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## THE ENCYCLICAL “CASTI CONNUBII” AND THE INSTITUTE OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC FAMILY IN GALICIA (FIRST THIRD OF THE 20TH CENTURY)

**Abstract.** This article examines Pope Pius XI's encyclical “Casti Connubii” (1930) in the context of the marriage and family policy of the Greek Catholic Church in Galicia during the first third of the twentieth century. **The aim** of the study is to analyze the impact of this ecclesiastical document on the moral and ethical guidance of the Greek Catholic clergy and on the formation of marital culture among the Ukrainian population of Galicia. Particular attention is given to issues that were highly relevant to society at the time, including marital fidelity, divorce, emigration, and the demographic crisis. **The methodological foundation** of the research is based on interdisciplinary approaches that integrate historical, religious, socio-anthropological, and source-critical analyses. **The scholarly novelty** of the article lies in its attempt to reinterpret the “Casti Connubii” not only as a component of Catholic doctrine but also as a tool of social influence that mobilized the Greek Catholic clergy in the defense of the traditional Christian family. **The conclusions** highlight that the encyclical “Casti Connubii” represented the Catholic Church's response to the moral and social challenges of the era. In the Galician context, it contributed to the consolidation of the clergy around the idea of family protection, served as a foundation for pastoral and educational activity, and reinforced the moral authority of the Greek Catholic Church in the face of new challenges.

**Key words:** Casti Connubii encyclical, Greek Catholic Church, Galicia, interwar period, family, divorce, pastoral activity.

## ЕНЦИКЛІКА «CASTI CONNUBII» ТА ІНСТИТУТ ГРЕКО-КАТОЛИЦЬКОЇ СІМ'Ї В ГАЛИЧИНІ (ПЕРША ТРЕТИНА XX СТ.)

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто енцикліку Папи Пія XI «Casti Connubii» (1930 р.) у контексті шлюбно-сімейної політики греко-католицької церкви в Галичині в першій третині XX ст. **Метою дослідження** є аналіз впливу цього церковного документа на морально-етичні настанови греко-католицького духовенства та на формування подружньої культури серед українського населення Галичини. Увага зосереджена на актуальних для тогочасного суспільства питаннях подружньої вірності, розлучень, еміграції, демографічної кризи тощо. **Методологічною основою** дослідження стали міждисциплінарні підходи, які поєднують історико-релігієзнавчий, соціально-антропологічний і джерелознавчий аналіз. **Наукова новизна** полягає у спробі переосмислити енцикліку «Casti Connubii» не лише як частину католицької доктрини, а і як інструмент суспільного впливу, що активізував громадську позицію греко-католицького духовенства в захисті традиційної християнської родини. У **висновках** зазначається, що енцикліка «Casti Connubii» стала відповіддю католицької церкви на моральні та соціальні виклики часу. У галицькому контексті вона сприяла консолідації духовенства навколо ідеї захисту сім'ї, слугувала основою пасторальної та освітньої діяльності, а також підтримувала моральний авторитет ГКЦ в умовах нових викликів.

**Ключові слова:** енцикліка «Casti Connubii», греко-католицька церква, Галичина, міжвоєнний період, сім'я, розлучення, пасторальна діяльність.

**Problem Statement.** In the contemporary world, the institution of the family is undergoing profound transformations, reflected in the complex interplay between the family – as one of the most fundamental social institutions of the state – and broader societal trends. With the rise of individualism and shifts in the understanding of personal values, many young people are reconsidering their attitudes toward family life. This is evident in the declining number of marriages and the increasing divorce rates, particularly in Ukraine, which, regrettably, now ranks among the highest in Europe in terms of divorce.

Historically, marriage served as a key mechanism for ensuring economic stability, legitimizing parenthood, and securing social recognition. However, these functions are increasingly losing their significance, and contemporary perceptions of marriage and family have changed considerably.

In this context, the study of the pastoral experience of the Roman Catholic Church regarding marital and family issues in the past acquires renewed relevance. It opens opportunities to rediscover and adapt forgotten approaches to transmitting Christian values, which may prove timely and effective in today's world.

