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# MAN AND WOMAN HE CREATED THEM

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The tenth Edward Cardinal Egan Lecture

Union League Club  
New York City,  
April 20, 2024

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Thank you for the honor of this invitation. I hope I may be of some service to you and to the Church. But allow me to open by asking for your pity on me for this undertaking.

Speaking about the most basic things is very difficult if you are not a philosopher or a theologian. Asking me to reflect on “man and woman” is like asking me to reflect on the topic of light and dark, or the sea and the dry land. The topic is huge, and has associated siren calls and pitfalls.

There is, for example, the temptation to try my hand at theology but I am a law and religion professor, not a theologian, and there are so many brilliant minds that have already done it.

Or I could rip a page from the headlines and tell you the horror stories about contemporary attempts to erase the whole *notion* of male and female from law, culture, and even the human body itself.

But in order for *me* to be of service to you, and to the faith, I assume that God (and my hosts) intend me to use the tools that God has given *me* over the course of my life. So what are *these*?

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Well, on reflection I am a woman over whose life the question of man and woman has loomed since I was a child.

I was born the year the birth control pill came on the market, and grew up in a household where seriously Catholic parents were clipping articles about the sexual revolution out of every *TIME* and *Newsweek* magazine, to keep them away from the children, so that you couldn’t pick these magazines **up** without the formerly connected pages falling to the ground.

I was a young adolescent during the Catholic birth control wars, wondering why it was so scorched-earth.

I just turned teenager the year *Roe* was handed down, and majority-age when the first “test-tube” baby was born, which was also about a year after no-fault divorce had swept the nation.

I was a young attorney working for the Catholic bishops when the Supreme Court **reaffirmed** that a woman’s right to abort her child was an essential part of her freedom, which the Court equated with her right to define her own identity and the shape of her personal universe. And I was sent out to endless governmental and private, religious and secular, academic and media, hostile and friendly venues—to debate about this on behalf of the Church.

And by the time the Supreme Court constitutionalized nonmarital sex and then same-sex marriage, and the transgender issue was dominating headlines, I had become a professor of both family law and law and religion, writing scholarship about the intersection of these two, **first** at a Catholic university and **then** at the public university where I teach now.

Not to mention that during this period I also married and raised children in the stewpot that is Washington, DC...

So I ask you... What **choice** did I have but to spend a good deal of my life... and my scholarship... asking what on earth was going on?... turning over in my mind the question of man and woman literally for decades?

So with **this** toolbox, rather than doing what others have done and can do better—I will *instead* reflect upon the trajectory of **challenges** to the Catholic understanding of God’s creating a two-sexed humanity... upon the challenges I encountered **relentlessly** and for **decades**, whether participating in televised debates and dueling congressional testimonies, or speaking on university stages, at United Nations conferences, in Supreme Court *amicus* briefs, law review articles and symposia, and during innumerable question-and-answer sessions with often hostile audiences across the United States and abroad.

I will ask what I perceived those challenging prevailing and Catholic conceptions of man and woman to be **seeking**. **Then** I will attempt to show why, from the perspective of our faith, they cannot “get there” from where they started or by the *means* that they chose. After that, I will consider how, in light of Christ and the signs and demands of the times, the Catholic faith might provide a better explanation and a better way forward, and what me might have to do better ourselves.

I start out with the general observation—stealing a thought from the work of Father Luigi Giussani—that I am not here to **condemn** all the desires of those who challenge us, but mostly to observe that they do not desire nearly *enough* regarding the flourishing of man and woman and the relations between them! By walling God off from their horizons, along with his creative purposes, *and* all of invisible divine reality—they could not grasp what they *really*, what they *ultimately* wanted and needed, when they made even their just demands, and pursued the paths they believed would get them there.

Additionally, let me note that while in the

**beginning** more of the goals of those wanting to fashion a brave new world for man and woman seemed laudable, and Catholics could readily endorse them, over time, as some of their deeper, underlying goals and the **means** proposed to advance them changed or became more visible, then the *limits* of their only-human reason became painfully evident: the effects of original sin, the absence of the light of faith. And pitfalls and even some pernicious outcomes emerged.

