

I'm John Lacken, this show was broadcast on Radio Maria Ireland on Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016. I would like to begin as always with a prayer to Our Lady asking her for guidance and protection for all married couples.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.  
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

### **Young People Have Lost Interest in Early Marriage**

Today I want to continue from where I left off the week before, and we were looking at the problem whereby our young people seem to have lost interest in early marriage. We saw from The Central Statistics Office that, for the year 2014, the average age for women to get married in Ireland was 33, and the average age for men was 35. We also noted that this was the lowest year on record for Catholic marriages.

We saw that in the past the marriage rate amongst 24 year olds would have been as high as 72%, and that now it has fallen dramatically below 10%.

### **Pope Pius XII – the Pope of the Second World War**

I also began looking at some of Pope Pius XII's writings. In one way, his was an unfortunate papacy in that, much of what is discussed in the public domain regarding his papacy is limited to how he allegedly conducted himself during the second world war. The reporting of these years is often biased against the Catholic Church. However Pope Pius XII wrote quite substantially on many different issues during his papacy and I have been very impressed by the great insights which can be gained from his writings.

### **Pope Pius XII speaks to Women in 1945**

In the last programme we were looking at address given by Pope Pius XII in 1945 on the duties of women. We heard Pope Pius, in referring to the benefits of true Catholic marriage say,

“The whole of civilization in all its ramifications, nations, the community of nations, the Church herself, in a word, all human values feel the good effects of married life when it is in a flourishing and orderly condition, and when youth becomes accustomed to look up to it, to honour it, and to love it as a holy ideal.”

I then noted that this is at the centre of our current problem. Our youth today, by the very fact that they put off getting married until they are into their thirties, clearly show that they no longer look up to marriage, or honour marriage, or love it as a holy ideal. It has become a secondary thing for them and not the primary aim of their lives and we saw that the Pope spoke about this problem too.

“Where, on the contrary, the sexes disregard the intimate and harmonious relations which God has established and willed to subsist between them, and indulge instead in a perverse individualism; where man and woman are nothing more to each other than the object of selfish desire; where they

do not co-operate in mutual harmony to serve humanity according to the designs of God and nature; where youth, irresponsible, and flighty and frivolous in mind and conduct, renders itself morally and physically unfit for the holy life of matrimony, here the common welfare of human society, spiritual and temporal alike, is seriously compromised, and even the very Church of God trembles, not for her own existence, since she has the Divine promises, but for the greater success of her mission among men.”

### **Problems Caused by Married Women Working outside the Home**

The Pope then went on to highlight some of the problems caused by married women entering the workforce and explained the negative effects and consequences, particularly on daughters whereby he held that the daughters would be less interested in marriage themselves where their mother's primary duties were not those of the home.

After extolling the benefits to society and the church of married life, Pope Pius XII also looked very briefly at the vocation to consecrated life saying

### **The Consecrated Life**

“And yet, for nearly twenty centuries, we have seen thousands upon thousands of men and women, and among the best of them, freely renouncing a family of their own and foregoing the holy duties and sacred rights of married life, in order to follow the counsel of Christ. And is the common welfare of nations and the good of the Church jeopardized in consequence? On the contrary; these generous souls recognize the association of the sexes in wedlock as a great good. If they step aside from the ordinary path, if they leave the beaten track, it is not to desert the service of humanity but rather to devote themselves to it with complete detachment and self-denial, and an activity which is incomparably more extended, indeed, all-embracing and universal. See these men and women; see how they dedicate themselves to prayers and works of penance, to the work of instructing and training the young and the ignorant; see them at the bedside of the sick and dying, their hearts compassionate to every kind of misery and infirmity, ready to heal, to comfort, to relieve, and to sanctify.

Remember that the Pope is speaking in the year that the second world war has ended, 1945, where there was a death toll of up to 85 million people. After the war there was a shortage of men and there were many widows and orphans and the Pope then addresses women who cannot find a husband.

