had broken up. Some members of the family were of diametrically opposed political persuasions. My parents were staunch anti-communists, and for as long as I can remember, this view has been the dominant one for the people closest to me. And while I find it difficult to understand why anyone would have joined the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party of their own accord, I try not to be judgemental. It is an unexpected but gratifying realisation when someone who professes to belong to the opposite camp in the traditional political arena turns out to have similar views as we do. That was the case with Katalin Szili, whom I knew as a left wing, genuine social democratic politician, and about whom I had my reservations. Over the years, however, I have come to acknowledge her deep Christian faith, which I have regularly experienced in person in the community of the prayer group in Parliament, and I have also become convinced of her commitment to the cause of national unification.

As parents and grandparents we are not primarily right wing or left wing. It is easier if we see the world in a similar way and think almost alike, but that is not what makes a family community close-knit, and human relationships can bridge differences in opinions in the best of

cases. Katalin Szili is one of the defining political figures after the fall of communism. For many, it must have been an inspiration that as a rural girl born in Barcs, she reached the exalted position of Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, the highest public office held by a Hungarian woman. In the next couple of pages she provides us with a glimpse into her family life and shares something with readers that they most probably did not know about her.

Respect and thanks!

Katalin Novák

A home built from the bricks of love

The family is a small microstructural group in society that functions as a relatively complete system in itself. It has close, multidirectional links with other subsystems of society, and its members are in frequent or permanent contact with each other, interwoven in their way of life. When I read the sociological definition of the family, I cannot help but think of our own family, in which four generations, though not living together, are present. Our parents, our children and our grandchildren. Together like this. We meet the sociological criteria of the family, namely, we function as a complete system, linked with other systems in society in ways that interlace our lifestyle.

The invitation to contribute my thoughts to this book is in itself a good opportunity to look a little deeper into what it is that holds our peculiarly complex, yet not so extraordinary family together. What do we look like close up?

Hard though we tried, we unfortunately did not manage to have a child of our own in our marriage. After a tragic accident suffered by our friends nearly 30 years ago, we took on the task of bringing up their children, who were then not even 10 years old. We brought them up as our own children. They are now university-educated, polite, wonderful adults, who speak foreign languages and have children of their own. So far we have one wonderful granddaughter, a bright and inquisitive little girl of three. We smile from time to time when she is trying to learn who is who in the family. Everybody has a different surname, especially as my mother

and mother-in-law both live in their second marriage, and my husband and I are from their respective first marriages. At a turning point in our lives we moved close to our parents to help them. One day, when one of our children was about to buy a property near us, I asked, "Why are you doing this, when your work ties you to Budapest?"

The reply was: "We want your grandchildren to have grandparents close by. Also, you're not getting any younger yourselves, the time may come when you'll need us."

At that moment, what up to that point had only been a gut feeling dawned on me with total clarity: apart from the caring function, the cohesive, cementing force of our family is the love, respect and responsibility we have for each other. This is what protects the bonds between us. It provides emotional security and a sense of safety for every member of the family at all times.

So,

for us the family is a building in which the bricks are made of love, the beams of responsibility, the doors and windows of respect, and it is all bound together by the solidity of faith,

and this is what gives us momentum in our daily lives and dignity in our celebrations.

We wanted to pass on this commitment to values.

Fortunately, our children reached that life stage in the last decade when they were able to benefit from government support to help them through the difficulties of having children and an independent life.

This reminds me that two years ago I had the opportunity to participate, as a member of the Hungarian delegation, at the UN Conference on the Status of Women, where the Hungarian government's family and support policies were presented in one of the panel discussions. The room was chock-a-block full of people from all over the world. It felt very good again to be Hungarian, on the other side of the ocean. So much praise was heaped on the various measures, but also on the whole family support system: crèche and nursery school, pregnancy and maternity allowances, home-making allowances and tax relief. During the break,

short consultations and quick exchanges of business cards ensured that the transfer of experience could continue. I was proud to see that our achievements were a “hats off” experience and our support schemes were appreciated.

For me as a politician who has always considered herself socially committed to social democracy, it was a strange and unique experience that after 2010, a conservative Christian Democrat government took concrete measures that political actors who had previously defined themselves as left wing could never have imagined, let alone carried out. In fact, the political experience of the last 30 years shows that, on the whole, the left-liberal forces rather excelled in austerity.

Over the past ten years social policy has built a coherent support system, and families are clearly the winners. Families built with the bricks of love, whose actual home building is supported by a range of benefits, thereby adding financial security to emotional security for every generation from the crèche to a dignified old age.