I will begin, then, by recounting the stated aims of those leading secular voices and movements aspiring especially over about the last sixty years to improve recognition of the dignity of women, and sometimes the dignity of men too, **and** of the relations **between** men and women, whether they announced these aims in the context of media outlets, government programs, United Nations conferences, *amicus* briefs, academic scholarship, interest group appeals, or lawsuits. Then I will describe the **means** they proposed to reach their ends. They demanded:

More respect for women’s capabilities, stressing especially the intellectual, while rejecting or at least omitting mention of women’s familial gifts;

Better health for women—especially in the context of what they considered too frequent childbearing—and less poverty, especially that regularly associated with single parenting;

Better relations **between** men and women, regularly with an emphasis upon more sexual relations free of the “worry” of pregnancy, alongside demands that men make greater contributions in the domestic realm;

Greater personal happiness for **each** sex, regularly highlighting more material possessions and sexual freedom, and reduced barriers to leaving unhappy marriages;

More **equality** between the sexes, defined regularly as giving women more of what they perceived men to be enjoying or even **hoarding**: education, employment, income, and sex without resulting pregnancy or childbirth.

It is not difficult to understand how much sympathy many of these demands generated, including from the Church. Especially regarding just demands for recognizing women's capacities, for better health, reduced poverty, fairness in domestic, educational, economic, and **all** social and political spheres, and greater personal happiness for **both** sexes.

Look, for example at Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, which supported women's "embrac[ing] a state of life or...acquir[ing] an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men." Look at Saint John Paul II's *Letter to Women* recognizing that "women's dignity has often been unacknowledged," and that they have been "relegated to the margins of society and...reduced to servitude," while still "importantly contributing to every single realm." Look at this letter's bluntly heralding what it called the "great process of women's liberation." And look closely at then-Cardinal Ratzinger's document for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *On the Collaboration of Men and Women*. There he calls a two-sexed humanity the fullest "realization" of God's image, and charges original sin with disfiguring male-female relations. He also insists upon the value of women's presence in **every single** sector of society.

And yet... several features of secular projects undertaken in the name of the flourishing and equality of men and women struck ominous notes. There was suspicion of or outright hostility to domestic contributions and parenthood... also to marriage—which was increasingly dismissed as an intrinsically "patriarchal" institution. There was the characterization of pregnancy and mothering as smothering and oppressive. There was the emphasis upon sexual relations, especially free of pregnancy and childbirth, to the point that campaigners

seemed to endorse the conclusion of Freud's disciple Wilhelm Reich, who pronounced sex the "core of life's happiness."

There was also the problem of the emphasis on **adults'** interests in sexual and marital happiness—including by resort to easier divorce—as distinguished from the interests of vulnerable children. And the filing of children under the heading of "burdens" upon especially women's *material* aspirations. And any notion of the family as a crucial first cell of society vanished without a trace.

In addition, there were the problematic **means** by which even laudable **ends** were to be achieved. These included most prominently more and more and more contraception and then legal, easily accessible abortion. And also more sexual encounters, but unburdened with children, and in the context of more easily breakable marriages or in temporary, cohabiting relationships.

Now the Supreme Court, since the early 1960s, until recently, both joined the chorus and became a *highly influential* teacher to the culture at large. Allow me to run you quickly through their leading relevant opinions, and their meaning for male-female relations.

First, in its 1965 *Griswold* opinion, the Court announced a constitutional right of married persons to use contraception. This effectively put some distance between sex and children, and between marriage and children. Because—even if a particular sexual encounter would not otherwise be procreative—contraception severs the whole *idea* of children from sex. Thus separating sex from "tomorrow," from the future, from the *ultimate joint enterprise* of marriage.

The Supreme Court continued this trajectory—separating sex from children and thus from tomorrow—in its *Eisenstadt* opinion seven years later, which announced a constitutional right of

*single* persons to access contraception. It also used the occasion of this opinion to instruct the nation that marriage is *not so different* from being single. The Court wrote: “Yet the marital couple is not an independent entity, with a mind and heart of its own, but an association of two *individuals*, each with a *separate* intellectual and emotional makeup,” and each possessed of a right to make the “fundamental” decision to use contraception to prevent parenting.

