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THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN LIFE IN *AMORIS LAETITIA*

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Abstract

Protecting and promoting human life is most debated in bioethics and in the general teachings of the Catholic Church. There are different attitudes and ethical approaches towards human life. The Catholic Church follows the sanctity of life approach. *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) is the recent document of Pope Francis on marriage and family life. The concept of human life flows from the theology of marriage and family life. This article explores the theological concept of human life in AL and argues that even though AL is specific about the theology of marriage and family, it has highlighted the concept of human life. My particular focus is on the fundamental theological concepts of human life and the different bioethical issues. After exploring and analysing the notion of human life in AL, this article concludes that AL follows the sanctity of life ethics specifically as it relates to Christian care ethics. It is in the same light that AL concurs with the teachings of the previous documents of the Catholic Church on human life.

Keywords: Care of Children and Elderly, Human Body and Life, Genetics, Infertility, Marketing Human Organs, Moment of Conception, Pregnancy

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Introduction

Amoris Laetitia (AL) has achieved a worldwide discussion with regard to its warm and welcoming tone to persons whose relationship is spotted by feebleness, breakdown and mistakes. AL explores love in marriage and how this love is fruitful, namely, in the form of fostering and protecting human life. In addition, it concerns pastoral challenges of married people and how the Church can help them in such situations. AL proclaims joy of love that is based on the different dimensions of human life. The human life amalgamates spiritual, intellectual, emotional and biological life. It is salient that AL adequately presents human life and related issues, which are scattered from the beginning to the end of the document. It is therefore relevant to examine the concept of human life in AL. Is there any difference between the teaching of AL and the previous documents of the Church with regard to bioethical issues? What are the similarities between AL and other documents?

In this article I focus on the theological concept of human life in AL and examine and compare the fundamental theological concept of human life and different bioethical issues in AL. I observe that AL speaks about the Christian care ethics, specifically care to human embryo, children, the elderly, married couples and even to the divorced and those in live-in relationship. I conclude that AL follows the ethical approach of sanctity of life and it is in line with the previous documents of the Catholic Church.

1. Theology of Human Life

Myriad of times people do not feel the joy of life due to physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual problems. Many take ethical decisions of life issues from beginning to the end of life from different ethical approaches. But sanctity of life is the fundamental approach of the Catholic Church, namely, the treasuring or valuing of all human life from the beginning to its natural end in whatever form it is.¹ The ethical approach of the sanctity of life is portrayed in AL. For instance, it depicts, “the family protects human life in all its stages, including its last” (AL, 83). This section analyses the theology of human life in AL.

1.1. Sources: *Amoris Laetitia* quotes bible and church documents, namely, *Evangelium Vitae* (1 time), *Humanae Vitae* (6 times), *Familiaris*

¹S. Kanniyakonil, *The Fundamentals of Bioethics: Legal Perspectives and Ethical Approaches*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2007.

Consortio (21 times), *Donum Vitae* (1 time), *Gaudium et Spes* (19 times), *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (9 times) to express the view of the theology of life and related issues. Besides, the Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father (24 October 2015) and *Relatio Synodi* (2014) also cite in the text to present the view on human life.²

1.2. Human Life: The term life occurs in AL 284 times; it is referred more to the context of marriage and family life. But when AL refers to human life (quoted 10 times), it actually identifies ethical issues related to human life. Hence AL says that every human life comes from God (AL, 161). That means life has not only biological, but also a theological dimension that can be understood fully, solely in relation to eternal destiny (AL, footnote 181). For instance, the value of human life, even that of a human embryo, is great (AL, 83). AL meticulously argues that we should welcome and care for human life and protect its value (AL, 47). Presently, technology separates human life from parenthood, which is against the plan of the creator (AL, 56). Moreover, the transmission of human life is salient for the couples (AL, 81). In this regard, conceiving a human life and the role of the mother with regard to it is very pertinent (AL, 173).