This is perhaps better illustrated by the case of a couple I know, where the wife is Hungarian and the husband comes from a wealthy Venezuelan family. They have chosen Hungary as their home and intend to bring up their soon-to-be-born child here. When I asked them why they had chosen Hungary, they said that they could bring up their children safely here, and that they had opportunities here that were even more attractive than those enjoyed by their relatives in Western Europe.

Of course I should also mention support for Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, which was also made possible by the significant changes in national policy in 2010. In addition to granting Hungarian citizenship, an important step was enshrined in the Fundamental Law: “Bearing in mind that there is one single Hungarian nation that belongs together, Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders...” In order to ensure that the Hungarian communities in neighbouring countries remain, prosper and grow in their homeland, the government extended some elements of family support to our fellow Hungarians in addition to supporting businesses. The name of the Umbilical Cord Programme is a good indication of the attachment

to the motherland; and its elements, namely maternity support and the start-of-life support extended to young people coupled with the Baby Bond scheme will hopefully improve the demography and strengthen the sense of national belonging, while at the same time belonging to the nation as an extended family will give everyone a sense of security in regard to both the present and the future.

Gábor Bányai

Engineer and politician.
He has been a Fidesz Member
of Parliament since 2006.
He is married and has five children.



Recommendation

The reality of the COVID-19 pandemic became tangible when it reached almost every family. For months, most people had only heard about the cruelty and aggressiveness of the disease from news reports, and then it caught up with acquaintances, relatives, friends and close family members. Many came to accept their personal vulnerability when they witnessed first-hand the devastation that the pandemic could wreak. In the first eighteen months the virus claimed many victims; children were orphaned, young men and women were widowed, and many families had to say an unexpected farewell to grandparents and great-grandparents. These are losses that can be measured in life, but the daily lives of countless families have been overshadowed by worry, fear, struggle with the disease, distance, and absence.

Our fellow MP, Gábor Bányai also faced death. Although he was just over fifty, the virus knocked him off his feet and he was hospitalised and then admitted to intensive care. He spent one hundred and fifty days away from home, eighty-five days in a coma, sixty-eight days on a ventilator, and his heart stopped twice. Almost everyone had given him up for lost, his wife and their five children had said goodbye to him twice. What happened, and how come Gábor was given another lease on life – is something the reader can find their own answer to. I can only add that a twenty-four-hour prayer chain was started for Gábor's recovery on the day before his condition turned for the better, and he himself proclaims with full assurance that it is by the grace of God that he is with us again.

Katalin Novák

The Family is the power plant of love

My wife, Krisztina and I have been married for almost three decades. It was very difficult to start a family amidst the economic and political difficulties after the fall of communism, during the austerity measures imposed by the painful Bokros package. Many people in those years gave up their dreams of having large families.

We too were considered irresponsible for having more children than the average. It is no secret that we sometimes had very serious problems.

But, looking back, I am – we are – happy to say that we would not have given up any of our children for an easier life together.

The family is indeed a power plant – the power plant of love.

We will never forget the joy of our children when their brothers and sisters were born, their games that would last into the evenings, the strength they gave to one another, the steps they made to becoming a fraternal community.

The birth of our youngest child marked the beginning of the most beautiful family stories and our best time as a family. The way in which shared care and devotion appeared in their lives, and the strengthening of their love for each other, proved once again, for the fifth time, that a child is a gift from God.

One of the important strengths of our family is the contact with our immediate and extended relatives, the gatherings of cousins, sharing and celebrating Christmas and Easter together.

We have lived through the greatest trials of our lives together. I myself spent the spring of this year in a distant, unconscious dream. The COVID-19 virus caused the greatest family reunion of our lives. The response to my illness was an unprecedented outpouring of love, responsibility and protection for each other. Not that we had ever lacked these things before. If we had not had a family, if we had not had children, the illness and suffering would have put both my wife and me in an even darker place.

The family is the strongest community of love that can exist in our lives.

I am not saying that the love of two people is not enough, but what has been particularly rewarding for us is that, thanks to our children, every day has brought us new experiences, so we never get bored with everyday life.

With these thoughts I would like to underline my feeling that it is possible to live alone without a family, but it is not worth it.



MEDIA

Fanny Hozleiter – Mosolyka

Gergő Süveges

Ilona Keresztes

Krisztina Vrábel



Fanny Hozleiter

– Mosolyka

Writer and blogger, awarded the Golden Blog Prize in 2012. Her book titled *Te döntesz* (Your decision) won the Golden Book Award. Her second book was inspired by her husband and won the professional jury's prize in the Celebrities category of the Health Heroes contest in 2019.