*Roe v. Wade* one year later then relied upon *these* prior cases separating sex from tomorrow, and upending the notion of the marital unity, to invent a *woman-only* constitutional right to destroy the child conceived by sex, whether she was married or single. *Irrational and unconstitutional mess though the opinion was*, it made two things perfectly clear: **first**, that the Court had no use for even the undisputed scientific data on the origins and development of human life; and **second**, that its basis for inventing an abortion right was the litany of women’s miseries it associated with an unwanted pregnancy and motherhood. The Court’s later affirmation of *Roe* in the *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* opinion then expanded upon this litany, claiming that without abortion women would suffer the inability to engage in spontaneous sex without fear, and *the inability to obtain* social and economic equality, self-definition, and personal universe shaping. According to the reflections of John Paul II, written during and shortly after these years, the law had thus embraced the notion that the person *first* charged with the duty of care for human life is the one with the right to destroy it at one of its most *vulnerable* moments, and to call this a human right.

Immediately surrounding the years when an abortion right was invented in the United States, no-fault divorce also swept the states. No-fault divorce is a one-way train, in which one spouse can attain a divorce after a relatively short period, on the ground that he or she is experiencing irreconcilable differences with the other. The legislative histories accompanying these laws claimed that easier divorce would promote adults’ happiness and health and even *children’s*

welfare on the belief that children are happier when their parents’ choices are realized.

Then, one year after the *Casey* abortion opinion, the Hawaii supreme court legally declared that there are no important distinctions between same- and opposite-sex unions. In short, that a state has no more interest in procreative versus intrinsically **nonprocreative** unions, or in marriages in which children can know and be known by the parents who brought them into this world versus same-sex marriages in which—in every case—children will be separated from their natural mother or father or both.

After this, the **US Supreme Court** began its march toward same-sex marriage, first by announcing a federal constitutional right to nonmarital sex for both homosexual and heterosexual couples in the *Lawrence* opinion, and then by claiming that the constitutional interests supporting legal abortion—rights to *individual* happiness, self-definition, and *personal* universe-shaping—also supported homosexual persons’ right to achieve these same personal goals by means of a marriage license from the state. The cords linking sex, marriage, and childbearing were now completely severed at law.

This was only confirmed by a movement that gained *huge* momentum immediately following the constitutionalization of same-sex marriage: transgenderism. Like these earlier movements, it denies the voices of creation and reason, embraces procreative sterility, and places sex, in this case sexual identity, at the center of the quest for happiness and health.

I should finally mention one additional movement supporting a vision of men and woman as individuals entitled to seek temporary sexual satisfaction, free of future commitments: the movement to demand equal legal treatment of cohabitation and marriage. One of its projects is



lawsuits forcing religious employers and landlords to hire and house cohabiting couples by suing them for “marital status” discrimination if they refuse. About half of the jurisdictions opining on this have sided with cohabitants on the grounds that the only distinction between marriage and cohabitation is the absence of a state-issued paper.

So having summarized the aspirations and leading means of those most vociferously challenging Catholic notions of man and woman, let us consider the results of this over-half-century-long campaign. To say the results are uneven is to understate things.

In the social, political, economic, educational, and legal realms, woman’s achievements have surged. Her intelligence, and diverse capabilities are far more recognized.

In the personal and familial realms, matters are more complicated. Men have more and more accepted the invitation to assume more domestic responsibilities, and to adjust their employment responsibilities accordingly.

But **alliances** between men and women are experiencing troubling trends. There is less dating, less marriage, more temporary cohabiting, more divorce, more nonmarital parenting, more loneliness, still high rates of domestic abuse, more abortion, more porn addiction, and a growing divide between the richer and the poorer when it comes to the odds of getting and staying married and raising marital children. Rates of happiness for both sexes, led by especially low rates among the young, are declining. And stunningly high percentages of those aged 12 to 27 now say they are *not interested* in the opposite sex, or that they want to *be* it, with 28.5% of women and 10.6% of men, more than double the Millennial generation, telling Gallup pollsters that they are same-sex attracted or transgender.