1.3. Human Body: Based on the teaching of theology of the body by Saint John Paul II, AL notes, “the nuptial meaning of the body and the authentic dignity of the gift” (AL, 151).³ This requires us to fight against the physical violation of the human body (AL, 153). The human body cannot be considered as an object. The human body has dignity (AL, 157). This demands us to respect the human body and to love other persons beyond his/her anatomical structures alone (AL, 164).

1.4. Moment of Conception: There are different arguments with regard to when human life begins. Some argue immediate humanization and others follow delayed humanization. The Catholic Church supports immediate humanization. The Church asserts that embryos are human beings from the moment of conception. There are three reasoning about immediate humanization. T. Srampickal elucidates these as follows:

a) Biological argument: An offspring generated by the union of human parents must be naturally a human being; it cannot be

²G. O’Collins, “The Joy of Love (*Amoris Laetitia*): The Papal Exhortation in Its Context,” *Theological Studies* 77, 4 (2016) 905-921.

³T. Petri, *Aquinas and the Theology of Body: The Thomistic Foundations of John Paul II’s Anthropology*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2015.

otherwise, according to biological law. b) Genetic argument: The zygote is the one-celled being formed by the fusion of a mature sperm and a mature ovum, each having 23 human chromosomes; thus the zygote has the full set (23 pairs) of chromosomes with their genes, carrying the whole genetic information of the new human being. c) Developmental argument: Further operation, growth and development of this being is controlled from within by the genes contained therein. The zygote is therefore the future child and adult in miniature. What remains for it is only to develop. Once the zygote is formed, it grows and develops by virtue of its own inner dynamism and goal orientation, and its interaction with the environment. At no stage of its development do we notice any significant change, which would persuade one to say that it is the event/point, which definitely makes the embryo truly human. So, if the developing embryo is human at any stage, it has to be so from the beginning. The development is an organic, continuous and autonomous process.⁴

This concept is very much highlighted in AL, which asserts, “let us pause to think of the great value of that embryo from the moment of conception. We need to see it with the eyes of God, who always looks beyond mere appearances” (AL, 168). This idea is further explained: “all the somatic traits of the person are written in his or her genetic code already in the embryonic stage” (AL, 170).

1.5. The Human Person: The Christian anthropology on human person is very much appreciated in AL. The word person appears in AL 195 times. AL presents the concept of human person in relation to marriage and family life.

There are three concepts of human person such as Kantian, Phenomenological and Potential concept.⁵ Kantian concept of person emphasizes human dignity for each and every one according to his

⁴T. Srampickal “Abortion and its Evil,” in Baiju Julian and Hormis Mynatty, ed., *Catholic Contributions to Bioethics: Reflections on Evangelium Vitae*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007, 226-228.

⁵For a detailed study on phenomenological and potential concepts of person see R. Sokolowski, “Phenomenology of the Human Person,” *Husserl Studies* 26, 3 (2010) 225-232; X. Thévenot, “Avortement et discernement chrétien,” in J. Doré, éd., *Éthique, religion et foi*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1985, 197-223; R. Burggraeve, “Het ethisch statuut van het menselijk embryo benaderd vanuit de sacraliteit van het leven,” in Y. Englert & A. Van Orshoven, ed., *Het menselijk embryo in vitro*, Leuven-Apeldoorn: Garant, 1999, 95-110; M.A. Warren, “Do Potential People Have Moral Rights?,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 7, 2 (1977) 275-289.

principle of autonomy and its categorical imperatives. These principles never allow us to reduce another person to a thing; object or instrument; rather it honours him/her as a person. This means a person has unconditional worth, and obviously he/she is free of any condition or quality, namely, as sex, race, or moment of existence, certainly before or after the birth of a person.⁶ This concept is also highlighted in AL regarding life and related issues.