Recommendation

It's your decision! – shouts the lettering on the turquoise-coloured mugs we got from Fanny Hozleiter, or Mosolyka, Little Smile, as her blogger's name goes, after her motivational performance to which I took my children. I wanted them to meet Fanny and have a first-hand experience of the positive approach to life that she radiates, and perhaps reflect on how lucky we are. We were coming out of the café where the event took place, mugs in hand. On one side there was a smiley, on the opposite side, a sad face. While we were excitedly assessing what we had seen and heard, my mug slipped out of my hand, fell to the ground and broke into three pieces. I got very angry, annoyed at myself for being so clumsy, we had not even got home yet and I had already ruined the gift, and then I looked at the sign on the mug: "Your decision!" – and smiled. Because that is the point. Ever since then, whenever I drink tea from the mug glued back together, I think about the many, many gifts the Lord has given us.

When I was reading Fanny Hozleiter's book, I kept wondering if I could have made the same decision as she did. Would I have been able, diagnosed with an incurable disease, confined to a wheelchair, severely limited in my actions, half-orphaned and then fully orphaned, to find a companion, a community; would I have been able to study, to work, to write, and even to empower others? It is good to think that yes, I could have done it too. Just as I would like to believe that I could have given our own children the right send-off in a similar situation. But that is just an idea, not a certainty. Fanny did it. Her smile is heartfelt; her drive is captivating, her cheerfulness infectious, and her perseverance impressive.

She also makes no secret of the fact that her life is still sometimes difficult. That she feels her condition is a burden, and sometimes even a sacrifice for the people around her. But we also know from her that, however insurmountable the difficulties we face may seem, it is up to us to decide how we deal with them.

Katalin Novák

Life is easier with a send-off gift

In 2016 my husband and I were moving from Budapest to Siófok. We had almost everything in the car in boxes. What happened there and then was very memorable and thought provoking for me. Exhausted from packing, still a little nostalgic, we sat down in the living room by our much-loved fireplace that my dad had made with his own two hands, next to the arch. We were silent for long minutes, with the only sounds being that of a small fly and our breathing. We held hands and knew that Sankó and I were on the threshold of a new life, a new chapter.

There was a box near us. The last box.

“That’s the only one left,” Sankó said. I sighed heavily and added, “There is actually a lot more left than that.”

He was thinking of the last box to get in the car. But I was filled with nostalgia in the flat where I lived through so much with my family...

Our move came a few weeks after my father had left this life on Earth and followed my mother. For me, that home had meant security for years – security personified by my Dad. I felt I didn’t want to live there without him: perhaps that was the point in my life when I had to grow up completely and put away my child self, along with the memory of the old home, in a very dear and important corner of my heart.

Apparently I could “only” take boxes with me to my new life, but in reality I have also brought the basics that my parents had given me as a send-off gift. Now I symbolically open one of these boxes in my new life and remember what I received as a gift from my family. It is already an inseparable part of me forever, and I owe them infinite gratitude for it.

A pair of glasses as a send-off gift...

My mother is a true MOTHER for me, with a capital letters, who was always my hero, and who provided me with the foundations for my approach to life. Although I lost her when I was 13, even at thirty-three, the treasures she gave me still constitute the foundations of my life.

I was still a child when she taught me to see life through symbolic glasses. Through that particular pair of glasses, life is not just black or white, but colourful and magical. While my classmates were playing tig or jumping over a skipping rope, I was in a wheelchair. But thanks to the "glasses" I had a happy childhood. I could see that while I couldn't play tig like the others, I was still able to be a valuable part of the community. I could give and accept love. I saw what it was like to consider each other's strengths and abilities instead of our shortcomings. While I did not become the champion of the tig game, my peers could always count on me whenever they wanted a chat, a creative thought, and a smile.

I remember my Mum's words:

"No, Fanny darling, you are not different from the others, you just solve things differently from them, but you are just as valuable as your peers."

To this day, that particular pair of glasses allows me to see the values in people, and to give and receive acceptance and love here on Earth.

I will make it into a send-off gift...

In my mind I can see my Dad in the kitchen cooking something delicious. Everyone has a special language, something through which they can best express their emotions. Although I didn't realise it for a long time, for him it was the preparation and serving of food. He even served simple potato pasta magically. My friends loved to come to visit because they knew they would go back home with full bellies and memorable tastes.

In addition to enriching me with countless taste experiences and infinite love, consciously or unconsciously, Dad passed on fundamentally important things that are now the tenets and guarantees of my life and my future.

Whatever he had in the fridge or the pantry at home, he would cook up something creative and superb.

Setting an example of creativity is a fantastic family gift, because it has taught me to make the most of what I have, and not to bemoan what I lack in my life.

