

## COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 46

### Love and the formation of a community of persons 3

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Today's article will focus on "De Facto Unions" specifically homosexuality and will also seek to round off the discussion on the family as essential to the development and well being of the society.

Why discuss *de facto* unions? Today several countries have legalised same-sex marriages and common-law relationships between man and woman have been legally recognised in many countries. The Catholic Church however warns against the increasing number of and variety of these unions.

Why is the Church "paranoid" about these unions? Many argue that two men living together in a house can provide the material needs and love and care for a child and many persons have come out of common-law relationships as law-abiding and productive citizens in the society. What about those people who through incidents such as death, crime, political instability and illness no longer have both mother and father?

Will they not be well-adjusted, contributing members of society? Because there are many who hold these beliefs, there has been an increasing trend towards legitimising these variations to the family prescribed by God. However, family life continues on the decline, the evidence: increased numbers of street children, higher divorce rates and in Trinidad and Tobago a spiralling crime rate of which young persons appear to be at the forefront.

The point that the Church wants to make about these unions is that they represent "man/woman's" interpretation of what the family is and its role. In previous articles the family was highlighted as the place where the moral training and salvation of future generations were ensured, and this can most effectively be done under God's law where there is a permanent union originating in marriage – a covenant between one man and one woman based on free choice and a union geared towards producing offspring.

While there are persons who will fall into categories where the "traditional" family does not apply, the "community of persons" from which love and care can be provided can be made available to them from other families who develop persons who truly know how to care for others- and the only place they can learn this is from the family.

This is what the *Compendium* tells us.

"De Facto unions, the number of which is progressively increasing, are based on a false conception of an individual's freedom to choose (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*) and on a completely privatistic vision of marriage and family. Marriage is not a simple agreement to live together but a relationship with a social dimension that is unique with regard to all other relationships, since the family – attending as it does caring for and educating children – is the

principal instrument for making each person grow in an integral manner and integrating him positively into social life.”

“Making ‘de facto unions’ legally equivalent to the family would discredit the model of the family, which cannot be brought about in a precarious relationship between persons (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*) but only in a permanent union originating in marriage, that is, in a covenant between one man and one woman, founded on the mutual and free choice that entails full conjugal communion oriented towards procreation.”

“Connected with de facto unions is the particular problem concerning demands for the legal recognition of unions between homosexual persons, which is increasingly the topic of public debate. Only an anthropology corresponding to the full truth of the human person can give an appropriate response to this problem with its different aspects on both the societal and ecclesial levels (*Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*).

The light of such anthropology reveals how incongruous is the demand to accord ‘marital’ status to unions between persons of the same sex. It is opposed, first of all, by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being.

Another obstacle is the absence of the conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical, biological and the eminently psychological levels. It is only in the union of two sexually different persons that the individual can achieve perfection in a synthesis of unity and mutual psychophysical completion” (*L’Osservatore Romano*).

“Homosexual persons are to be fully respected in their human dignity (*L’Osservatore Romano*) and encouraged to follow God’s plan with particular attention in the exercise of chastity (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). This duty calling for respect does not justify the legitimisation of behaviour that is not consistent with moral law, even less does it justify the recognition of a right to marriage between persons of the same sex and its being considered equivalent to the family” (*L’Osservatore Romano*).

“If, from the legal standpoint, marriage between a man and a woman were to be considered just one possible form of marriage, the concept of marriage would undergo a radical transformation, with grave detriment to common good. By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties.”

“The solidity of the family nucleus is a decisive resource for the quality of life in society, therefore the civil community cannot remain indifferent to the destabilising tendencies that threaten its foundations at their very roots. Although legislation may sometimes tolerate morally unacceptable behaviour (*Evangelium Vitae*), it must never weaken the recognition of indissoluble monogamous marriage as the only authentic form of the family.

It is therefore necessary that the public authorities “resist these tendencies which divide society and are harmful to the dignity, security and welfare of the citizens as individuals, and they must

try to ensure that public opinion is not led to under-value the institutional importance of marriage and the family (*Familiaris Consortio*).

“It is the task of the Christian community and of all who have the good of society at heart to reaffirm that “the family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society (*Charter of the Rights of the Family*).

The family is the sanctuary of life, Chapter III, The Social Subjectivity of the Family will be dealt with in next week’s article