From this perspective, the analysis of Pope Pius XI's 1930 encyclical "Casti Connubii" becomes particularly pertinent, offering a theological foundation for rethinking current challenges in marriage and family life.

**The aim of this article** is to examine the significance of Pope Pius XI's encyclical "Casti Connubii" (1930) in shaping and preserving the traditional institution of the Greek Catholic family in Galicia during the first third of the twentieth century.

**Main Findings of the Study.** At the beginning of the 20th century, Ukraine ranked among the countries with the highest marriage rates, alongside Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Japan. According to available statistical data, in the second half of the 19th century, 160,000 to 200,000 marriages were registered annually in Ukraine. By the early 20th century, prior to the outbreak of the First World War (1914), this figure had increased to 200,000–250,000 marriages per year [1, p. 66].

An analysis of the monthly distribution of marriages revealed two primary influencing factors. The first, an economic factor, showed a peak in marriages during October, following the completion of agricultural work. The second, a religious factor, indicated a decline in weddings in March and April due to the Church's fasting periods before Christmas and Easter [1, p. 68].

In Galicia, as in other parts of Ukraine, interethnic marriages were also present, though they did not exceed 2% of all unions [2, p. 159]. Most commonly, such marriages in Galicia occurred between Ukrainians and Poles. Marriages between Ukrainians and Germans or Jews were more sporadic.

The religious factor was particularly significant in the Ukrainian context, given the influential role played by the Greek Catholic clergy. The conservative upbringing of girls in Ukrainian families at the beginning of the 20th century even became a subject of criticism, particularly in relation to the prevalence of Polish-Ukrainian mixed marriages in Galicia. The fact that Ukrainian men often chose Polish women as spouses was, according to some observers, attributed to the «monastic upbringing» of Ukrainian women, who were said to be "overburdened and constrained by ideas instilled in various Basilian institutions", and whose ideals, shaped there, often rendered them less appealing in communication [3; 4, p. 99].

Despite the intensity of marriage processes, Galician families also experienced the negative effects of broader political developments. The period under study encompassed the era when Galicia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and later, during the 1920s–1930s, the Second Polish Republic. It is well known that during periods of occupation, negative trends in all spheres of life tend to intensify. This reality also affected Ukrainian rural families, where alcoholism, infidelity, declining birth rates, and divorce became common aspects of everyday life. Moreover, assimilation policies implemented by the authorities, combined with the problem of agrarian overpopulation, led to

mass emigration of Ukrainian peasants to Canada, the United States, Argentina, and other countries. These processes profoundly impacted the lives and family structures of emigrants [5, p. 101–106]. The separation of husbands and wives due to emigration or war often lasted for years, which adversely affected not only the family as a small social unit – disrupting its internal bonds, emotional and sexual life, and household functioning – but also undermined social stability and the normal rhythm of daily existence.

One archival case noted a husband's request for divorce from his wife, who had emigrated to Canada in 1914. Rumors circulated that "the wife no longer intended to return to Galicia. This destroys me morally and materially, and above all prevents me from managing a rational household" [6, fol. 3; 7, fol. 10; 8, fol. 16]. Through petitions to ecclesiastical courts for the declaration of a missing spouse as deceased and the dissolution of marriage, plaintiffs sought not only to restructure their personal lives but also to restore their reputation within the community and in the eyes of the local priest.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the divorce rate among rural residents in Ukraine was merely 0.6 persons per 100,000 population [9, p. 70]. It should be emphasized that the extremely low likelihood of divorce during that period was due not only to restrictive legal frameworks but also to strong condemnation from the Church, community, and broader familial and social circles. Divorce was viewed as a deviation from socially acceptable norms of behavior. The primary reasons for divorce recognized by rural communities included childlessness, the husband's profligacy, or alcoholism.

In Galicia, there were 23,269 taverns and inns. On average, there was one tavern per 233 people, and each person consumed approximately 20 liters of vodka annually. Peasants annually incurred debts totaling 6,663 gulden, equaling about 60% of their assets [9, p. 101].