I have asked the “big question” countless times, and Dad's answer is still ringing in my ears.

“What are you cooking?”

“Well, we’ll see what it turns out to be when it’s ready, sweetie.”

We never know what tomorrow will bring, what is hiding on the bottom shelf of the pantry and of our lives, but it is our decision whether we cook something divine with the ingredients; something delicious we can then share with our loved ones.

Whatever we do or eat, it can be served up in a way that makes us enjoy, love and appreciate it even more. A tiny sprig of parsley from the garden can add colour to a meal, just as a kind thought of appreciation can add colour to our day.

Actions can teach us without words, and that is what our families do first and foremost. Sometimes we only really appreciate them later. It is later that we realise what they have given us, what they have left us. Sometimes we find their treasured gifts hidden in boxes, sometimes they are hidden in our hearts and souls.

Everything seems to pass in life, but we can keep so many happy memories of our families in our hearts, and smile at the thought that we are lucky enough to have had those moments with them... I miss them so much, and sometimes it hurts that I cannot hug them anymore, but then I fall asleep with this thought: Thank you for being your child and for the time you spent with me. The memory of you will live in me forever.

Gergő Süveges

Journalist, winner of the Prima and the Kazinczy Prizes, television and radio editor and anchor. Author of several books on fatherhood. He is married and has four children.



Recommendation

At a conference this morning, the speaker began with an apology. He said that he was feeling very distracted because they were expecting their third child and his wife could go into labour at any moment, and when she did, he would have to leave immediately. Even before he finished his sentence he was greeted by a loud cheer. Nothing is more natural, we think, than for a father to be there when his child is born, just as he is there later, not only at bathing, telling bedtime stories or when the broken toy car needs to be fixed, the pram has to be carried downstairs or the cot assembled, but also just to be there. When our first child was an infant, only my husband could hold him in his arms in such a way that he calmed down immediately and usually fell asleep. And in the eighteen years since then, how many situations have arisen when it was he that was needed, and no one else!

Today, more and more people know what Gergő Süveges has often been saying: we need fathers who are present. The majority of today's young men want to take an active part in bringing up children, and preparing for fatherhood. In the mornings, in kindergartens, schools or at teacher-parents meetings you see fathers just as much as mothers, and there are now fathers who take advantage of the opportunity to spend part of the state-supported period of child care leave at home with their children.

Many people know Gergő Süveges from the television screen or his radio programmes, and people who do know him know that he is a genuine Christian and a man who preserves and conveys values; one who uses his popularity to serve.

As a father of four, he knows the beauty and the difficulties of being a father who is really present in his children's lives.

Katalin Novák

Opportunities of our fatherhood

“Tell your child about your father in the way you want them to tell about you to your grandchildren.”

What do you think of this advice?

When my book *Apakulcs* (“Father key”) was first published I was sometimes faced with very surprising reactions. The book is for fathers and helps us to connect more closely with our children. Yet, when I gave talks around the country, or shared a typical sentence, a small paragraph, a personal experience on social media, this was the sentence that triggered by far the most reactions.

For while the book is primarily intended to help readers shape their own attitudes towards their children, and their relationship with them, this sentence has led fathers (and mothers) to recall their memories and experiences – of their own fathers. I will show you some of these reactions so that we can take it further and think about what follows from all this.

Of course, this is also true if you have a father you respect.

It depends on the sort of father he was. There were three of us children and when my sister was born he left us. He had no financial or personal involvement in our upbringing. What should I tell my children about him? I'm not going to say much of anything, but when they're old enough, I'm sure I won't say anything good.

There is that father about whom it is best not to tell, because nothing good can be said of him.

I can't tell much good about my father, he was not a real father, I was 16 when he died. But I never talk badly about him in front of the children. I don't want to put the frustration I feel on them. It's my burden to deal with.

There are things we'd rather not say in front of the children. My father was unfit to live with. I think my case is different. I have a wonderful husband whom I love and respect very much and he loves and respects me. I admire him in my children. I doubt that we would be treated like my parents were, purely on the basis of our relationship to each other and to other people.

*My life is about breaking the pattern. The only thing my parents could show me was the wrong counter example;
of what partner and what relationship not to choose.*

Actually, the "how" is the big question, isn't it? Whether I can get to the point where, whatever it was like, I can accept it and say that it gave me so much. If I have that attitude, then I can tell you practically anything that's true, can't I? In fact, it might even be a prop for my children to understand me – and themselves – if they know my story. In doing so, I am setting an example that I can perhaps count on a little mercy from my children, and also that what I give them may one day be confronted (and that is a huge incentive for unrelenting honesty with myself).