Before turning to the question of how Christianity illuminates what went wrong, and a better

way of pursuing the nobler goals of men’s and women’s flourishing and relations, let me stop for a moment and ask: Have you ever wondered what is the larger context in which we got to this point? When so many young people and politicians and media and interest groups are absolutely obsessed with the matter of sexual identity and relations? I raise this because there are such things as historical trends, as well as stages in salvation history. We see them often clearly when we look *back*. But if we are to gauge the urgency of our current situation and to decide to respond *now*, how to *help*, we shouldn’t wait too long to think about this.

One hears Catholics and others ascribe the recent trajectory to “the pill,” or “the decline of the family,” the decline of religion, or the interplay of these, or to “the sexual revolution” or feminism, or even just to Americans’ famed individualism and materialism. These are part of the mosaic. I think three overlapping accounts, however, do a more *complete* job regarding our US situation: the long history of ideas account; the salvation history account; and the interplay of law and culture account. *Very* briefly, to grasp the **first**, you can’t do better than to read Carl Trueman’s *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution*. There he traces the last several hundred years’ **intellectual** shifts that facilitated shifts in sexual practices and beliefs.

**First**, the psychologizing of the self so that people understood themselves *not* as mostly communally located and connected, but instead as self-**maximizing**, self-**constituting** *individuals*. Second, **the move** to claim that sexual desires are a person’s **most important identity**. And **third**, the **politicizing of sex** on the belief that oppression is a fundamentally psychological phenomenon, so that the sexual codes endorsed by families and churches and impinging on humans’ psychological consciousness must be overthrown in the name of human freedom. Think Rousseau, Shelly, Blake, Freud, Wilde, Joyce,

Marx, Reich, Marcuse, Sanger, Butler, and today's universities, and interest groups such as Planned Parenthood and the Human Rights Campaign.

The **next** account I call the salvation history account. Whereas much of the West was most concerned beginning at the time of Christ to ponder the identity of Jesus as both human and divine, and the Trinitarian nature of God, for the last several hundred years, the focus has been upon the human person—upon anthropology. But we have broken the pattern—save within communities of faith—of pondering this *in light of Christ*, and moved within our own heads. Among other consequences, this has led to a narrowing of our focus to the sexual aspects of human life, and in particular to subjective sexual desires.

This possibly overlaps with an observation revealed by Sister Lucia, one of the children who witnessed the Virgin Mary at Fatima, who wrote to Cardinal Caffarra on the occasion of the institution of the John Paul II institute [for Studies on Marriage and Family], saying:

“Father, a time will come when the decisive battle between the kingdom of Christ and Satan will be over marriage and the family. And those who will work for the good of the family will experience persecution and tribulation. But do not be afraid, because Our Lady has already crushed his head.”

In short, it is the time of the “man and woman” question in salvation history.

Now a last account concerns the interplay of culture and law in the US particularly, in the last sixty-odd years. I couldn't possibly treat here **all** of the elements involved, but I indicated their presence in my account of the Supreme Court's separation of sex from marriage from children: there is, for example, the “**turn toward the self**,” which is interrelated with subjectivism, declining concern for children, and an ignoring or rejecting of the transcendent. Thus a preoccupation with sexual expression divorced from

tomorrow and from others. Sex becomes instead self-referential and a tool for forging personal identity. It is not referred to God and his purposes. This is paired with the **triumph of the therapeutic**, which often separated the body and the mind and further elevated subjective reality. And there is the **technological imperative**, especially in the realms of severing sex from procreation and altering sexual characteristics via surgery. There was also the movement to associate transgressive sexual behaviors with the concept of political freedom, which is in full flower today.

All of these accounts have the ring of truth. And among other uses, they tell us where we might **be** in the stream of things. They suggest the ideas that need correcting or even toppling.

They also make the case for the urgency of Catholic assistance. So what are some of the leading Catholic insights that help explain why even noble goals went astray? And that illumine human reason's limited vision, widen human horizons to factor in *all* of reality, and *deepen* and *heighten* human *desires* in the realm of man and woman to lead us to what we *ultimately* seek—the face of God himself and our relationship with him?

Please understand how broad a brush I am painting with here, and excuse my simplifications as I suggest various insights without suggesting a hierarchical order among them.