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the communion of husband and wife. This communion takes place in the image of the union of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (AL, 29, 71). In relation to the communion of person, AL discusses about the relationship of persons (AL, 77). Many people are fearful about interpersonal relationships, and become distant from others, avoiding affection (AL, 107). Pope Francis notices that the absence of spiritual dimension in a person leads to fragility of relationships (AL, 43). Saint John Paul II calls everyone to “full and mature spontaneity in their relationships” (AL, 151).

There is goodness in every person, since everyone is created in the image of God. Pope Francis indicates, “the person who hates you most has some good in him” (AL, 118). This is really something great because it allows us to see the goodness in another person even if he/she does harm to others. Besides, Pope Francis argues, “whether natural, adoptive or taken in foster care, are persons in their own right who need to be accepted, loved and cared for, and not just brought into this world” (AL, 180).

Each person is unique and absolute (AL, 33). The reason is that “the light of Christ enlightens every person” (AL, 78). One can hear the voice of God in the secret core and sanctuary of a person (AL, 222), which is the conscience of a person (GS, 16). Besides, it is our duty to help others to form his/her identity (AL, 221).

Another salient feature of AL is that it portrays a person in the context of love. Love asks each and every one of us to accept another person as part of this world (AL, 92). Actually, true love appreciates the other person’s achievement (AL, 95). Loving the other person means looking at him/her with the eyes of God (AL, 96), which admires their innate beauty and sacredness (AL, 127). Love goes beyond the limitations of others (AL, 118).

⁶For Kant’s account of human dignity see I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Translated by H.J. Paton, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, 36, 102-3, 106-107.

1.6. Dignity of the Person: Christian anthropology enunciates dignity of the human person.⁷ AL too distinctly explains it. Everybody holds their own proper and inalienable dignity (AL, 155). AL states equal dignity of man and woman. However AL is not positive about the radical types of feminism which voices for all types of the liberation of woman (AL, 54). Besides, valuing the dignity of a child means declaring “his or her natural right to have a mother and a father” (AL, 172, 270, 286).

The human body also has dignity (AL, 151). For this reason, one has to respect the dignity of the person (AL, 152). Pope Francis asserts: “we rejoice at the good of others when we see their dignity” (AL, 109). But a human person loses dignity, when he/she devolves to an animal nature (AL, 157, 147).

Dignity of the person is the criteria to evaluate the methods of regulation of birth (AL, 82). Human dignity requires to “act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within” (GS, 17; AL, 267). Moreover, one has to admire the dignity of others because the other possesses the dignity of God (AL 323).

1.7. Image of God: The word image of God appears 17 times in AL. The well-known quotation from the Bible, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27), is quoted in AL (10).⁸ AL narrates the biblical theology of image of God that gives the idea of sexual difference as male and female. The fruitful relationship of couples is an image for understanding the mystery of the triune God (AL, 11).

Family is to grow up in the image of God (AL, 29). As a result the parents and children make a communion of persons within the image of the communion of the Holy Trinity. Moreover, marriage breathes in the image of Holy Trinity, and love flourishes from this mystery (AL, 63, 71). So the image asks to love others even in their limitations (AL, 118). Thus the image of God is the backbone for the joy of love and life.

⁷L.D. Chirico, “The Dignity of the Human Person: Towards an Evangelical Reading of the Theology of Personhood of Vatican II,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 77, 3 (2005) 249-259; S. Kanniyakonil, “Human Dignity and Moral Norms in *Gaudium et Spes*,” *The Living word* 119, 1 (2013) 15-19.

⁸C. Melchert, “God Created Adam in His Image,” *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13, 1 (2011)113-124.

1.8. Right to Life: AL emphasizes and protects the right of the innocent people. Pope Francis describes, one could not reduce the right of another for his/her own well-being. Right to life is inalienable to each and everyone (AL, 83). Consequently, violating the fundamental right of others is egregious in itself (AL, 139).

1.9. Fundamental Value: Human life has a fundamental value. Family has to respect the particular needs of family members especially to secure the quality and value of every human life (AL, 47). Human life is never considered as an object. It has a great value (AL, 83). For instance, we have to look at the status of the embryo “with the eyes of God” (AL, 168).