A recurring experience and conclusion of the Father Key meetings and training sessions is that the functioning of every father is fundamentally affected by the father image he carries in his heart, in his memories, in his experiences, in his guts. Some are happy to carry on the patterns they have learnt at home, and are unreservedly grateful to their father for all he gave them in the first decades of their lives. Others find it painful to be confronted with their father's shortcomings: they feel disappointment, despair, or even pity, contempt or anger when they think about their father, and understandably seek new ways of thinking about their own fatherhood.

Today's parents also face countless difficulties, but one thing is undeniable: today, in the 21st century, we know much more about the human psyche and how relationships work, and we have a deeper understanding of the drivers of psychology. Anyone who wants to can access good quality literature or training to become a better father or mother to their children.

Our parents' and grandparents' generation did not have all this. And we have no reason to doubt that most of them brought up their children and grandchildren

to the best of their convictions and intentions. We may have reason to doubt, but we have precious little right to pass judgement on previous generations.

And of course, pointing fingers in retrospect does not make sense either.

It is more fruitful to look at our own fatherhood and try to make the most of what we have been given. It is enough if we strive to put into practice in our own lives the principles that help to build the father-child relationship.

Mainly by being aware that

*there are three keys to the bond between father and child:
the key of knowledge, the key of goodwill, and the key
of alliance.*

Bonding depends on the extent to which a father is able to know, love and support his child, and how skilled he is. The bond becomes stronger if the father is, first of all, curious about his child, tries to get to know them in as many situations as possible, to learn as much as possible about them – and at the same time to give information about himself. Secondly, if the father is able to express that his child is important to him, that he wants to do good for them, that he has the right kind of love for them. And thirdly, if the father keeps his child's growth and development in mind; and is able to support his child on this path. This is the message of the three keys: know, love, and support your child.

Maybe the father had never received these three gifts from his own father. But he can still give it to his own child.

It is worth picking up all the crumbs of memories and experiences that we can pass on from our father's behaviour. And it's worth building our own fatherhood – perhaps through the three fathering principles.

I firmly believe, and I experience it time and time again, that we can leave behind our shackling, stifling, sickening patterns. We do not have to pass on the wounds that we have suffered. We are able to find life-guiding, new directions in our own fatherhood, make a plan of action for ourselves along those lines, and begin to implement it.

And who knows? It is even possible that in the meantime we will come to terms with our own paternal legacy. Even if forgiveness and reconciliation are not easy steps. Moreover, they don't even mean the same thing.

While forgiveness is an individual task, reconciliation is a joint decision between two people.

Forgiveness is a difficult process and is essentially a matter of choice. It involves letting go of the desire for revenge, often even letting go of the need to receive an apology. Forgiveness is an effort to realise that this is what you were capable of then, and there, in that situation. The forgiver chooses to "let go of the other person's throat", figuratively speaking. This can be done even if the other party does not apologise or is no longer alive.

Reconciliation can only come from mutual will. It is a special gift to be able to participate in it. It requires sincere curiosity, listening to the other person without criticism, understanding and empathy for the other person's situation, generosity and a desire to make the relationship more important and valuable than chewing over one's own grievances. It is a very difficult, but also a liberating and happy opportunity. If there is a chance, it is worth taking it. For this great experience can give us the strength to make our own fatherhood healthier.

Every father and every child takes a different path, but ultimately they want the same thing: a deep encounter: bonding. Whether or not we have managed to create this with our own father, we must try to do so with our children.

For if the child remembers his father, it is in fact the bonding they had that he will remember. Not the make of his car, but the fact that they got in it together, he was sitting on his father's lap and was steering, they almost hit a tree, but they had a big laugh at the end. Not the brand of his clothes, but the smell he inhaled deeply as they wrestled on the floor. Not the lunch, but the laughs they shared across the table.

For it is in our bonding that we live on. That is our eternity.

Ilona Keresztes

Radio editor and presenter,
winner of the Prima Prémium Prize,
founder of the community named Young People
in the Service of Life. She has four children.



Recommendation

Vendég a háznál – gyerekekről felnőtteknek (House Guest – To Adults about Children). For me, the title and slogan of this daily programme on Kossuth Radio is closely linked to cooking and years spent at home with children. I was making lunch for them right at the time the programme on family and parenting issues was on the radio. That is how I got to know the editors and presenters, including Ilona Keresztes. In addition to her distinctive, soothing voice, I liked her because she asked her interviewees questions that I myself was curious about, and because she reassured me on a daily basis that the work I did at home to bring up children is no less valuable, useful and meaningful than being back in my office.