I begin with the Christian insight that God is God and we are not. We are—all of us, both women *and* men—first to be characterized then by **receptivity**, which also implies humility, and an attitude of dependence and gratitude. *This* is our fundamental identity. God makes our incredibly complex bodies and the world around us. We are infinitely smaller and more fragile. Death comes for us all, and for every earthly civilization too. I am reminded of that marvelous discourse in the book of Job where God

lectures him for no less than four chapters, asking him questions like: “Where were you when I founded the earth? Who determined its size? Surely you know? Who stretched out the measuring line for it? Who shut within doors the sea? Have you ever in your lifetime commanded the morning and shown the dawn its place?”

This humility, receptivity, deference to God’s creative power, defined the greatest among us human beings, our Mother Mary, and must be our way too, beginning with our acceptance of fundamental facts of our existence: our being made by another, our creation as male and female, and ways in which men and women have related to one another throughout human history.

While acknowledging the positive aspects of our preoccupations here in the United States with activity and self-assertion, if we are not *first* receptive to the author of the universe, and aware of our dependence and fragility, we will not be able to live out our sex, or relations with the opposite sex, as we ought.

Closely related to the necessity of being *receptive*, is the necessity of respecting what God has chosen to create. As the first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans reminds us: *For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood...in what he has made.*

But those rejecting Christian views also regularly eschew reasoning from creation, and increasingly distance themselves from reason itself. Remember the observation made by Father Richard John Neuhaus toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when he mused, “Wouldn’t the philosophes of the French Revolution be astounded to wake up 200 years later only to discover that the greatest champion of reason is the Catholic Church herself?” Today, we see many who wear the mantle of intellectuals asserting five preposterous things before breakfast. They declare the

sexed body a social construct, and a body—male in every cell—to be female. A recent article concerning a transgender curriculum in a public school quoted a teacher expressing her *joy* that 20 of 32 of her kindergarten children had “come out” as gay or trans. She really seemed to believe this. In a university debate with a family law professor several years ago at a top-five law school I was “dared” to name even *one* difference between men and women, and at another debate several years later, the head of Columbia University’s Reproductive Rights project said exasperatedly that voices like mine “should not be allowed in the public square.”

But let’s say we did resort to reason to think about men and women. What would a reflection even on the natural plane reveal about the existence of a two-sexed humanity? Well, that it indicates that neither sex can exhaust what it means to be human. That *each* seems to have a need for the other, a natural desire to go out of oneself to what is similar but also toward what one does not possess. That the uniting of differences brings new life. And the child born—unlike many animals—is born helpless for a long time and in need of the contributions of *both* parents. Even without a belief in God one might reflect on all that this indicates about the human being.

But now ponder this in light of the reality of **God**, and **more** wisdom emerges. He makes man and woman equally in his image, providing a rock-solid basis for understanding their equality that is unequalled by any human rationale about the sexes’, for example, possessing equal intellects or talents. It suggests from the beginning, from the man’s existential loneliness to his exclamation upon seeing the woman, to the couple’s procreative capacities, that human beings are characterized by relations with an *other* beyond the self. That this is radically, intrinsically, at the core of being human.

All of this suggests too that there will always

be some mystery in God's plans for humanity. The mystery of man and woman is one of God's many "ideas" with which we have to "sit" for a lifetime, and even then, only plumb a relatively little. Like the mystery of God's coming in a "still small voice" and not regularly with lightning— and earthquake-sized events. Like the whole "last shall be first" Gospel motif. Like God becoming a helpless child in our midst and subject to our cruelty and rejection. But that God allows mystery is *not* to say that he is irrational. The mystery that persists in the relations between men and women is but one example. Note how it has a way of drawing us together. I stumbled upon one of the plainest expressions of this in an interview with former President Obama. About his wife Michelle he said, "I'm extremely happy with her, and part of it has to do with the fact that she is at once completely familiar to me, so that I can be myself and she knows me very well and I trust her completely, but at the same time she is also a complete mystery to me.... And there are times when we are lying in bed and I look over and sort of have a start. Because I realize here is this other person who is separate and different and has different memories and backgrounds and thoughts and feelings. It's that tension between familiarity and mystery that makes for something strong, because, even as you build a life of trust and comfort and mutual support, you retain some sense of surprise or wonder about the other person."

