

ARTICLE 1

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

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Marriage – A Gift from God

Marriage is one of the greatest gifts that God has given to mankind. It is a sublime vocation ordered to love and crowned with the beauty and glory of children. It is the foundation stone, designated by God, on which society must be built.

Yet today, in the western world in particular, marriage is in grave difficulty. The number of couples divorcing or separating is on the increase. The number of young people who choose to co-habit rather than to marry is on the increase. The number of couples contracepting in their marriages is at an all time high.

People are also getting married much later in life because marriage is no longer seen as a top priority. I came across an interesting statistic from America recently. In 1960 72% of Americans aged 24 were married. By 2012 that figure had dropped to just 9%.

Our understanding of marriage has been undermined to such an extent that a significant proportion of the population now think that marriage can be extended to include so called “same-sex” couples. Our Irish government is proposing to enact legislation in 2015 that will allow for the adoption of children by “same-sex” couples. Our government are also introducing programmes into our schools which seek to teach our children that there is no fundamental difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

Catholic Marriage is Necessary for Society

But does any of this really matter? Isn't this just another element in the evolution of modern society?

The answer to this question is that society depends for its very survival on the health and well being of Catholic families. Society cannot function or survive without Catholic marriages.

We recently celebrated our twenty fifth wedding anniversary. Our spiritual father, a Benedictine monk, celebrated Mass for us.

During a conversation with him afterwards I said that I believed that the recent enactment of laws to allow “same-sex” couples to marry signalled the end of western civilisation as we know it.

His answer was that western civilisation has already collapsed and that modern society leans on the remnants of historic structures which are artificially propping it up.

On reflection I believe that he is correct. Western civilisation has collapsed. Here in Ireland we have also passed the point of no return. Abortion was legalised in 2013. Same sex adoption will be legalised in 2015. Same sex marriage will be legalised in 2015 if the referendum is passed by the people in May and there is every likelihood that it will pass.

During the homily at our anniversary Mass our spiritual father, referencing St Paul, pointed out that marriage is an image of the love of Christ for His Church. Therefore those who hate Christ and His Church will always attack marriage in order to destroy it, believing that in doing so they will destroy the Church.

The Survival of the Catholic Family

Fr John A. Hardon SJ, in an article titled “The Survival of the Catholic Family” puts it like this, “Where the Christian family – the Catholic Christian Family – is strong, the Catholic Church is strong.

Where the family is weak, the Church is weak.

Where the family is struggling for survival, the Church is struggling for survival.

Where the Catholic family is dying, the Catholic Church in those cultures and countries is dying. And once the Catholic family, as instituted by Christ disappears, the Church of Jesus Christ has been removed from that nation of people”

We must live in Faith & Hope and Plan for the Future

There is a danger that looking at this situation, grim as it now is, can lead us to despair. But despair would show a lack of faith in Christ and His Church and a lack of faith in marriage.

No, we must not despair. But we must face up to reality. Western civilisation, like many civilisations before it, is dying. Catholics must now start preparing for the future by starting to build society anew on the only sure foundation given to us by Jesus Christ for building society and that is on the sacrament of matrimony.

In order to do this effectively it is important that we don't make the same mistakes over again and so we first need to analyse the problem. We then need to identify the causes and eliminate or neutralise them and then we need to put in place a plan of action which will restore harmony and stability to Catholic family life and to society in general.

An Analysis of the Problem

So how has this situation come about in Ireland?

In order to fully understand what is going on we first of all need to have a look at the Church's understanding of Marriage. This series of articles proposes first to look at some of the Scriptural references to Marriage and then to look at specific Church teaching on marriage through the writings of various Popes.

In particular, “Arcanum” by Pope Leo XIII, “Casti Connubii” by Pope Pius XI, “Humanae Vitae” by Pope Paul VI and “Familiaris Consortio” by Pope John Paul II along with other Papal pronouncements that have a bearing on either the Catholic understanding of Marriage or on the Catholic understanding of the nature of human society and the corresponding duty of Catholics.

Once a Catholic understanding of Marriage has been gained we need to look at the factors that are challenging and undermining that understanding of Marriage. We need to identify where there is a variance from Church teaching and where it is coming from. To do this we need to take a hard, open and honest look at the negative influences operating both within and without the Church here in

Ireland whilst also noting any positive developments that are there.

An Action Plan

Only then can we devise our plan of action that seeks to neutralise or eliminate the identified negative factors whilst re-building a proper understanding of Marriage amongst the Catholic population so that Catholic families can once again fulfil their role of evangelisation through living authentic and holy married lives within those families.

Catholic families must once again become the leaven that elevates Irish society so that God is given glory and so that the level of evil which currently permeates our society is driven out and diminished.

These are lofty goals indeed but they must be undertaken urgently so that we are prepared for the inevitable collapse of western society. That collapse will result in an increase in the level of violence and decadence which will be joined by a new and deadly state sanctioned persecution of the Catholic Church throughout the western world. The signs of this are already clear for anyone who has eyes to see.

As Archbishop Fulton Sheen famously said,

“It is a characteristic of any decaying civilization that the great masses of the people are unaware of the tragedy. Humanity in a crisis is generally insensitive to the gravity of the times in which it lives. Men do not want to believe their own times are wicked, partly because they have no standard outside of themselves by which to measure their times. If there is no fixed concept of justice, how shall men know it is violated? Only those who live by faith really know what is happening in the world; the great masses without faith are unconscious of the destructive processes going on, because they have lost the vision of the heights from which they have fallen.”

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