Years went by, our children went to kindergarten, I went back to the Ministry, and that put an end to my listening to *House Guest*. A few years later as Minister for Family Affairs I found myself on the other side of the microphone and became a regular guest on the programme. That is how I met Ilona Keresztes, the tireless reporter of topical current opportunities and topical issues that concern families. She asked practical questions, passed on listeners' comments, provided authentic information and was a pleasure to talk to.

Over the years, Ilona has expanded the programme's traditional audience in an exciting new direction: she gave a weekly slot to teenagers to talk about what was on their minds and ask questions from interviewees. *Válasz-utak (Choices and Answers)* is another programme worth listening to.

Ilona Keresztes is an authoritative source of information who conveys values. Her work reflects her Christian faith and her commitment to the protection of life. She has recently said goodbye to radio and has taken up community service to dedicate herself to the causes she cares about. She and her husband brought up four children in love and honour.

Katalin Novák

The family is the child's mental atmosphere

When our child is born, we want to give them the best to ensure that their development is smooth. Peace and calm as a foetus, breast milk as a baby or if there isn't any, a formula that is a perfect substitute for what nature has created. Later, healthy food, the best nursery, the kindest teacher, the best doctor, because that's what is safest. We want the water we drink, the air we breathe to be clean. If for some reason it isn't, we buy filtering equipment to filter out the things that are harmful to them. We all know that a child goes through a tremendous growth and neurological maturation process right from conception, and this continues after birth until adulthood. Anything that takes this away is an obstacle to development. We want them to have a flawless childhood, but life is not flawless.

My birthday is on the 1st of April. We used to joke that it was April Fools' Day, and there were people who thought my parents were actually fools for having a third child. In Hungary 180,269 babies were not born that year, but I was given a chance. The number of abortions peaked in 1969 (206,817) when my sister was born, and then it slowly started to decline. The average family then had one or two children or no children, but ours ended up with five sisters. We had a good life when I was a child but we also faced difficulties, and as I grew up I learnt that family life was not something constant but changed all the time. I understood that the family is fragile. I first experienced this when my girlfriend's parents divorced. Her world fell apart, she blamed herself. I was happy that I did not have to worry about that, but why? Were we just lucky? Or did my parents have a secret?

My parents were children during the war. My mother spent Christmas Eve in an air-raid shelter when she was of kindergarten age; in '56 tanks fired under their window; and later she and my father dated in the streets of bombed-out Budapest. Their careers as teachers were dogged by persecution under the communist regime because of their Christian faith. Where did they find the strength? According to my mother, their parents had the same secret: they were not driven by external events or the current ideological trend, but had their own worldview, their own firm values, which shaped their decisions. I was shocked that my paternal grandmother risked her health when she decided to give birth to my father against the advice of doctors. She was confined to a plaster bed throughout her pregnancy but she ended up giving birth to five children. My mother told me that it was my maternal grandmother that gave her family a solid framework as they lived through world wars, poverty, and starvation, as well as the destruction and rebuilding of their house, and what it was like to lose a child before it was born. My maternal grandfather gave me ammunition for a lifetime. His cleverness, strength, generosity, love of freedom and his humour are an eternal reserve that I still draw on every day.

Later, I heard a lot of stories about families when I started working for Kossuth Radio after the birth of my fourth child. I edited numerous programmes over the course of twenty-three years, and for 10 years I presented the family magazine *House Guest*. I saw that

every story goes back to family and childhood.

It is clear that our childhood determines our adult lives, and continuing as an adult depends on many, many human decisions. Just a few examples:

I remember the mother who was widowed with three children after her husband's serious illness. She had a mother-in-law, who was also grieving but stood by her in her daily life. It was this solidarity that helped the children recover from their loss.

I remember the couple who had six children and adopted three more, three babies with Down's syndrome, and are still bringing them up. For the youngest one it was a life-saving decision.

There was a girl who was raped at a party and got pregnant. She gave birth alone and her family helped her through the first years. She later found the love of her life, who married her, adopted her child and they had children together.

I also met families where “nothing really happened”: they did not get divorced, they did not have a tragedy, they did not become famous; they just lived their lives. They took care of each other and the children in their care. These families generally have six or eight children, and after two decades, the grandchildren arrived, followed by great-grandchildren. Mothers with large families have often given up their personal careers, but their children are there as adults, working in hospitals as doctors and nurses, or teaching at schools and universities – we can find them in many places where we need good people. Of course it is not true that we, women with large families should necessarily give up the career to which our talent entitles us. I hosted several researchers, artists and journalists with large families who managed to reconcile career and family. None of them said it was easy, but they all said it can be done.

There was a couple who could not have children. They grieved for a long time, but finally gave up their dream of a big family. Instead, they found a common vocation where they could work for families.

