

What the word “family” means to me?

A page from my diary

If I weren't involved in an unfortunate story which has happened to me recently, I would certainly write about „Christmas chicken”. Let's start from the very beginning. After I had read „Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens, I waited for the Christmas time more impatient than ever before. My father bought a Christmas tree, my mother made last preparations for the Christmas Eve and I couldn't wait this day. Unfortunately I got to the hospital on Friday, two days before Christmas Eve. It turned out that I had pneumonia. I was desperate and couldn't believe my situation. Sitting on my bed I was reminiscing about Christmas in the last few years. During that time our whole family visited my home. My grandfather disguised himself in a costume of Santa Claus and gave presents to all of us. My family didn't disappoint me this time either. My parents and grandparents brought me Christmas dishes and presents to the hospital, we shared a holy wafer and wished each other all the best. This situation had a great meaning to me and it taught me a very important lesson – the real meaning of the word „family”.

My parents brought me also a notebook because most of the time I spent alone. Thanks to it I could surf the Internet. On the “Wikipedia” I found the following explanation of the word „family”: *Family denotes a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity or co-residence. The concept of the family affiliated only by blood is controversial because of the marriage or adoptions. Many sociologists and anthropologists believe the primary function of the family is to perpetuate society, either biologically, socially or both. From the perspective of children, the family is a family of orientation: it plays a major*

role in their enculturation and socialization. From the point of view of the parent(s), the family is a family of procreation to produce and enculturate and socialize children. This meaning didn't satisfy me. The definition was too scientific and didn't reflect the reality. In my opinion family is something more than just a sociological group. It means common feelings, experiences and worries. Family also means particular people like mother, father, brother, grandmas, grandpas, uncles. But not only them, also people, who I even don't know, because they died a long time ago and I never had a chance to meet them. Some of them I know only from my grandparents' stories.

While surfing the Internet I found another thought: *Family is the first and the most basic people's community. It creates the first surrounding, where people learn how to live, deal with the problems, love and respect each other.* This John Paul's II quote has a deeper meaning and gives us universal truth - a family is a foundation of humanity. If someone wants to destroy it or makes it less important, he is convicted to fail right from the start.

Every single human needs someone close to him. Without this person, whoever he or she is – father, mother, sister, grandpa, wife or husband, nobody can be happy. Since we are born, our parents and grandparents form our personality because they want us to become good people in our future life. They are our first teachers, we watch them and their behavior and simply imitate. They also show us the difference between good and evil. Learning from them, we receive first information about the world and values and we write everything deep inside our mind, memory and heart. An American composer, Anthony Brandt, once said: "Other things may change us but we start and end with family." The most important is love we receive from our family – it gives us feeling of safety and self-confidence.

After Christmas Eve I spent next few days in the hospital. Meanwhile I reminded myself a story written by Charles Dickens – "A Christmas Carol". This tale is about a man called Scrooge. When he was young, he didn't have

good relations with his family. Because of this he found money his true and only friends. He had changed his attitude after a visit of three ghosts but he lost many years of his life being alone, without family.

Thinking about the meaning of the word “family” reminded me also a story described in a book entitled “Ten Obcy”. It’s about a boy, Zenek, who was born in a pathological family. His mother died, when he was a baby and his father was an alcoholic. Zenek didn’t know the real meaning of the word “family”. His experiences didn’t allow him to create a closer relationship with another person. He had changed only after the help from a group of friends. They became his family. That is why I agree with the maxim of Christian Morgenstern: “Home is not where you live but where they understand you.”

These stories show that not every family is happy and what’s more - it has a great impact on who we become in the future. Even at the time of being in the hospital I read in the Internet about violence in the, seemingly, ordinary homes. Can we call this mentally ill relations a family? I don’t think so. Unfortunately pathology is a common phenomenon even in our times, despite it’s a crime according to the law. Usually is connected with violence – psychical or physical. Adults use their strength to show the power and domination. They don’t treat children as partners with their own dignity. Children suffer because of different types of abuse. These, who witnessed abuse, often suffer low self-esteem, depression, stress disorders and feelings of powerlessness. They are also at high risk for alcohol or drug use, isolation, fear or even suicide. What’s more - violence is a learned behavior, so children raised in violent homes may learn to repeat the family patterns. It’s an important social issue and a great challenge for specialists. Their task is to draw these families back into a sane and safe world.

Let’s take Adolf Hitler’s example. His family had a huge influence on him. Hitler had a troubled childhood. His father was violent to him and his mother. They were both beaten by Adolf Hitler. Later Adolf, as a man, told his secretary: "I then resolved never again to cry when my father whipped me. A

few days later I had the opportunity of putting my will to the test. My mother, frightened, took refuge in front of the door. As for me, I counted silently the blows of the stick which lashed my rear end". Historians and psychologists believe that this history of family violence influenced *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's personality in general.

Politicians often talk about the value of the family, using it as an important argument supporting their political and social programs but later it suddenly turns out that they don't pay alimony, they don't have time for their children or we see them on TV with their, much younger not very intelligent, partners.

In my opinion the word "family" hasn't got one simple meaning, it depends on culture, religion and tradition. Nevertheless most of the significances refer to love, responsibility and community. Every single person needs a family. It's impossible to be a part of society without knowing this feeling.

In my family, which can be an example for many others, we celebrate Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandma's and Grandpa's Day. We spend lots of time with each other, we go together for winter or summer holidays.

I came back home on 28th December, after six days in hospital. My family organized a fantastic welcome party. I didn't know how to thank my family for staying close to me for all this difficult time but very soon I realized, that this way of thinking was pointless. We don't have to thank our family for the asylum, love and parental care. It's natural and obvious just like the fact, that we love them. Sometimes our parents worry too much and it turns out they want us to live their lives. In that case we should know the balance but we should also remember, that our home was the first environment, the first path which led us to our future life. Sometimes these memories aren't as colorful as we would like them to be but it's a part of us and we can never change it.

The point of this essay is "Make your dreams come true, but don't forget about roots from which you grew up".