### **The 'vocation' of the Unmarried Woman**

“ 'Vocation': this is the significant word which springs to our lips when we think of those girls and women who voluntarily renounce matrimony to consecrate themselves to a higher life of contemplation, sacrifice, and charity. It is the only word that fits such a noble sentiment. This vocation, this loving call, makes itself heard in many different ways, as many as the infinite variety of accents in which the Divine voice may speak: irresistible invitations, affectionate and repeated promptings, gentle impulses.”

“But there is also the Catholic girl who remains unmarried in spite of herself; and she too, if she believes firmly in the Providence of her Heavenly Father, recognizes the voice of the Master in the life that has fallen to her lot. 'The Master is here and calleth for thee.' [John 11: 28] And she answers the call; she abandons the fair dream of her adolescence and young womanhood, surrenders her hope of having a faithful companion to share her life, of making a home and family of her own. In the impossibility of marriage she discerns her own vocation and, sad at heart though resigned, she too devotes herself entirely to the highest and most varied forms of beneficence.”

### **No 'true' Vocation to the Single Life**

From this it can be seen once again that there is really no true vocation to the single life. The Pope speaks of women who are single in spite of themselves. In other words they did not choose to remain single, and they are sad though resigned to make the best of this single life which 'fell to their lot'.

### **Woman as Mother**

The pope then spoke of motherhood saying "a woman's function, a woman's way, a woman's natural bent, is motherhood. Every woman is called to be a mother, mother in the physical sense, or mother in a sense more spiritual and more exalted, yet real none the less."

It is important to keep these three distinctions in mind, the married woman, the consecrated woman, and the woman who is single through circumstances not of her choosing, when we look to what the pope advises with regards to women's duties in social and political life.

### **Should Catholic Women and Girls enter Politics and Society?**

In this regard the Pope first asks the question "Are we therefore to conclude, Catholic women and Catholic girls, that you must resist the current which, whether you like it or not, that is drawing you into the stream of social and political life?"

He answers as follows "Certainly not. Various theories and systems, we have seen, are in various ways detaching woman from her true mission and, whether with the flattering promise of emancipation or with the hard realities of a hopeless poverty, depriving her of her true dignity, her dignity as a woman; and we have heard the cry of alarm, calling her back as soon as possible to take her active place in the home."

### **Woman is Kept away from the Home**

"The fact is that woman is kept away from the home, not only by her declared emancipation, but often also by vital necessity, by the need to earn her daily bread. It is therefore useless to preach her return to the home so long as conditions continue which in many cases force her to remain absent from it. And here is the first aspect of the mission in social and political life which now presents itself to you."

### **A Woman's Proper Place is in the Home**

The Pope highlights that woman's proper place is in the home and that she is either being forced by economic necessity or by the allurements of the world to leave this place of her queenship and her sanctuary, and he then identifies, creating the conditions within society which will enable the woman to return to her home duties, as being the first aspect of woman's new role within society. He goes on to identify another reason why Catholic women must engage in this battle and that is because other women, who are opposed to Catholic social teaching on the nature and dignity of women, are already active in this field.

### **The Battle Must be Fought by Women**

"Would you leave to other women, to those who are actively engineering the ruin of the home or at least conniving at it, the monopoly of organizing the social structure, in which the family forms the principal element of its economic, juridical, spiritual, and moral unity? The fortunes of the family, the fortunes of human society, are at stake; and they are in your hands:"

He then says “Therefore every woman without exception is under an obligation, a strict obligation of conscience, mind you!, not to remain aloof; every woman must go into action, each in her own way, and join in stemming the tides which threaten to engulf the home, in fighting the doctrines which undermine its foundations, in preparing, organizing, and completing its restoration.”

### **The Pope is not Calling Married Women or Consecrated Women into the Workforce**

Is the Pope saying that all women married with children or not, living a consecrated life or not, must enter the political sphere? Of course not! For that would contradict what he has said earlier about woman's role. After speaking about the equal dignity of the sexes the Pope notes that women, because of their different nature, better understand the needs of domestic and family life. He then addresses the issue of who should enter upon this task.

