The family creates the fundamental element of the social structure, subjected to changes and transformations. The family is both historically the oldest form of social life, occurring from the earliest stages of human history, regardless of its different varieties and cultural conditions, as well as the most common social group whose member was and usually is every man. The family has many functions in the life of a human and society, two of which are essential: procreation, which is an extension of the biological existence of society and socialization, meaning the transmission of socio-cultural world from generation to generation. In the context of the assumptions presented in this article, it should be emphasized that the family is the relationship between a man and a woman who seek to have children. This is understanding of the family, which is defined as a territorial unit consisting of a wife, a husband and children. In every family, both the role of a husband and a wife is the range of rights and obligations associated with a particular social position. In the family this position is the result of the relationship between a man and a woman who make up the family structure.

Keywords: family, social change, husband, wife

The family in the process of social change

So God created man in His own image;
in the image of God He created him; male
and female He created them.

Genesis 27

The family has always been an essential element of the social structure and similarly to it, was subject to change and transformation. At the

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1 The article is a revised and improved version of the article which was published in Polish: Marek S. Szczepański, Anna Śliz: Przemiany roli męża i żony [w:] J. Kupny, M. Łuczak (red.) Między kryzysem w rodzinie a kryzysem rodziny. Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Św. Jacka, Katowice 2011, p. 13-27.
same time it remained a permanent place in the fast running world: The family mostly absorbs shocks – someone once said – made in society; there the man comes back, hurt and bruised, after the battles fought with the world (Toffler 1998, 236). The family is seen as the most stable structure, because it is, among other things: 1. Historically the oldest form of social life, occurring from the earliest stages of human history, regardless of its different varieties and cultural conditions; 2. the most common social group whose member was and usually is every man; 3. also a basis for the existence of society. This claim is reflected in the essential functions assigned to the family, the most important of which is procreation, which is a biological extension of the existence of society and socialization, i.e. the transmission of socio-cultural world from generation to generation.

In the literature the multiplicity of definitions of family is significant, although sociology usually sees it as a universal social institution, meaning (...) established in the tradition of all cultures, ritualized set of human activities aimed at meeting the essential needs of its members (Szlendak 2011, 95).

In the context of the assumptions presented in this article should be emphasized that the family is also the relationship between a man and a woman who aim at owning children. This is the understanding of the family, which is defined as a territorial unit consisting of a wife, a husband and children. This is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and division of labor and reproduction (Szlendak 2011, 96). In the family understood like that both the role of a husband and a wife is the range of rights and obligations associated with a particular social position. In the family the position it is the result of the relationship between a man and a woman who make up the family structure. Determination of the role of a husband and a wife could be read in the words of the Book of Genesis: And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”2.

These are the words that actually have constituted family relations of patriarchy, when the prestige and power has been given to a husband and father. This relationship, which we call a sloping, was subjected to substantial changes, and today is exposed to major shocks, which are the result of global processes of social change. Today we are witnessing the transformation of the family, as well as being the result of that, changes in rights and obligations constituting the social role of a husband and a wife. These changes and transformations are related to established sociological theories that analyze relationships inside the family, especially the relationships of a husband and a wife. Recalling established in the literature modernization theory of social change, we refer to the transformation of the family in the following stages of social development, which was described by Alvin Toffler (1997). The changes, which in the history of the world took part first of all in the economic sphere, influenced the changes in subsequent scenes of social life and family. So we can identify three dominant family models, which describe the three stages of the imperative of social development. It is a traditional family (multigenerational) characteristic for the traditional society. It is the nuclear family, this model was the most popular in the industrial society and the modern family, which is either a continuation of the nuclear family, or takes the form of an alternative.

**Sloping relationship meaning a wife reported to her husband.**

**Traditional family**

In a society before the Industrial Revolution when agriculture was the basis of existence, people mostly live in large multi-generational groups. Under one roof there gathered not only three or four generations, but in addition uncles, aunts and cousins. They all worked together, giving each other the possible existence, simultaneously creating a kind of a production entity sometimes self-sufficient and autonomous. As a part of the extended family, there was also cultural transmission: (...) the continuity of all cultures – Margaret Mead wrote – based on lively co-presence of at least three generations. An important feature (...) is the belief expressed by the members of the older generation in their behavior, that their way of life does not change, that is eternally the same – regardless of whether it is actually true or not (Mead 1978, 27). In such a family there was an authoritarian power of husband and father. Patriarchy, firmly
Changes in the roles of husband and wife

