

## ARTICLE 10

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

#### Marriage a gift from God

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### Marriage – The Church's Understanding through Scripture

#### St Paul on Marriage

St Paul has a lot to say to husbands and wives throughout his writings. Much of what St Paul says in this regard is seen as being contentious in our day. St Paul speaks plainly and very bluntly. He doesn't beat around the bush but is very direct is what he has to say. St Paul is often accused of being misogynistic on account of what he says concerning women. “Let women keep silence in the churches”, “Let women be subject to their husbands”, “but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to use authority over the man”.

#### Before Reading St Paul – review Church Teaching on Sacred Scripture

Before we proceed let us recall once again what the Church teaches about Sacred Scripture in the document “Dei Verbum”

“Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit... Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.” (Dei Verbum 11)

Therefore we cannot dismiss what St Paul says as being misogynistic and neither can we ignore what he says because it seems difficult to understand and causes discomfort, particularly for women, but for men as well. Sometimes the men feel uncomfortable because it makes the women uncomfortable. Critical thinking is not very evident amongst the men of our day and it seems that, in a lot of cases, the Truth is dismissed on account of uncomfortable feelings and emotions or because the Truth hurts. The Catholic intellect seems to have become subservient to emotionalism and sentimentalism. This thinking says “I don't like it, therefore I dismiss it, because it hurts my feelings.”

#### Catholicism is a religion for the strong

Catholicism is not a religion for the faint hearted, and to understand St Paul one has to be bold, courageous, strong and determined to leave all human thinking aside in order to follow Christ. When St Peter tried to steer Christ away from Jerusalem and death through crucifixion, Christ replied, “Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.” (Matt 16:23)

Christ then addresses us with the following stark words:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his

own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works.” (Matt 16:24 - 27)

### **St Paul seeks to proclaim the Truth**

St Paul is not concerned with making us feel good about ourselves and our lives, rather he exhorts us, both men and women, to live holy lives pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. We must also remember that we cannot take little pieces of scripture out of their context and then interpret them to suit our own prejudices and desires rather, we must give attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture. Either we are with Christ or we are against Him, either we follow the inspired teachings of Sacred Scripture or we reject them and follow our own whims to the detriment of our own salvation.

So let us look at what St Paul says to husbands and wives in his Epistle to the Ephesians.

“Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: Because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. He is the saviour of His body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and delivered himself up for it: That he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any; such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the church: Because we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself: and let the wife fear her husband.” (Ephesians 5:22 – 33)

### **Beautiful Scripture**

When taken in its entirety, this is one of the most beautiful and striking passages of sacred scripture concerning the vocation to married love. But before we look deeper into this passage let us go back to the book of Genesis in the Old Testament and to the fall of man, because there is an understanding which we can gain from the account of the fall of man. After the fall God outlines the consequences of their disobedience for Adam and Eve;

“To the woman he said, 'I will multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam he said “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3: 16 – 19)

### **The Effects of the Fall**

Before the fall Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with God and with each other. There were no disagreements, there was no strife, they were innocent and lived in peace. However, after the fall, Adam accuses Eve, Eve accuses the serpent and blame and disharmony enter into the realm of mankind. Now instead of harmony the man will rule over the woman and will tend to dominate her.

It is very important that we men realise, that, on account of the fall, we have a tendency to dominate and rule over women in an unjust way. The history of mankind is replete with examples of this unjust domination of women by men, through unjust laws, unjust customs, unfair wage discrimination, voter disenfranchisement and numerous other practices. We cannot just dismiss the complaints of the radical feminists out of hand as if they are without foundation, for this would be to deny history. However we must also realise that the cause of this disharmony between the sexes goes right back to our first parents and to their rejection of God's rightful authority over them through their freely chosen act of disobedience.

St Paul, in the above passage to the Ephesians, gives us the antidote to this problem and teaches us how to overcome this inherent disharmony in how we live out our married lives.

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