“It has been seen that a woman's work is concerned primarily with those tasks and occupations of domestic life which contribute so powerfully, and more powerfully than is generally appreciated, to the true interests of the social community. But the furtherance of those interests calls for a great number of women who will have more leisure at their disposal, and so be able to devote themselves to the task more directly and more completely.”

### **Where are the necessary Women to be Found?**

“And where should we find these women if not especially [We do not, of course, say exclusively] if not especially, among those to whom We have been alluding: those upon whom the force of circumstances has imposed a mysterious vocation; those whom events have destined to a life of solitude which was not in their thoughts or aspirations, and which threatened to be nothing more than a selfishly useless and purposeless existence? And now, behold, their mission at the present day is revealed: a mission many-sided, militant, and calling for all their energies; a mission such as they can more readily undertake than many of their sisters, occupied as they are with family cares and the education of their children, or else subject to the yoke of a religious rule.”

“Of these women some have hitherto devoted themselves. with a zeal often quite admirable, to parochial activities; others, gifted with wider vision still, have been engaged in more extended work of moral and social improvement. The war, with its calamitous results, has led to a great increase in the number of such women. Many brave men have lost their lives in this terrible conflict, others have come back disabled or sick; many a young woman will therefore await in vain the return of a husband, will vainly hope for the coming of new young lives to cheer a solitary home. And just at this moment new needs, created by the entry of women into civil and political life, have arisen to claim their assistance. Is this nothing more than a strange coincidence? Or are we to see in it a disposition of Divine Providence?”

### **Primarily the Role of Single Women & childless Widows**

So we see here that the Pope, in looking at woman's entry into the political realm, is thinking primarily of single women with little or no prospects of marriage and widows without children, although he admits that the mission is not 'exclusively' bound to these women. He is not encouraging married mothers to abandon their homes and see the work of women in social and political life as being to protect the dignity of women and to create the conditions which are favourable to mothers in the home.

He outlines two particular areas of work.

### **The Work of Education**

“Thus a wide field is opened to woman's activity. An activity primarily intellectual or primarily practical, according to the capabilities and qualities of each individual. To study and explain the place and function of woman in society, her rights and obligations; to be the guide and teacher of her sisters; to correct ideas, dispel prejudices, clear up confusions; to expound and spread the teaching of the Church, as the surest means of defeating error, illusion, and falsehood, and as the most effective method of countering the tactics employed by the enemies of Catholic faith and morals, here is an immense and urgently important task, without which the active apostolate, however zealous, will give only precarious results.”

So this work for women is primarily one of education. Educating women with regard to the teachings of the Catholic Church and on the nature and dignity of women. Then the Pope looks at the active apostolate.

### **The Need for Direct Action**

“But direct action is also necessary, otherwise sound doctrine and solid convictions will remain barren, or at best yield little fruit. This direct action, this effective co-operation in social and political life, in no way alters the distinctive character of woman's activity. Associated with the work of man in the sphere of civil institutions, she will apply herself especially to matters calling for tact, delicacy, and maternal instinct, rather than administrative rigidity. In such questions as those of woman's dignity, a girl's honour and integrity, the protection and education of the child, who better than a woman can understand what is needed? And what a number of problems there are of this kind which require the attention of government and legislature! In the suppression of licentious behaviour, for example, only a woman has the gift which can temper firmness with kindness without sacrifice of efficiency; in dealing with morally abandoned children, only a woman will know how to save them from humiliation and have them trained to a decent life and to the practice of the religious and civic virtues; only she can be truly successful in administering orphanages, in welfare work for released prisoners, and rescue work for fallen girls; she alone can give true expression to the lament of a mother's heart when she sees a totalitarian State, call it by what name you will, trying to rob her of the right to educate her children.”