Changes in the roles of husband and wife fixed in the public consciousness made already mentioned sloping relationship between a husband and a wife, the source of which we can read in the words of St. Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (…) Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband3. The words of St. Paul's wife's submission to her husband become contemporary reality. Moreover, this relationship requires on the one hand the love between spouses, but on the second hand, only a wife should refer reverently to her husband. In the social reality these words translated into almost absolute obedience of a wife to her husband. In traditional society a wife as much as a husband was a part of the family manufacturing business and at the same time belonged to her almost all the duties associated with running a household. An illustration of such a situation we can read in Polish literature, among others in “Peasants” by Wladyslaw Reymont. The image of family life of one of the characters – Hanka and Antek – is the essence of the contemporary roles of husband and wife. The woman, illiterate, marginalized in public, but also in a family dispute, vulnerable to acts of humiliation from her husband, makes great efforts to release him from prison. When he returns he does not show the slightest gratitude. Wife totally closed in the sphere of domestic life was reconciled with her role. Because such a model she internalized in the process of socialization, which was based on postfigurative transmission of culture: Basic knowledge was passed on to children early, in a manner so little articulated and so ruthlessly demanding a hearing as soon as it was possible, in accordance with the knowledge of older, that there is only one way of shaping a successful fate of the child, who is flesh of their flesh and the spirit of their spirit, belongs to their land and their traditions, to everything that unites them and differ. Hence, the sense of identity of the child and the belief that only one destiny awaits them (Mead 1978, 26). This destiny was to duplicate social roles fixed in the public consciousness. People were afraid of any changes, because they were frightened

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by unknown. In addition, they were convinced that it must be so, due to the theological foundations of feudal society. Tradition going back to the roots of the Church's teachings dictated such a perception of the world. Although Karl Marx, relying on Ludwig Feuerbach – “Essence of Christianity” in 1841 (Marx, Engels 1969) – accept the idea that religion is the ideas and values created by people in the course of their cultural development, but falsely attributed to the forces of the divine and the gods, and people absolutely believed that God arranged the world as it was, and surrendered themselves to it. Slow social change that accompanied the traditional society translated into duties and roles held in that society. Hence, only the shock resulting from the industrial revolution accelerated the development of both social development as well as changes in the rights and obligations attributed to specific social roles. Many wondered what would be the future of the family. Pessimists stretched a vision of the destruction and the collapse of the traditional family. Optimists, in turn, said that since the family had survived for so many centuries that nothing could destroy it. Digressions are still valid, although it is worth noting that today the future of a family is virtually unpredictable.

*The wave of change meaning the nuclear family*

The Industrial Revolution, which forcefully shook the well-established social structures, accelerated social change with all its consequences. These consequences revealed not only in the world economy, but also in the socio-cultural one. They also left their mark on the family and the role of a husband and a wife. Great social changes and scientific revolution – primarily in the field of motherhood (pill, implantation of embryos, test-tube babies) – created new forms of family life. Traditional family remained, but it was enriched by the cultural and social diversity.

Industrialization brought first of all the mass moving people from the countryside to the cities. The surplus labor force in rural households necessitated for many people the need of seeking work in the growing industry. Ties that united several generations living under one roof, began to wane, and emerging small (nuclear) family became mobile and ready for changes. Their necessity was the result of conflict between settled in society the traditional model of the extended family and the challenges brought about by the time of industrialization.
This conflict swayed primarily the authoritative power of the husband and father, changed the relationships between spouses, and changed the relationship of children to their parents. Transfer of a large part of the production from the fields to the factories damaged one-person production holdings and began the formation of the working man (homo faber). The workers gave themselves at the disposal of the factory, and many features that in traditional society were filled by the family passed into the hands of specialized institutions such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes or shelters. The most important, however, remained the mobility of families, when a laborer in search of work moved from place to place. This completely damaged the image of the traditional family tied to the place. The necessity of migration to the highest degree influenced the change in the structure of the family, as well as the role of a husband and a wife. Accepted model of family life become a nuclear family consisting of the parents and, most often, two children. The rhythm of the day changed, it was marked by the work time and free time, and a card recording the start and end of work became the symbol of the period of industrialization. Having a paid job was overwhelming domain of men, but more and more often women were forced by the economic situation to find a job, too. This slow change associated with taking professional roles by women led to their independence. Women began to acquire education and to have their opinion, which gave them a pass to the sphere of public life. The Second Vatican Council drew the attention to it, when the Finishing Message featured the sentence: The hour is coming, there has come the time when the appointment of women is fully realized. The hour in which a woman influences on society and obtains power which she has never before possessed. Therefore, at a time when humanity is experiencing such a profound transformation, women imbued with the spirit of the Gospel can bring great help to humanity, so it does not fell (John Paul II, 1988, 1). They are the words which confirm the transformation of the role of a husband and a wife from the sloping relationship to the horizontal one, which is clearly evident in the modern world.