Christianity adds that our two-sexed humanity is also a means of coming better to grasp who God is and how he wants us to love him and one another. Furthermore, that the uniting of different but also similar sexes bears new life, and that our being "his image and likeness" helps us understand the communion of life that is the Trinity. That the Old Testament and the New call humanity the bride to God's Bridegroom helps us understand what his love is like, and also how we are to love one another as he instructs us, to love one another as he loves us. Saint Paul makes this explicit in Ephesians 5 when speaking of marriage between a man and a woman as a privileged glimpse of the relationship between Christ

and his people the Church.

But because our national milieu is more about "choice" than "being chosen to love" and more about relying upon our own limited thoughts and schemes, and it is often more *ideological* than rational, it is no *wonder* that we are failing to understand the gift that is our sexual identity, its implications not only for relations with the opposite sex but also for our basic orientation to the world: as the man or woman *for* others. Similar flaws taint our approach to equality.

A purely secular approach to equality, that is, has led to discord, competition, ranking, quotas, or an insistence upon leveling down to sameness. Christianity teaches, however, that *all* differences are to be viewed "in light of Christ," as in Saint Paul's *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. Thus, the unparalleled basis for equality is our imaging Christ, and his dying to save us all so that we might live with him for ever. In other words, as with the Trinity, as manifested in sex and in procreation, as with all differences between members of the Body of Christ, sexual differences are pointed toward unity, synergy, collaboration. This is a recipe for what currently ails so much of DEI activism.

A last insight Christianity brings to purely secular contemporary notions of man and woman concerns original sin. Now as Pope Benedict and others have observed, this is **one** Christian mystery that most people could conclude is actually empirically observable everywhere and every day. But there is an aspect of original sin beyond its manifestation in people's perpetually being tempted toward pride and self-love. For the Church **also** teaches that original sin first and perhaps **most** profoundly affected the relations between man and woman. Then—Cardinal Ratzinger wrote that "God's decisive words to the woman after the first sin express the kind of relationship which has now been introduced between man and woman: *your*



*desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you* (Gn 3:16). It will be a relationship in which love will frequently be debased into pure self-seeking, in a relationship which ignores and kills love and replaces it with the yoke of domination of one sex over the other. Indeed the story of humanity is continuously marked by this situation, [wherein....] the equality, respect, and love that are required in the relationship of man and woman according to God's original plan are lost."

In light of **this** teaching, it is no wonder that secular humanity's belief comes to naught that **merely** human exhortations or even **laws** can right what goes wrong in the relations between men and women. *Only* the New Adam, *only* mutual submission in light of Christ, can make a dent in the problem.

There are so many more observations I could make about how Christianity brings light to the contemporary questions concerning man and woman, but I have to stop here for reasons of time, and in order to offer a few concluding observations along two lines. First, to make a brief case in favor of greater visibility of the Church on these matters, and second to suggest some difficulties to be overcome.

What I am saying here is rather basic, but still it's good to organize some thoughts on this. Regarding greater visibility of the Church: First, God's scheme for a two-sexed humanity is **architectural** to our faith. Without plumbing it, and experiencing it in the way he intended, we will be impaired in our understanding of God's identity, how he loves us, and how he wants us to love him and one another. I know this sounds overblown, but it really does flow from a close examination of Scripture and Tradition and is a fair conclusion from our own current experiences too.

Second, without explaining this scheme more frequently, we are leaving a lot of human misery unaddressed. People need to accept and understand their sex to know themselves. And because the human mind understands things better by distinction than

by description, a failure to understand the opposite sex, too, will leave us struggling to understand our own. And without understanding and even extending empathy to our own and the other, we cannot forge the relationships for which we were made and without which we fall into navel-gazing, selfishness, loneliness, and despair.

Third, a society without stable, loving family life not only breeds individual misery, but social chaos. You read enough about this every day, so I won't bore you with the details. But there is one aspect of this that deserves highlighting. The fact that poor and minority Americans are *far* more often than their more privileged neighbors suffering the loss of love, stable marriage, and marital parenting. This phenomenon is, in fact, the single greatest factor in the growing and hardening income, wealth, and education gaps between the wealthy and the poor, the majority and minority populations in the United States. It is not only an individual human tragedy, but also a civil rights, social, and spiritual tragedy.