1.10. Vulnerable: The state of human being is vulnerable. AL asserts that we have to welcome those who are fragile as part of our society (AL, 47). For instance, sometimes the highly industrialized societies consider elderly people as burden. It is also noticed that the elderly are exploited for economic benefits (AL, 48). Similarly, a poor person is in tenuous situation when he/she is removed from a protected family environment (AL, 247). In the same way, the family members or couples can be in a situation of vulnerable condition (AL, 217, 224, 241).

2. Bioethical Issues in *Amoris Laetitia*

AL seriously takes into account certain bioethical issues, which will be discussed under this section.

2.1. Responsible Parenthood: Responsible parenthood implies many things including the right of the couples to plan the size of their family that arise from the theology of marriage and family life. There are certain criteria regarding the size of the family. Couples can make a decision either to have a big family or a small family. In line with *Casti Connubii* (no. 56), *Gaudium et spes* (51), *Populorum Progressio* (no. 37), *Humane Vitae* (no. 10) and CCC (1652), AL discusses responsible parenthood. Decision regarding responsible parenthood requires the formation of a mature conscience (AL, 222). Here AL quotes GS 16 as follows: [conscience which is] “the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There each one is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of the heart.” According to the right order of priorities, responsibilities towards God, themselves, family and community, one can make the decision about responsible parenthood (AL, 68). Further, Pope Francis elucidates that the church is so happy about large families. As well, he observes, “couples are to use their inviolable liberty wisely and responsibly, taking into account social and demographic realities, as well as their own situation and

legitimate desires” (AL, 167). One has to employ natural family planning methods to plan the size of the family. In this perspective AL (82) states, “we need to return to the message of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of Blessed Pope Paul VI, which highlights the need to respect the dignity of the person in morally assessing methods of regulating birth.” Moreover, depending on GS (48), AL (80) points out, “the conjugal union is ordered to procreation by its very nature.”

2.2. Pregnancy: One of the nuances in AL is that it has an adequate theological concept on pregnancy and related issues (AL, 168-171). Pregnancy is a remarkable period for a woman, as she “joins with God to bring forth the miracle of a new life” (AL, 168). Each woman participates in the mystery of creation (Ps 139:13). The value of embryo begins at the moment of conception itself. Parents may dream about their child, as he/she is a plan of God. AL comments: “for nine months every mother and father dreams about their child... You can’t have a family without dreams. Once a family loses the ability to dream, children do not grow, love does not grow, and life shrivels up and dies.”⁹ Furthermore, a pregnant woman might be happy like Mary, as she professes, “my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant” (Lk 1:46-48). Women have to ask Lord to hand over this joy to their child (AL, 171).

2.3. Prenatal Diagnosis: Today there are different methods employed to prenatal diagnosis such as scanning and genetic tests, which has both positive and negative effects. In this context AL (170) presents says that Almighty Father only fully knows the child: “He alone knows his or her deepest identity and worth.” Pregnant mothers have to accept their children as they are. Sometimes parents feel that their child is not coming at the right time. In this context they have to ask the Lord to heal and receive their child fully and wholeheartedly. It is salient for that child to experience that he/she is wanted in the family. Thus, parents have to welcome the child unconditionally.

2.4. The Issue of Population: AL is very much conscious of the decline in population and erroneous arguments of population explosion.¹⁰ There is also a hidden agenda behind reproductive health. Many

⁹Taken from the Address at the Meeting with Families in Manila (16 January 2015) AAS 107 (2015) 176.

¹⁰M. Illathuparampil, “Population and Environment,” in S. Kanniyakonil & D. Vechoor, ed., *Paristhithideivasastrathinu Oru Samakalikaabhashyam*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2016, 137-146.

European and North American countries face the issue of low population growth.¹¹ Also, one way or another biotechnology affects the growth of the population. AL observes that industrialization, the sexual revolution, the fear of overpopulation and economic problems are other reasons for decline in population (AL, 42).

