



‘Legio Sanctae Familiae’ The Legion of the Holy Family

Under the Patronage of
The Sacred Heart of Jesus
The Immaculate Heart of Mary
The Most Chaste Heart of St Joseph



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Pope Pius XI began his examination of the three societies of Church, State, and Family by looking firstly at the rights and prerogatives of the Catholic Church with a particular focus on education. He showed how the mission of the Catholic Church is neither opposed to the mission of the secular State nor to the mission of the Family. The Church is in complete harmony with a true understanding of the purpose of both of these societies. Pope Pius XI now examines the society of the Family. In the last article he finished speaking of the harmony that exists between the three societies with the quote, “The works of God are perfect and all His ways are judgments.” (Deuteronomy 32:4) He now tells us:

“This becomes clearer when we consider more closely and in detail the mission of education proper to the family and to the State.” (Divini Illius Magistri 29)

“In the first place the Church’s mission of education is in wonderful agreement with that of the family, for both proceed from God, and in a remarkably similar manner. God directly communicates to the family, in the natural order, fecundity, which is the principle of life, and hence also the principle of education to life, together with authority, the principle of order.” (Divini Illius Magistri 30)

The authority of parents over their children comes directly from God. It is connected to the order that God established in the world He created. This includes the natural order through which is ascertained the primary purpose of human sexuality which is children. But the roles of the mother and father regarding their children are neither identical nor equal. Mothers and Fathers share an equal dignity as children of God, but God established a hierarchy in both the Catholic Church and in the family.

“The Angelic Doctor with his wonted clearness of thought and precision of style, says: “The father according to the flesh has in a particular way a share in that principle which in a manner universal is found in God... The father is the principle of generation, of education and discipline and of everything that

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Legio Sanctae Familiae

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bears upon the perfecting of human life.” (St Thomas Aquinas - Summa Theologia - 2-2, Q. CII, a. I)” (Divini Illius Magistri 31)

St Thomas is not ignoring the mother, he is simply enunciating the principle of the headship of the husband. The father of a family holds the primary role of guiding his wife and children to Heaven. The

father will be held accountable by God for how he carries out his duties of leading his family to Heaven through their service of Almighty God. This he does by cultivating the virtues in the lives of his children, especially in their formative years. He does not do this alone, but shares the responsibility with his wife.

“The family therefore holds directly from the Creator the mission and hence the right to educate the offspring, a right inalienable because inseparably joined to the strict obligation, a right anterior to any right whatever of civil society and of the State, and therefore inviolable on the part of any power on earth.

That this right is inviolable St. Thomas proves as follows: The child is naturally something of the father . . . so by natural right the child, before reaching the use of reason, is under the father’s care. Hence it would be contrary to natural justice if the child, before the use of reason, were removed from the care of its parents, or if any disposition were made concerning him against the will of the parents. (St Thomas Aquinas - Summa Theologia - 2-2, Q. X, a. 12)

And as this duty on the part of the parents continues up to the time when the child is in a position to provide for itself, this same inviolable parental right of education also endures. “Nature intends not merely the generation of the offspring, but also its development and advance to the perfection of man considered as man, that is, to the state of virtue” (St Thomas Aquinas - Supplementum - Summa Theologia - 3; p. Q. 41, a. 1) says the same St. Thomas.

The wisdom of the Church in this matter is expressed with precision and clearness in the Codex of Canon Law, can. 1113: “Parents are under a grave obligation to see to the religious and moral education of their children, as well as to their physical and civic training, as far as they can, and moreover to provide for their temporal well-being.” (1917 Codex Iuris Canonici c. 1113) (**Divini Illius Magistri 32 - 34**)

The rights of the family come directly from God. It is important to understand, that, when speaking of ‘the family’, Pope Pius XI is speaking of The Traditional Catholic Family founded on the sacramental marriage of one man and one woman and their biological children.

Most western democracies have corrupted the meaning of ‘the family’ to include persons of the same-sex who are in a sexual relationship. This is contrary to the law of God. In Ireland, a referendum is proposed for March 8th 2024, which will further extend the legal definition of family to include “other durable relationships”. This is an affront to law and an affront to Almighty God.

These are the times in which we now live and thus the importance of the encyclical ‘*Divini Illius Magistri*’ which gives Catholics and others who read it, a proper



Fathers, your duty is to watch, to pray and to stand in the way of any harm which threatens your family and their Catholic Faith.

understanding of the nature of the family and of the limitations to the authority of the civil State.

That the rights of the family are anterior and inviolable on the part of any power on earth, does not stop civic leaders from trying to usurp those powers. Many States attempt to control the Catholic family and to steer the children of these families away from their true purpose and ultimate end, which is Heaven. Catholic fathers, in particular, are called upon to resist such encroachments of the secular state into the lives of their families. They must protect their families from those whose policies would jeopardise the salvation of their wife and children.