In the industrial society to the essential duties of a wife was taking care of the household regardless of whether the woman was working professionally or not. Slightly stereotypical, but probably true for the industrial period, is the picture of a woman returning home and carrying
a number of shopping bags. This is a picture that illustrates first of all the industrial era in its socialist installment. In the countries of market economy the role of a wife was subjected to faster changes, which was associated with greater personal and socio-cultural freedom of a woman and wife. Women to a greater extent undertook professional work and more and more often were involved in fulfilling by a family material and economic functions. In addition, a woman spent some time outside, which resulted in the acquisition of certain household chores by her husband and children. The wife was freed from many of the tasks that were taken over by the institutions from outside of the family, such as care and education of children become partly taken by the nurseries, kindergartens, schools and community centers. Together with the change of model of family from multigenerational on nuclear the duty of care for the elderly and the sick disappeared. These functions were taken over by hospitals and nursing homes. The necessity of taking over a part of the household duties by their husbands helped to change the sloping relationship between spouses. Slowly they conflate in rights and duties. But we should keep in mind that sloping relationship preserved in the past and strongly supported by cultural patterns still occur in some places in the modern world, especially in societies that have just come on the path of modernization.

The horizontal relationship meaning a wife is equal to her husband.

Modern family

Underlying all the changes there are many things that are not changed. One of these things is the family institution, which remains constant in its institutional framework, although its filling content varies. The institution of marriage and the family from the beginning has a character of uniting people, which is still subject to stronger or weaker laws of evolution. The essence of the family is marriage, the formal union of a man and a woman. The relationship is subjected to transformation as a result of changes in the environment or social reality. It was notice by the Church – John Paul II – who in his apostolic letter Mulieris Dignitatem gives a new interpretation of the part of the Letter to the Ephesians: Wives, be subjected to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is a head of the wife (5: 22 – 23). The system, which was deeply rooted in traditional society, in customs and religious traditions, and now must...
gain a new understanding and realization: *as a mutual surrender of reverence for Christ* (...) especially that the husband is called the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, because he gave himself up for it (...) in giving himself up for it means giving up their own lives. However, while the relationship between Christ and the Church the subjection is only the Church, in the relationship between husband and wife the “subjection” is not one-sided but mutual (John Paul II, 1988, 24). Epistles were addressed to the people who lived within the borders of identical thought and action. Contemporary frames of thinking and acting are different, hence the new interpretation, which has gradually pave the way into the hearts, consciences, thinking and actions of people, and which is adequate to the present. It refers to the acceptance of the relationship of mutual submission of husband and wife and is a response to the challenges posed by the contemporary world. And today, the quality of the relationship between a husband and a wife depends on how the partners adapt to each other in the various phases and stages of life, and not being subjected to the dictates of a long tradition. Contemporary, post-modern world creates the increasingly diverse forms of family life and hence more and more sociologists talk about families (plural) and not the family (singular). It is difficult to identify today the dominant family model, but there are rather many forms of family life, although their proliferation are limited by four factors: external, or economic constraints, material and instrumental; internal or intimate feelings and behavior; sex meaning the sharing of sexual exclusivity and formal, meaning ties of blood and marriage, which could lead to incest (Szlendak 2011, 109 – 110). It should be recognized, however, that today *the alternative forms should be treated as real life systems, many of which are socially approved and verified – usually after some time, ex post facto – by law. Because they are accepted and legalized, they become institutionalized patterns of life and give “exclusive partnership”* (Slany 2006, 82). These relationships vary depending on social class, ethnic group, region, culture, religion and personal preference. The variety of forms of married family life is now heavily exposed, but the basic family type of formal does not disappear. The shock of the pace of change in civilization lasting several years now crucially influenced the transformation of family life, which includes, inter alia, the breakdown of family or marital crises. A big concern is the number of divorces recorded in Poland.
In 2013 in Poland more than 180 thousand couples married. In the same year, simultaneously 66 thousand couples divorced. Despite these disturbing trends family still remains one of the most important values in human life, but its transformation is a fact. Hence, more and more clearly you can hear coming from different directions the voices on the crisis of the family. The changes and the crisis of the family world are directly proportional to the rate of change of civilization in the social space, and the reasons for this state of affairs can be found almost everywhere. The crisis and the disintegration of the family, the emergence of alternative forms of married family life contributed to changing social roles of a husband and a wife. Symbolic for such changes is the fact that in 2006, 35% of men declared leaving work for home and raising children. Men do not jib from using the parental leave, especially if the wife (partner) earns more (Piątek, Barabbas 2008, 35). Greater involvement of men in the “housework” is the result of, among other things the possibility to work at home. Spouses in this situation share responsibilities of both professional and home. A husband and a wife share their responsibilities equally. When the husband works, the wife is a housewife, and vice versa. It is also important to emphasize that the change of roles takes place due to the increasingly wide taking over the duties of the family by other institutions. An example is a childcare – nurseries, kindergartens or nannies. At the same time the diversity of socio-cultural influences on the different interests of spouses and prolonged years of life results in fact that people are more and more often tempted to change a partner. According to the sociologist Jessie Bernard the most characteristic aspect of marriage in the future will be the ability to make different choices for different people, for whom their relationships with other people will be able to meet the different needs and goals. The fact is that more and more people live – by choice or not – in non-family households. It is a designated by early exit from the family home by young people and living on their own (Slany 2006, 84). It is also the result of getting married in an increasingly later age, late childbearing, or adopting a lifestyle that prefers childless relationships. Imposed by modern society the styles and patterns of life need to spend time primarily on self-fulfillment in the professional world. Marriage and family is moved away in time or in its place there are alternative forms of married family life, which would