My first ever report was about a single woman who adopted four children. Each of them had something that could have got them stuck in the child welfare system: stillbirth, resuscitation, lack of oxygen, Roma origin, heart disease, etc. They became a single mother family, living as if the head of the family were the God Almighty. They struggled through the years, but the children have grown up and all have become very valuable people.

Countless lives have taught me that a crisis is not the ultimate evil and certainly not the end of life, but something that can be solved if you make a decision in the best interests of your children. These people have accepted that life is not comfortable, it can be painful, and that society might look at them askance. But they know the joys that permeate everyday life, and they can see the end of the story, which is much better than they thought at the moments of crisis.

With thousands of conversations under my belt, it is clear to me that the most important task is to help families at all levels to lead their lives.

That is why I decided to work with all my strength to protect life. There is a lot to do. There are fundamental issues that we do not yet understand clearly and it is important to clarify them. We love children, but we cannot say when childhood begins. We who were born take it for granted that we do not question anyone's right to life, but at the same time we do not necessarily grant the same right to the youngest children before they are born. The world has changed a lot, and we have come to the point where it is no longer unambiguous what we call a family, who the father is and who the mother is.

My parents' marriage was a bond of equals based on respect. It would never have occurred to me that women's equality could only be achieved by opposing a mother's right to self-determination with her own child's right to life. As a third child, what chance would I have – not to mention my two sisters – if my mother had thought that my existence would be a hindrance to her?

A child is as small as a seedling. They have nothing to do with the insecurities or identity crises of adults. It is not for them to correct or suffer for the mistakes of their parents, their existence should not be about the comfort of grown-ups. It is society's task to protect the child and to make up for the shortcomings they suffer, so that their world resembles as closely as possible what nature has created for them: to have a mother, to have a father, and to be a carefree child in the midst of them.

Krisztina Vrábel

Author of cookery books,
food photographer and journalist.
She has a column in several magazines,
and has published several books on diet.
She has two children.



Recommendation

Baking is one of my hobbies. When everything goes quiet in the evenings, I close the kitchen door behind me and get to work. Sometimes I make two or three cakes, because it is relaxing and it feels good to see the kids and my husband polishing off Danish chocolate whorls, croissants or brownies one after the other. Although I often make carb-rich desserts, I also try to use healthy ingredients. I have grown to like using alternative flours, chia seeds, plantain seed husk, and coconut oil. I still make the best dough with fresh yeast and white flour, but I know that I can do a lot for my family's health by making healthy options more appealing to them.

As mothers, sooner or later we have to cook and bake. Some of us find it a burden, but many of us take pleasure in putting food on the family table. In our house, my husband is responsible for the meat and I take care of the soups, side dishes and desserts. Different houses have different ways.

I first came across the name of Krisztina Vrábel when we were trying to reduce the amount of carbohydrates in our family meals. I found lots of ideas and recipes in her cookery books and blog for which I am grateful. Not only does Kriszta make delicious and tasty meals with clear and easy to follow descriptions and mouth-watering photos, but she also talks about why a healthy diet is important and what we can do to reduce obesity in the family. She does all this with a big smile, kindness and patience. Her advice is particularly useful now, after months of putting on extra pounds during the coronavirus restrictions.

As a mother of two, Kriszta has personal experience of how to make healthy food appealing to younger children. She also gives tips about how

to serve and eat. She is worth listening to, as sharing a meal together can be an important opportunity for family conversations.

Katalin Novák

Mothers hold the key to the family's health

I cannot define the strength of the family as the fundamental building block of our community without approaching the issue from the perspective of my profession. At first glance, the direct link between a healthy diet and the family may seem distant. But if we take an honest look at the way we live today, at the causes of obesity, one of the most pressing long-term health problems of our time, it is clear that the link is quite strong. I believe that the key to the family's health is held by mothers and that we must use that key. Even if some people may brand us as stick-in-the-muds for doing the basic – and I believe wonderful – job that we women have been given as an evolutionary vocation.

Over the past thirty or forty years the obesity rate has doubled. It is particularly worrying that obesity among children is rapidly increasing. What can families do about it?

I believe that learning to eat a good and healthy diet takes place within the family – just like we learn behavioural norms in the family. Shared activities in the kitchen, laying the table together, a family lunch or dinner in peace and quiet, or seeing a mother or grandmother making a meal are the most profoundly formative situations and experiences for a child. This was typical when I was a child, and I do not want to idealise that world at all, because we (also) suffered in the 70s and 80s in many ways, but mothers went to the farmers' market to buy ingredients and cooked for the family, so children grew up on home-cooked meals. Poverty and, in today's terms, a lack of supply at that time led to a healthier diet.