2.5. Contraception and Sterilization: The Catholic Church teaches, “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life” (*Humanae Vitae*, 11). Contraception and sterilization are the two methods which repudiate fertility. As well, John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio* (no. 32) states that contraception separates “two meanings of conjugal act that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion.” AL too points out the issues of contraception and sterilization. Couples need a generous mind in transmitting human life. The Church strongly opposes the compelled state policy of contraception and sterilization (AL, 42).

2.6. Abortion: Abortion “is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy through the destruction and/or removal of the embryo or fetus.”¹² *Evangelium Vitae* (58) states that “procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth.” This is also known as induced abortion, which means abortion has taken place purposefully. AL strongly opposes state policies supporting abortion (AL, 42). AL (83) argues, “so great is the value of a human life, and so inalienable the right to life of an innocent child growing in the mother’s womb, that no alleged right to one’s own body can justify a decision to terminate that life, which is an end in itself and which can never be considered the ‘property’ of another human being.” There are diverse practical ways to stop abortion. Adoption is one of the methods to prevent abortion (179).

2.7. Reproduction and Infertility: Fertilization naturally occurs when sperms are introduced into a woman’s body through an act of sexual intercourse and one of the sperms succeeds in penetrating the woman’s ovum and fertilizing it. Artificial reproduction means that the sperm is not united with the female ovum through an act of

¹¹T. Frejka and J. Ross, “Paths to Subreplacement Fertility: The Empirical Evidence,” in R.A. Bulatao and J.B. Casterline, ed., *Global Fertility Transition*, New York: Population Council, 2001, 213-254.

¹²M.J. Gorman, “Abortion,” in J.B. Green, ed., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011, 34.

sexual intercourse but by some other means.¹³ AL notices that there is a problem with regard to reproductive technology such as separating congeal act from human life. This happens due to desires of individuals or couples. AL (56) strongly asserts: “let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift.” In the same way AL (54) is against surrogate motherhood.

AL is very much concerned about infertile couples. Quoting from GS 50, AL says, “marriage was not instituted solely for the procreation of children... Even in cases where, despite the intense desire of the spouses, there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life, and preserves its value and indissolubility” (AL, 178). This highlights that motherhood can be understood in a diverse manner, which cannot be reduced only to a biological realm. Infertile couples can do myriad of charitable works, which includes also adoption and foster care.

2.8. Adoption: AL encourages adoption, which is an expression of charity (AL, 82). Pope Frances observes, “adopting a child is an act of love, offering the gift of a family to someone who has none. It is important to insist that legislation help facilitate the adoption process, above all in the case of unwanted children, in order to prevent their abortion or abandonment” (AL, 179).¹⁴ Adoption and foster care are other ways of parenting and raising children. Therefore, children, adoptive or natural, must be accepted, loved and cared for on account of being persons in their own right. It follows that we have to always consider the interest of the children for adoption and foster care (AL, 180).

2.9. Genetics: Genetics grows so fast today. Every month there is a new announcement about the scientific achievement from genetics research in plants, animals and human beings. Compared to other medical technologies, genetics can radically change the nature of environment and of human being. Currently there are genetically engineered trees, plants, animals, food, insects, bacteria and viruses. Genetics in medicine also substantiated the origin of genetic diseases and the functions of genes. Genetic testing and screening, genetics

¹³S. Kanniyakonil, *Chritrimaprethyulpadanam* (The Morality of Artificial Reproduction), Kottayam: OIRSI, 2012.

¹⁴S.V. Brakman and D.F. Weaver, ed., *The Ethics of Embryo Adoption and the Catholic Tradition: Moral Arguments, Economic Reality and Social Analysis*, New York: Springer, 2007.

therapy, genetic design and enhancement are the few developments in medical genetics.¹⁵ Genetic engineering is so common and we live in the midst of it. There are many merits and demerits in genetics research.¹⁶ The problems in genetics are very complex and complicated and raise innumerable ethical and moral theological issues. In this context AL (170) clarifies the moral problem with regard to genetics. Even though one can know the somatic traits from genetic code, only God knows the identity and worth of a person.

