

## ARTICLE 57

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

#### Marriage a gift from God

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#### Marriage! The Garden of Eden

##### **Tempted by the Father of Lies**

We have seen how the serpent tempted Eve with a lie. We have seen that Eve fell for this temptation, doubted God, and then disobeyed His command. We have seen how Eve passed on the temptation to Adam, because Adam failed to protect her from the lies of the serpent, and we have seen how Adam also fell and disobeyed God. In the last article we saw a comparison between the first Eve and Our Lady, the second Eve. The bible presents us with plenty of these comparisons in the examples it gives of the choices that men make and these examples are for our instruction. Each example should raise questions in our hearts. Who am I most like in this story? Who do I desire to be like? What must I do in order to become like them? As we progress through the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis we should keep in mind that the Bible is written for our instruction and to teach us what we must do in order to get to heaven.

##### **The Justice of God**

When God enters the garden of Eden after the fall, He comes to fulfil His justice and to give hope to mankind in the promise of the incarnation. He announces the punishments due for sin in the order in which the sins were committed. Thus, to the serpent he says

“Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle, and beasts of the earth: upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.” (Genesis 3:14-15)

The punishment of the serpent comes with the promise of our salvation through the seed of the woman which is Jesus Christ. God now turns to the woman and addresses her thus.

##### **The Punishment of the Woman**

“I will greatly 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.”

Before the fall, giving birth to a child would not have caused any pain to the child's mother. Children are a great blessing and the crowning glory of marriage but now, on account of Eve's disobedience to God, children will be brought forth in pain. The pain is a salutary reminder of the existence of sin in the world and of our need to repent.

##### **Authority in Harmony**

Adam and Eve lived in perfect unity before the fall and, though Adam was the head of Eve, there were no disagreements between them and so his authority was exercised in perfect harmony with Eve. Man and woman have been separated since the fall and now there is discord amongst them. The woman's desire for her husband has become corrupted and now his rule over her tends towards domination.

### **The Abuse of Authority**

There are very important lessons for us to learn here. For us men, we need to recognise our fallen tendency to dominate women in a way that is disrespectful of their dignity. This tendency has many guises on the part of men; from outright physical abuse, to pornography, to adultery, to homosexual practices, to a dismissal of the views of women and to a general lack of consideration of the needs particular to women.

On the other hand, there can be a tendency amongst women, in reacting against the domination of men, to seek a false independence from men and to assert themselves over men. Again this can take on many guises including physical abuse, sexual taunting and deliberate immodesty, adultery, lesbian practices, a desire to put men down and to put them in their place.

### **The War of the Sexes**

Just as I was writing the above paragraphs, my wife Naomi came in and was reading the article over my shoulder. She said, 'you're going to start a war!'. I replied, 'that war was started in the garden of Eden.' And so it was.

The important point to note, rather than dwelling on the different guises through which men and women now compete with each other, is that this competition has come about as a result of the fall. Men and women were created to complement each other in the service of God and to increase His kingdom through living in marital harmony. However, we now struggle to attain that harmony on account our sinful natures.

### **The Punishment of the Man**

God next addresses the man "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."

First, let's get something straight. God is not telling men that they should not listen to their wives. Such an interpretation would be an example of man's unjust dominion over women. What God is telling Adam is, that he should not have followed Eve's suggestion to disobey God. The problem is not so much what the man heard, but what he did after hearing. The man's future labours are now impeded. Whereas before the fall, the earth would have 'co-operated' with the man's efforts to till the ground in the grand harmony of God's creation, now the man, through his sin, has sown discord and this discord effects the whole of earthly creation. Man will struggle to make ends meet, and at the end of the struggle he will die, just as God foretold him.

### **Original Sin Leads to the Death of Every Human Being**

Not only that, but all men will die, including the seven or so billion who now live on earth, on account of Adam's sin. In looking at what seems to be a rather severe punishment meted out by God, it is easy to overlook the fact that these punishments constitute an aspect of God's mercy. In this day and age mercy is often portrayed as a kind of forgetting of wrongdoings but such a concept of mercy is false for it omits God's justice. God's mercy allows us to make an effort at reparation for our sins. He gives us penance and tribulation in order to humble us and to help us to avoid Adam's sin of pride.

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