And finally on this matter of greater visibility, who *else* is so well positioned to do this work on a grand scale? Did Paul VI not declare the Church an "expert in humanity"? Is this not what we believe as followers of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, who came to show us the way for humanity? Do we believe with John Paul II that the "marginalization of Christianity...would not bode well for the future of society...indeed, it would threaten the very spiritual and cultural foundations of civilization"?

Yes, there are some marvelous sociologists—some of whom even get quoted in the pages of the *New York Times* or other leading media. Yes, there are other academics, religious leaders, and interest groups. There are even some brave politicians from time to time. But none are as massive, none speak with two thousand years of reflection upon the word of God, speaking so comprehensively, so integratedly,

with such a command of the entire intellectual canon of the West. In documents such as *Gaudium et Spes*, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the *Letter to Women*, *On the Collaboration of Men and Women*, *The Theology of the Body*, *Deus Caritas Est*, *Dignitas Infinita*. And is there any international figure like Pope Francis or his immediate predecessors who can achieve global coverage of remarks about men and women at the drop of a hat?

The world is listening. The importance of our witness, and the danger it is perceived to pose to prevailing problematic ideas, is evident in the number of lawsuits filed to squelch the religious freedom of our institutions that stand for our teachings regarding man and woman. As my husband always reminded me on my tough days, “they don’t drop the bombs, Helen, unless you are over the target.”

At the same time, I would be remiss not to mention the difficulties and shortcomings in this work.

This is a difficult arena... to make the understatement of the week. We have been and will continue to be labeled “haters,” even “unChristian.” We are presently and for a long time airing our own dirty laundry, our shame with the clergy sex abuse scandals. But an unwillingness to be justly excoriated for this in the public arena can’t be the reason we abandon men and women to the prevailing messages. Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis have shown us how to apologize to the world for our failures while continuing to shed light, *especially* in those places where angels fear to tread.

Second, we haven’t well communicated, **especially** to young adults, not only the **architectural** quality of our teachings on men and women, but also the inseparability of these teachings from our teachings regarding social justice generally. For the first persons strewn on *all* our paths, requiring sacrificial care from us, will be those we encounter at home on the way to the kitchen. We are fooling ourselves to think we can learn to love the stranger without the benefit of the

first school of love, the members of which we will affect deeply and indelibly for the rest of their lives, either for the good or for ill. And the links between better male/female relations and the wellbeing especially of children and the *poor* should be far better discussed.

Third, there is a dearth of accessible, articulate theology undergirding our teachings on same-sex relations. Younger people are especially confused. A discussion about the relationship between our teaching on **this** subject and other **basic** Christian commitments is long overdue. About its relationship to our deferring to the word of God, to accepting his created design and to adhering to the radicality of the Christian love command. Its relationship to fact that God has made us for going out of ourselves, across differences, in relationships involving the giving and receiving of gifts, and the procreation of new life. Its relationship to the well-being of children. This full-bodied conversation has yet to be had.

Finally, debates about the proper view of man and woman most often arise today in the context of religious-freedom challenges to Catholic institutions. But our institutional replies are often insufficient. Instead of using the occasion to teach about men and women with confidence and *pride that we are contributing to the common good*, we too often say that we simply have to obey a moral rule or the local bishop. There are too few people speaking on behalf of our institutions taking up this work of giving a reason for the hope that is in us. Despite our great intellectual history and our convictions about God’s plans for human happiness. Convincing speakers able to articulate in human terms the human costs of sexual confusion, and how Christianity illuminates these, are in too-short supply.

I realize that the Church too is still **learning** about men and women. And that actions speak louder than words on so many occasions. But I think words have been underestimated and underutilized in the

current predicament. And that we should take a page out of an exhortation once made by Cardinal John Henry Newman. He wrote in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century:

“There is a time for silence, and a time to speak’, the time for speaking is come. What I [desire] in Catholics is the gift of bringing out what their religion is... You must not hide your talent in a napkin, or your light under a bushel. I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity; I am not denying you are such already: but I mean to be severe, and, as some would say, exorbitant in my demands, I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, what are the bases and principles of Catholicism and where lie the main inconsistencies and absurdities of [the opposing view].”

And because I cannot speak better than that, I just want to say thank you for your presence here today.