The difficulty is that the family is not a perfect society. The family needs the assistance of both the Catholic Church and secular State to accomplish its mission from God. From the Catholic Church it receives the graces of the sacraments as well as sound teaching on how to live a moral life. From the secular State it receives those helps that allow the parents to provide for their families material needs and allow the family to live in a peaceable society. The life of the family becomes more difficult when those in authority in the Catholic Church and those in authority in the secular State fail to carry out their duties.

“On this point the common sense of mankind is in such complete accord, that they would be in open contradiction with it who dared maintain that the children belong to the State before they belong to the family, and that the State has an absolute right over their education.

Untenable is the reason they adduce, namely that man is born a citizen and hence belongs primarily to the State, not bearing in mind that before being a citizen man must exist; and existence does not come from the State, but from the parents, as Leo XIII wisely declared: “The children are something of the father, and as it were an extension of the person of the father; and, to be perfectly accurate, they enter into and become part of civil society, not directly by

themselves, but through the family in which they were born.” (Pope Leo XIII, 1891 - Rerum Nevarum 14)

“And therefore,” says the same Leo XIII, “the father’s power is of such a nature that it cannot be destroyed or absorbed by the State; for it has the same origin as human life itself.” (Pope Leo XIII, 1891 - Rerum Nevarum 14) It does not however follow from this that the parents’ right to educate their children is absolute and despotic; for it is necessarily subordinated to the last end and to natural and divine law, as Leo XIII declares in another memorable encyclical, where He thus sums up the rights and duties of parents:

“By nature parents have a right to the training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end for which by God’s blessing it was begotten. Therefore it is the duty of parents to make every effort to prevent any invasion of their rights in this matter, and to make absolutely sure that the education of their children remain under their own control in keeping with their Christian duty, and above all to refuse to send them to those schools in which there is danger of imbibing the deadly poison of impiety.” (Pope Leo XIII, 1890 - Sapientiae Christianae 42) (**Divini Illius Magistri 35**)

We can see in our current culture that the common sense of which Pope Pius XI speaks is almost gone. We are now told that men can become women and that women can become men. We are told that men can give birth. We are told that it is now in accordance with the law to murder the unborn. We are told that men can marry men and that children who are adopted by same-sex couples will fare just as well as those born into natural families. All of these assertions are contrary to reason and therefore contrary to common sense.

We see in western democracies an almost constant intrusion by the secular State into the lives of families. We are told that it is the secular State that will decide what is in the best interests of children and not the parents. We see attempts to pass laws that seek to regulate the domestic lives of couples and to enforce on them a false equality which disregards both the differences of men and women and also their complementarity. In Ireland a referendum has been proposed which will remove the onus on the secular State from having to protect mothers from being obliged through economic necessity to work outside of the home. In this, the Irish Government is putting the economic interests of corporate businesses above the rights and duties of families.

Pope Leo XIII, as we have seen in the series of articles on ‘*Sapientiae Christianae*’ which is quoted above, urges parents to spare no effort in protecting their children from those who seek to usurp the rights of the parents in raising their families according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Fathers need to realise that a global war is being waged against families and against the Catholic family in particular. This is because good Catholic parents are



well aware of their rights and duties regarding their children and they are prepared to fight to defend these rights and duties from being usurped by the secular State. Catholic families are now regarded in many societies as being an enemy of the secular State. The opposite is in fact true. Many secular States are now the enemy of Catholic families.

“It must be borne in mind also that the obligation of the family to bring up children, includes not only religious and moral education, but physical and civic education as well, (1917 Codex Iuris Canonici c. 1113) principally in so far as it touches upon religion and morality.

This incontestable right of the family has at various times been recognized by nations anxious to respect the natural law in their civil enactments. Thus, to give one recent example, the Supreme Court of the United States of America, in a decision on an important controversy, declared that it is not in the competence of the State to fix any uniform standard of education by forcing children to receive instruction exclusively in public schools, and it bases its decision on the natural law: the child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right coupled with the high duty, to educate him and prepare him for the fulfillment of his obligations.” (**Divini Illius Magistri 36-37**)

Here is the quote from the US Supreme court decision.

“The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right coupled with the high duty, to recognize, and prepare him for additional duties.” (U.S. Supreme Court Decision in the Oregon School Case, June 1, 1925)

Much has changed since 1925 and we now see democratic governments seeking to impose mandatory secular indoctrination on children. This is opposed to Catholic Church teaching and to the rights and duties of parents. It also corrupts the children by teaching them falsehoods and by undermining their moral understanding, leading to grave unhappiness.