In one generation, all this has changed completely. The classic female role has been labelled outdated. Today it is almost embarrassing for a woman to cook, and many people question why a woman should be in the kitchen. And people who would want to cook have no time to do so.

Do we see the contradiction? Today we have a wealth of options that are supposed to be healthy: we have gluten-lactose-and-everything-else-free and vegan foods, and there is no shortage of opportunities to exercise, especially compared to the 1980s when the five-minute telly exercise programme was almost the only option. Yet we are much fatter today than we were then. What is the reason for this huge difference?

In my opinion, it is because of the contradictory expectations that surround the ideal modern woman: be successful in your job and be a supermom; earn a lot but have time for your family and even have me-time; have the looks of a cover girl but accept yourself as you are; eat a cereal bar but have chocolate chips in your ice cream in the next commercial... and I could go on. It is immensely hard to find a balance amidst all these expectations and continue to convey harmony in the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Given our current lifestyle, it is perfectly understandable that in order to save time we outsource tasks that we cannot take on because we ourselves are short of time.

So we have also outsourced feeding the family. But while outsourcing the washing, washing up and vacuuming to machines has no obvious impact on the health of the family, outsourcing the family's diet and meals to the food industry unfortunately has an immediate effect. The "buy everything ready-made, processed, flavoured, coloured, scented, over-sugared, over-fatted" approach leads to serious consequences in the medium and long term, when all we want is what is best for our children.

The key is to find our place, our role – I am not afraid to say it – in the kitchen again. I believe that the modern woman today is one who thinks in terms of sustainability, but not primarily about the big issues of the environment, but more about the health of her family. And she does that first and foremost by cooking whenever she can – in other words, by taking feeding her family into her own hands.

Admittedly, this takes time, a lot of time. But that time is an investment in our health and in the health and future of those we love most in the world. And yes, we have a responsibility to our children in this area too, a responsibility for what we bring home from the supermarket (often with

the best of intentions and love), what we put on their plates, what eating habits we develop and shape in them. We are the control, the gateway: what the family eats at home is what we have chosen, what we have got them accustomed to. It will be crucial to the health of the adults they grow up to be.

The responsibility of passing on dietary patterns is similar to that of passing on moral and social patterns.

This responsibility (also) belongs to us, Hungarian mothers.



KINCS

| MÁRIA KOPP INSTITUTE
| FOR DEMOGRAPHY
| AND FAMILIES

www.koppmariaintezet.hu

Emőke Bagdy : Iván Bagi : János
Balázs : Zoltán Balog : Gábor
Bányai : Barbara Czeizel : András
Csókay : Kornél Dávid : Péter Erdő
Tünde Fűrész : Péter Gáncs
Anita Görbicz : Éva Hegedüs
Ágnes Hornung : Fanny
Hozleiter – Mosolyka : Katalin
Gyurkó Kardos : Barnabás
Kelemen : Ilona Keresztes
Fülöp Kocsis : Katalin Kokas
Slomó Köves : János Lackfi
Zsófia Laposa : Tamás Lőrincz
Viktor Lőrincz : Zsolt Marton
János Martonyi : Norbert
Michelisz : Erika Miklósa : Anna
Nagy : Zoltán Novák : Gergő
Oláh : Judit Polgár : Ferenc
Rófusz : Erzsébet Schäffer
Anikó Schanda : Balázs Schanda
Mária Schmidt : Katalin Makrai
Schmitt : Fruzsina Skrabski
Tamás Sulyok : Gergő Süveges
Ági Szalóki : András Székely
Katalin Szili : Péter Tóth-Heyn
Zsolna Ugron : György János
Velkey : Attila Vidnyánszky
Ottó Vincze : Krisztina Vrábel
Róbert Zsigó : Rózsa Zsigó
Zsuzsanna Vincze Zsuráfszky
Zoltán Zsuráfszky

Family. What does the cardinal, the bishop, the rabbi, the Olympic champion, the medical professor, the director, the writer, the politician, the bank manager, the racing driver, the opera singer, the head of a family organization or my own father think of this word? I asked them about it. I asked them to write something about the family. Anything they can think of without any genre restrictions. I turned to Hungarian people who are worth listening to, who are worth paying attention to, whom I personally appreciate. Some of the authors are known acquaintances, and some are unknown to the majority. In the writings, they talk about unity and struggle, and the common denominator is faith and grace. I hope that the book will help us, as the Simone Weil quote in the title says, “learn to long for **what is ours**.”

Katalin Novák



KINCS

MÁRIA KOPP INSTITUTE
FOR DEMOGRAPHY
AND FAMILIES