2.10. Children: The term 'children' is used 225 times particularly in connection with marriage and family. The basic theology of children is summarized in AL, 170: For, "children are a gift. Each one is unique and irreplaceable... We love our children by the reason they are children, not because they are beautiful, or look or think as we do, or embody our dreams. We love them because they are children. A child is a child."¹⁷

2.11. The Elderly: Elderly people are in their vulnerable stage. Elders have the feeling that they are being forgotten or rejected. Accordingly Psalm 71:9 says, "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent." Thus we have to listen to the cry of the elderly (AL, 191). They might experience that they are part of the community. Saint John Paul II writes, "the elderly help us to appreciate the continuity of the generations, by their charism of bridging the gap"¹⁸ (AL, 192). This implies that grandparents transfer values to grandchildren. It is well to remember that a large number of people got their Christian initiation from their grandparents. Further, basing on Catechesis, AL narrates, "attention to the elderly makes the difference in a society. Does a society show concern for the elderly? Does it make room for the elderly? Such a society will move forward if it respects the wisdom of the elderly."¹⁹ Listening to the elderly helps us to understand our own family history, neighbourhood, and country. Family has to honour the aged, and then it will have a bright future

¹⁵A. Harmon, "Human Gene Editing Receives Key Panel's Support," *The New York Times* (February 15, 2017) 3.

¹⁶S. Kanniyakonil, "Genetic Medicines in India: Blessing or Curse?," *Asian Horizon* 7, 4 (2013) 720-734.

¹⁷I.V. Cully, "A Theology of Children," *Review and Expositor* 80, 2 (1980) 201-210.

¹⁸Address to Participants in the "International Forum on Active Aging" (5 September 1980) 5: *Insegnamenti* III, 2 (1980) 539.

¹⁹Catechesis (4 March 2015), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5 March 2015, 8.

(AL, 193). AL is very serious with regard to the society who abandons the elderly, and considers that such society contains deadly virus.²⁰ Further, AL notices, “the lack of historical memory is a serious shortcoming of our society” that happens as a result of not knowing the experience of the elderly, and due to this the society feels emptiness today (AL, 193). However, plenty of families consider that the elderly are blessings for them. They respect and love them. In the light of faith, we have to serve those people (AL, 47).

2.12. The Sick and Disabled: Giving care to the sick and disabled is a unique feature of the Catholic health care ethics. A wife has to extend her care to the sick husband specifically at the end of his life. This means a wife loves her husband unto death (AL, 162). Significantly, when children are sick, it is the responsibility of parents and siblings to help them (AL, 195). Above all, prayer over the sick is necessary for the spiritual healing of the person (Mk 1:40-45; 7:33) (AL, 289). Indeed, extending care to the disabled is the duty of family members and others (AL, 195). Sometimes disability can break desires and expectations. The family must give special attention and care to the disabled (AL 47).²¹

2.13. Suicide, Euthanasia, and Death Penalty: AL is very much concerned about the issues of suicide and euthanasia. Currently the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg have legalized euthanasia and Oregon is the first state in the U.S. to legalize physician assisted suicide.²² Continuing the teaching in the Vatican *Declaration on euthanasia*, CCC (2277), *Evangelium Vitae* (15), AL rejects suicide and euthanasia. The Church requests families, “to take care of their elderly and infirm members” (AL 48). Likewise, health care professionals have a moral duty in conscience to help people for natural death rather than for euthanasia. Similarly AL strongly rejects death penalty (AL, 83).

2.14. Legal and Illegal Marketing of Human Organs: In commercialization of human body, there is marketing of human organs, tissues, and body parts for the purpose of transplantation. There is legal and illegal trade in organ donation and transplantation.

²⁰Catechesis (4 March 2015), 8.