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4 Marriage and fertility w Polsce: http://stat.gov.pl (access date: 2016.10.21)
abolish the established roles of a husband and a wife. Moreover, these forms are the result of the preferred lifestyle, as well as the necessity of being mobile. It essentially excludes having a family. Thus, today we are talking about relationships between people, which replace the family relationships – marriage and parenting. The most common form of alternative relationship is co-habiting, which is becoming increasingly competitive with formal marriage. Today the special type of co-habiting relationship becomes very popular Living Apart Together (LAT – together, but separately). This relationship does not require cohabitation. Rapidly disseminating alternative form is a single life (living alone). This is often a life of choice, which also raises concerns about the course of social life, based on the family. In the 60s of the last century together with the sexual revolution, homosexual relations emerged. Today in many countries they are legal. Especially in the modern world a form known as monoparenting, or family of a single mother / father. This form is particularly popular in the Nordic countries, although in Poland it also spreads rapidly. In view of the increasing number of divorces there occur secondary marriages, the effect of which is the creation of reconstructed families (for example, the partners and their children from previous marriages and children from the current marriage) (Slany 2006, 84 – 85). A different alternative constitute the family commune (Toffler 1998, 242). It is a common life of a group of adults and children, which protects primarily against a sense of loneliness and isolation. A common feature of alternative relationships is the lack of clear and defined roles of a husband and a wife. If we assume that still a very important form of married family life is a formal family, we must remember that the roles of a husband and a wife were put into unknown till today transformations. Women’s access to education meant that they came out of the four walls of their home and took important professional roles sometimes culturally ascribed to men. They set up their own companies; they climb the ladder of social advancement. It requires from them either abandoning the formal founding of family, or imposing their husbands with household chores. Increasingly frequent sight of dads taking care of their little children, the public debate in Poland on father’s leave are the most visible exemplification outlined above changes in the role of a husband and a wife / a mother and a father.
In the face of today’s rapid social changes which strongly impact upon family life is not surprising that the position of the Church is slowly changing in the topic of the relationship between a man and a woman, who form the foundation of the family. The above-cited passage of the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II is the clearest example. *Husbands, love your wives (...)* is a fragment, which repeals another: *Wives, be subject to your husbands (...)*. Love, in fact excludes any submission, and makes both husband and wife are subjected to each other. So much as to teaching of the Church. And a modern world is increasingly equating the rights and responsibilities of a husband and a wife, both in the sphere of private life and the public one.

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The modern world offers us various forms of married family life. There changed the size of the family, the level of fertility of women and relations between women and men, but the core function of the family is not questioned. Progressive social change has generated new forms, but the basic functions of the family remain valid. Apart from the obvious role of procreation, the family remains a key unit of socialization, although part of this process has been ceded by the parents at the school, peer groups or expansive media. The situation of Polish families leads to poetic metaphor once written by Wislawa Szymborska: *The future is not as black as it is wanted by the pessimists nor as bright as would like the optimists*. The family is an institution that requires a support of central, local and regional authorities. The key in this case is a real family policy.

But even the most effective policy of protecting the family does not exempt the intrafamily key actors, meaning a husband and a wife, and from the perspective of the children – the father and the mother, from their duties. And the family should still be accompanied by the words of the Book of Genesis: *Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.*

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Changes in the roles of husband and wife


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