In this context, it is important to highlight the role of the Greek Catholic Church (GCC), which fulfilled functions that remained neglected by state institutions in relation to the Ukrainian population. The GCC took care of the highest human values – life and health—which held significant economic value for society. Church structures actively engaged in the anti-alcohol movement in Western Ukrainian lands, deepening the idea of sobriety within the territory of the Galician Metropolis.

As early as 1874, Greek Catholic Metropolitan Yosyf Sembratovych issued a pastoral letter to the people entitled «On the Great Dignity of Man». In a second letter dated August 4, 1874, Brotherhoods of Sobriety, the Metropolitan encouraged the clergy to struggle for the "sobriety of the people and the establishment of anti-alcohol missions in every village", as well as to form "Brotherhoods of Sobriety" [10, p. 73–108]. These missions of sobriety may be regarded as the first mass mobilizations of Galician Ukrainians, whose nature and significance extended beyond purely religious or temperance campaigns. At the time, in Galicia and Transcarpathia, the GCC, together with local communities, even practiced a preventive measure known as "sobriety marriages", in which the bride and groom were required to swear on the Bible to abstain from alcohol during the wedding ceremony.

It is also worth noting that the GCC played a pivotal role in the everyday life of the average Galician family. The local Greek Catholic priest served as the spiritual father, leader, teacher, and advocate for his parishioners at various levels. Moreover, he was often the only nationally conscious person in the village with a university education [11, p. 16]. The priest was typically the driving force behind improvements in the lives of his parishioners, founding cultural, political, and economic organizations. The main messages that clergy conveyed to the faithful were: education, sobriety, diligence, and frugality [10, p. 94].

The authority of the priest was so significant that, beginning in the late 1880s and early 20th century, the urban intelligentsia could not communicate effectively with the largely illiterate population without the priest's mediation. His authority was grounded in his strong relationship with the peasants [12, p. 125; 4, p. 79; 13, p. 308].

During the interwar period, the Church authorities even attempted to proactively regulate, monitor, and generally prevent divorces in rural areas. However, the realities of that time were quite different, as such cases were becoming increasingly common. Although divorce in the village was still perceived as a social drama, it gradually became a more normalized aspect of everyday life, shaped by the profound changes brought about by emigration and war. One particular indicator of the transformation of domestic family relations was the growing initiative shown by women in pursuing divorce. Many of them began to openly defend their right to a different life, choosing to separate from their husbands, return to their parental homes, move in with another partner, leave the village, or seek employment in the city.

These circumstances led women to appeal to the Consistory of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate of Lviv to dissolve their marriages and to request permission to start a new family [14, p. 103–104]. Court case materials reveal that women more often than men (though men too were affected) became victims of forced marriages. In rural communities, family and parents often prioritized property and general well-being over love, personal desires, and happiness [14, p. 103–104].

From the mid-1930s onward, as social life increasingly shifted toward totalitarian principles, the state adopted methods of strict control over all aspects of human existence, including private and family life. Legislation introduced significant restrictions on the freedom to divorce and complicated the divorce process, leading to a marked decline in the number of divorces. As a result, official statistics appeared to improve, but the contradictions in the development of family and marriage – objectively driven by industrialization and the wide-scale inclusion of women in the public workforce – remained unresolved.

The social and demographic catastrophes and wars that Ukrainian society experienced left a profound imprint on the national mentality. These upheavals not only disrupted the gender and age structure of the population but also reshaped the hierarchy of life values, including the role of marriage and parenthood [15, p. 362–364; 10, p. 75–77].

An important milestone in increasing the public engagement of the Greek Catholic clergy in addressing complex family issues within Galician society throughout the 20th century was the encyclical “*Casti Connubii*” (“On Christian Marriage”) by Pope Pius XI, published in 1930 by the “*Biblios*” printing house in Lviv. In this document, the right to life is closely tied to issues of artificial birth control, including contraception, sterilization, eugenics, and abortion. Pope Pius XI addressed these concerns in response to the growing movement for birth control in Europe and the debates following the Anglican Lambeth Conference, which permitted the use of contraception within marriage.