### **Need For Preparation**

The Pope speaks of the two stages of preparation, whereby women are prepared for a life that is truly worthy of them, and of active participation in social and political life whereby women seek to ensure that families have the means necessary to develop as economic, juridical and moral units of society and they will seek to prevent class dominance and an ever greater economic and national ascendancy because this leads to civil strife and perpetuates the danger of war among nations.

Pope Pius XII concludes his 1945 address to women, on the duties of women in political and social life, by telling the women to,

### **Restore the Home, Restore the Family, Restore Society**

“Take courage, then, Catholic women and Catholic girls; labour without ceasing, undaunted by difficulties or obstacles. Under the standard of Christ the King, under the patronage of the Mother most admirable, Queen of mothers, work for the restoration of the home, of the family, and of society. May Divine favours descend upon you abundantly, in pledge of which We grant you paternally and with a full heart Our Apostolic Blessing.”

### **Domestic Issues are the Priority not Career Making**

You see there the priority, that the women when they go out, it's not that they're going out seeking after careers, they are working for the restoration of the home, for the restoration of the family and for the restoration of society. Family is the fundamental building block of society, the family needs a home. So the home life the family life. So again, Pope Pius XII is not encouraging married women to go out into the workplace, he is primarily looking at single women, at widows without children, and these are the source of, if you like, of the hands and the minds that will actually do this work.

### **The Desire of Pope Pius XII has not been Achieved**

Sadly, it is all too obvious in our time that what Pope Pius XII desired for these women to achieve has not come about. It would seem that the lure of money and the material comfort that it brings, albeit at the expense of family life and of having children, was too great for many women and now the majority of married women work outside of the home and young women and men postpone marriage until their thirties. Our 'Catholic' schools no longer educate women on the dignity of their calling to marriage and motherhood, or on the dignity of the consecrated life. Contraception is promoted within our Catholic schools and through our Catholic marriage courses. Education has become a false God, offering a life of supposed excitement, of physical pleasure and comfort, of a progressive career with a good income, whilst marriage and having a family are relegated to the back burner as a secondary aspect of life which one only considers as middle age approaches.

### **The Importance of Children**

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me” (Matthew 18:1-5)

### **Today's Society sees Children Primarily as a Burden**

In our day and age children have been knocked off the pedestal upon which Our Lord placed them. They are now seen almost primarily as a burden to parents. A recent study commissioned by the healthcare provider Laya, and reported in several Irish newspapers in the last couple of weeks, put the cost of raising a child from birth to college at €100,000 per annum.

One headline said “Families are spending a small fortune to raise a child from cradle to college” and it gave a detailed breakdown of childcare and other costs associated with having children. The message from this 'one sided' research is clear. Children are a financial burden. Nowhere in the article does it look at the value of each individual child, a value which cannot be measured in monetary terms. When our Lord said, “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?” in Matthew 16:26, he shows us that each individual soul is of greater worth than the whole of material creation. The study on the cost of rearing children is like looking at only one side of a company balance sheet and seeing the thousands of Euros of expenses whilst ignoring the multi million dollar assets the company might have. To reduce children down to mere financial costs shows a huge, although not uncommon, disregard for the true meaning and value of children and family life. It is disregard for children that sees millions of children's deaths caused annually by abortion which are hardly ever mentioned with grief in our national newspapers. Our current Taoiseach has set up a commission whose purpose is to undermine the legal protection that these children currently enjoy in Ireland whilst still in their mother's wombs.

### **Morally Sick Society needs Catholic Families to effect the Cure**

We live in a morally sick society, and if the foundation of society is the family, which it is, then this indicates that most of our families are morally sick too. The job of Catholics, particularly Catholic fathers, and Catholic mothers but particularly the Catholic fathers, has not changed since Pope Pius XII addressed his concerns to women in 1945. We are called to promote and to protect Catholic family life. The future of the Church depends on it, the future of society depends on it. The increase in the Kingdom of God, called for by God in the very first chapter of the book of Genesis, and the salvation of souls depends primarily on the promotion and safeguarding of the Catholic family.

That's all for today.

I'm John Lacken, thank you for listening.

May God bless you