

From the Editor

It is a truism to recall the increasing numbers of elderly people and men of advanced age in highly developed areas, which primarily include North America and Europe. The complex causes of this state of affairs and possible social consequences of ageing societies have already been thoroughly diagnosed. However, it is still worth putting the problem of proper preparation for an old age, responsible way of experiencing the ageing process and the attitude of the rest of society to seniors. There is no doubt that every person who lives to an old age - regardless of the mechanisms of rejection and denial - will be in the group of elderly and old people. Fundamental equality in this regard seems so obvious that everyone should know this, but life practice shows that in many cases old age seems to surprise people, putting them vulnerable to the unknown, without preparing and rethinking the fact of their passing away. In addition, the increasingly frequent encounter of people in the autumn of life on their life path is a specific challenge for conscious positioning towards seniors. The above reasons have caused the research of this volume to be focused on the issues of ageing and old age. Although in the title of the volume and in its substantive structure the family context of old age was not emphasized, it was largely family references that found expression and allowed to solve the problems pointed out by the authors in subsequent articles in a different way.

It seems that a few more or less reflective attitudes can be accepted in relation to ageing and old age. Without an *a priori* assessment of such an attitude, the most common one is the negative and pessimistic view of the senior phase of life. Perhaps this is due to the physical and mental nuisance itself inherent in old age, but also due to cultural backwardness in relation to finding new life roles for fit and ready-to-act “young seniors”. Perhaps the mechanisms of stereotyping and labeling people in the autumn of life come to the fore, perhaps it is affected by the view of the atomization of society, which makes us personally familiar with only few seniors (most often relatives); and what is unknown worries us, encouraging to maintain distance, so watching only the external phase of this life does not inspire optimism. The second trend in the approach to ageing and old age is

formed by all the perspectives in which the values of wisdom, experience, memories attributed to the elderly are exposed, also indicating the importance of seniors for the proper functioning of society. In this trend, a special role belongs to the developed structures of Universities of the Third Age, which focus on the activity of the older generation and on appreciation of the last phase of life as a period of improvement and further development. This perspective seems to create an optimal way of perceiving one's own and other people's old age. Only for statistical reasons the existence of the third option should be mentioned, which tries to ignore old age, passing it over in silence. This approach is clearly irresponsible, because "good old age" does not occur automatically, but it is the result of conscious individual preparation for it, the creation of appropriate mechanisms and social structures, as well as the constitution of its presence in intergenerational dialogue. Accepting this option would be an expression of the taboo of old age, the taboo which is the part of a wider trend of rejection of death, passing away from the social space.

The scientific texts included in the current volume raise the issues from the area of positive trends in experiencing old age and ageing, as well as negative experiences of seniors themselves and society responding to the value of people in the autumn of life. It is worth appreciating the interdisciplinary nature of the research results presented in the volume and supplementing the social and pedagogical perspective with theological, biblical and spiritual ones. Broadening the spectrum of aspects in the view of ageing and old age well reflects the leading demand for the need for a holistic view of this issue, for the integral treatment of problems and challenges arising with old age. It was a good thing that in the reporting part of the volume there appeared texts written with the practice of functioning of a senior home with Christian roots and about the challenges associated with senile dementia and care for elderly people affected by this type of disorder.

A graphic layout of the journal cover, as every year, becomes the thematic trailer of the volume which is included in the changing square. From the first volume of "Family Forum" this concise factual message is transmitted by a system of intertwined strings of different colours, which is defined as an illustration of the reality of the family and the problems it has to face. In the present volume the grey colour of the cover indicates ageing, since it is often said that there is a "grey" old age. Grey is also the natural hair colour of an elderly person. For the first time, the square is not a smooth surface, but it is wrinkled, just as the body of an ageing person ceases to be smooth and gets wrinkled. Ageing also involves a sense of loss caused by passing away (dying) of close relatives. The senior is in many cases alone, because the people with whom he/she was connect-

ed by ties of love and friendship have passed away. To illustrate this experience, this time only a single string appears in the square - it is left alone, because the "beloved others" (at least those from the older generations) are not with him/her any more.

The creation of the journal volume is always the fruit of cooperation of the group of people who I express the words of gratitude to on behalf of the Editorial Board of "Family Forum" and the Institute of Family Sciences – the institution that publishes the journal. I would like to thank both all the Authors of the texts for their exemplary cooperation and concern for good quality of articles, and reliable and competent Reviewers and Thematic Editors, and also skilled Translators, very reliable and accurate Proofreaders and Technical Editor, who is also the Secretary of Editorial Board. The quality of the journal is also affirmed by the Scientific Council of "Family Forum", which is attended by eminent scientists from various scientific disciplines and from different European countries. I would like to thank all of them for their cooperation and concern for high quality of the journal.

On behalf of the Scientific Council and Editorial Board of "Family Forum", I would like to invite all the interested to take up the issue of violence in all its complexity, both in the family and in society, in the next year volume. We wish all readers an inspirational reading of the current volume.

Piotr Morciniec
The chief editor of "Family Forum"