²¹T. Cooreman-Guittin, “*Amoris Laetitia* through the Lens of Disability,” *Journal of Disability & Religion* 20, 3 (2016) 213-217.

²²S. Kanniyakonil, *Wait for God’s Call: Catholic Perspective on Euthanasia*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2011.

For example, in **Iran** monetary compensation for organs is officially permitted from 1988.²³ According to World Health Organization, 10% of all organ transplants were of commercial origin in 2005.²⁴ The Catholic Church is against paid organ donation, and it is very clear in the addresses of Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. For instance, at the World Congress of the Transplantation Society (Rome-2000), John Paul II observed, “any procedure which tends to commercialize human organs or to consider them as items of exchange or trade must be considered morally unacceptable, because to use the body as an “object” is to violate the dignity of the human person.” Equally, AL prohibits commercialization of human body (AL, 46).

The trafficking of human organs is banned through law in Eastern Europe, Philippines and India.²⁵ However, owing to the economic crisis and political instability, currently trafficking of human beings for the removal of organs take place also in Latin America, North Africa and other regions.²⁶ According to US based Institute for Global Financial Integrity, in 2011 organ trafficking created the profits in the range of \$600 million to \$1.2 billion per year.²⁷

Conclusion

AL has obviously highlighted the theological concept of human life. We may not find in AL a detailed description of the fundamental theological notion of human life. However, this idea is presented directly and indirectly in relation to the teaching of the theology of marriage and family life. There is a strong relationship between the teaching of AL and the other documents of the church with regard to bioethical issues. It might be concluded that the basic orientation of AL is the concept of sanctity of life. It flows in the same line with previous documents of the Church with regard to human life and

²³K. Aramesh, “Iran’s Experience on Living and Brain-Dead Organ Donation: A Critical Review,” in R.J. Jox *et al.*, ed., *Organ Transplantation in Times of Donor Shortage, International Library of Ethics, Law, and the New Medicine* 59, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016, 285-292.

²⁴G.G. Garcia, P. Harden & J. Chapman, “The Global Role of Kidney Transplantation,” *The Lancet* 379 (2012) 36-38.

²⁵S. Shroff, “Legal and Ethical Aspects of Organ Donation and Transplantation,” *Indian Journal of Urology* 25, 3(2009) 348-355.

²⁶Directorate-General for External Policies European Parliament, *Trafficking in Human Organs*, Belgium, 2015.

²⁷S. Hughes, “Neo-Cannibalism: The Global Trade in Human Organs,” *Hedgehog Review* 3, 2 (2002) 7-52.

related issues. In this point of view, AL is not different from other documents. It is strongly against human trafficking, abortion, suicide, euthanasia and death penalty. AL promotes culture of life through the description of the significance of pregnancy, natural family planning, adoption and foster care, the care of the children, disabled and elderly.

Going a step further, AL respects the life of all people including people whose relationships are marked by failures (AL, 242, 250).²⁸ In other words this is really the Christian care ethics approach, specifically giving moral attention to the problems, dealing with others with sympathetic understanding, and acting responsibly to all human beings who are in critical situations. Above all, AL proclaims the gospel of life and asks everyone to protect human life in all of its stages.

²⁸T. Knieps-Port le Roi & R. Burggraeve, "New Wine in New Wineskins: *Amoris Laetitia* and Church's Teachings on Marriage and Family," *Louvain Studies* 39, 3 (2015-2016) 284-302; B. Petra, "From *Familiaris Consortio* to *Amoris Laetitia*: Continuity of the Pastoral Attitude and a Step," *INTAMS Review* 22, 2 (2016) 202-216; A. Lambert, "Accompanying, Discerning and Integrating the Fragility of Couples," International Conference INTAMS, October 26-27, 2016, KU Leuven, Belgium; S. Kanniyakonil, "*Amoris Laetitia* and Indissolubility of Marriage in the Syro-Malabar Church of India before and after the Synod of Diamper," International Conference INTAMS, October 26-27, 2016, KU Leuven, Belgium.