In opposition to such developments, Pope Pius XI firmly stated that «marriage was neither instituted nor restored by man, but by God; the laws that strengthen, confirm, and elevate it were not devised by humans, but by God – the Creator of nature, and by Jesus Christ – the Redeemer of that same nature. Therefore, these laws cannot be subject to any human decrees or any contrary agreements, even those of the spouses themselves» [16].

Regarding the procreative function of marriage, the “*Casti Connubii*” encyclical emphasizes that God, having created man and woman, called them to cooperate in the continuation of the human race – a process that is not only physical but also spiritual. The document highlights that marriage, according to God’s design, is a “means for the transmission of life”, and openness to life is a defining element of conjugal love. Therefore, the Church stresses the significance of this function, which carries a profound spiritual dimension [16].

The encyclical also underscores that children occupy the foremost place among the blessings of marriage. It is through the birth of children that God’s plan continues—calling humanity to participate in the spread of life on earth. Pope Pius XI refers to Saint Augustine and the Apostle Paul, who affirm that the purpose of marriage is the procreation of children who not only populate the earth but

are also meant to worship God and live in His love. The Creator of the human race, in His goodness, desired to make use of human beings as His collaborators in the propagation of life. He taught this truth when, establishing marriage in the Garden of Eden, He said to our first parents – and through them to all future spouses: «Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth» [16].

Saint Augustine beautifully explains this truth, drawing on the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, stating: “The Apostle [Paul] himself thus testifies that marriage exists for the purpose of bearing children: ‘I desire,’ he says, ‘that young women marry’”. And, as if anticipating the question “why?”, he immediately adds: “to bear children and be mothers of families” [16].

The right to bring forth new life is a privilege reserved exclusively for the married state and must be strictly confined within the sacred bounds of that state [16]. Thus, the Church promotes responsible and orderly procreation, clearly distinguished from mere animal reproduction.

God desires the birth of human beings not merely to populate the earth, but to establish a relationship with them. «God desires the birth of people not only so that they may live and fill the earth, but even more so – that they may worship Him, know Him, love Him, and ultimately rejoice with Him eternally in heaven» [16]. Therefore, parents, as participants in God’s design, bear the responsibility not only for bringing children into the world but also for raising them in the Christian faith, passing on Christian values.

Accordingly, “Casti Connubii” emphasizes the importance of marital fidelity, openness to life, and a responsible attitude toward the birth of children. The encyclical is not merely a response to the social changes of its time, but a clear affirmation of the inviolable principles that, in the Church’s view, safeguard human life and dignity.

**Conclusions.** In the first third of the 20th century, the GCC remained a key moral compass for the Ukrainian village, which was undergoing profound social transformations—emigration, demographic losses, a crisis of fatherhood, and, ultimately, the gradual erosion of the traditional family structure. In this context, Pope Pius XI’s encyclical “Casti Connubii”, published in Lviv in 1930 by the «Biblos» press, was not merely a theological document of global scope. It addressed challenges that were becoming increasingly relevant in the local Galician context – such as the legalization of cohabitation without marriage, the crisis of parental responsibility, the practice of forced marriages, issues of separation, emigration-related hardships, and the rising number of divorces.

Although there is no direct evidence that “Casti Connubii” had a mass impact on Galician society, it is known that the hierarchy and clergy of the GCC – particularly Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsk – actively referenced its content in synodal messages and pastoral initiatives. Importantly, “Casti Connubii” reinforced the authority of the clergy as defenders not only of the faith but also of social stability – through their defense of marriage, motherhood, and the Christian upbringing of children.

In an era marked by growing secularization, the early stages of women’s emancipation, migration, mixed marriages, and the weakening of patriarchal authority, the encyclical served as an ideological framework that allowed the clergy to maintain moral leadership within the community. Thus, “Casti Connubii” organically complemented the Galician tradition of pastoral care for the family, a tradition rooted in the 19th century but gaining particular significance during the interwar period.

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