

The Traditional Catholic Family – Radio Maria Ireland

Hello, my name is John Lacken, from Legio Sanctae Familiae, and this programme was broadcast on Radio Maria Ireland, on Friday 22nd July 2016, and I'd like to begin as always with a prayer to Our Lady asking for her guidance and protection for families

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

The Garden of Eden

Last week I gave a summary of our reflections so far on the Garden of Eden, from the book of Genesis, and here again I will give a very brief synopsis.

So at first, God exists on His own in a beautiful Trinity of Love, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God creates the world and all earthly living creatures His ultimate creation being Man, and Man is created Male and Female in the image and likeness of God, and Man alone amongst the earthly creatures has free will. The Man and the Woman are naked together and are unashamed of their nakedness because they do not yet know good and evil, they only know good at this stage.

The devil, in the guise of a serpent, is sent to test the Man and the Woman and the Man and the Woman listen to the lies of the Devil and they betray God through an act of disobedience. They then become ashamed of their nakedness and seek to hide from God.

The Serpent Tempts the Man and the Woman

God questions them about their disobedience and then administers punishments to them on account of their sin. God then clothes the Man and the Woman before banishing them from the garden of Eden. An angel is then stationed to guard the entrance to the garden denying anyone entrance lest the Man should try to eat of the tree of life and live forever.

The Man and the Woman begin to have children. Death enters the human race for the first time when their first born son Cain, kills, murders, their second born son Abel, in an act of jealousy and rebellion against God. In time Adam and Eve will also die because they disobeyed God's command and because God's Word is True, while the serpent's word is false. God's Word brings Truth and Life, the serpent's words brings death and deception.

The Lessons from Genesis

So, in the Book of Genesis, from the beginning up to verse sixteen of chapter four, we learn all the lessons necessary for us to live our lives.

We learn that God existed from the beginning, that all creation comes from God, and that all that God created was and is good.

We learn that God, in his goodness, created the earth and all earthly creatures and that He also created Man, that is us. We are creatures. Because of God's essence, we can also come to know why we were created. As Frank Joseph Sheed says in his book 'Theology and Sanity', "created beings achieve their own perfection in glorifying God.

Or again as the old Baltimore catechism puts it in the question answer format to the question,

Q. Why did God make you?

A. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in heaven.

We also learn in this early part of Genesis that God gave instructions to Adam and Eve, therefore our lives have a specific purpose, and we learn from Adam and Eve's response to the serpent, that Adam and Eve had free will. They were free to obey or to disobey God. We too have this freedom. God does not force.

We learn that God's commands are life giving and that to disobey God results in death.

We learn that we have an enemy, whom God permits to test and to tempt us, so that we will prove our love for God, or conversely or lack of love for God, in the choices that we make. In other words in the exercise of our free will. We show our love by how we exercise our free will.

We learn that Adam and Eve disobeyed God and that as a result of this, every human being since, with the one exception of Our Lady, has inherited original sin which results in an inclination to evil within our souls.

We learn that on account of the punishment delivered by God for original sin, our lives will be beset by difficulties, pain and suffering. These punishments are a part of God's mercy towards us and they allow us, through loving acceptance, to grow in holiness and love of God.

We learn that men are capable of killing one another

We learn too that one day we will die.

We also learn that God in His mercy chose to send His Son Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, to redeem us from our sins and to crush the head of the serpent.

We should keep these lessons always in mind

So there's many lessons there and we need to keep these simple lessons always in mind if we are to understand the world, our role in the world, the path that leads to perdition and the path that leads to holiness and salvation. The knowledge of many of these lessons seems to have disappeared from our modern world and even within the Catholic Church, many do not give proper adherence to these lessons and thus we see chaos in our world and a growing chaos within the Catholic Church whereby Cardinals and bishops of the Church are publicly disagreeing with each other as to what the Church teaches, especially on marriage and family life.

Today I want to look at a particular aspect of the problems within our society as regards marriage. This comes from a communication that I had last week from a young man who wanted to discuss a particular problem with me. When I got talking to him the problem that he was concerned about was affecting him and other young men that he knows. They want to get married, but they cannot

seem to find Catholic girls of a similar mind, that is young Catholic girls who want to get married.

In the past I have also met and spoken with some young Catholic women in their late twenties and early thirties who speak of a similar problem. Of not being able to find good men to marry.

Looking for Love – nowhere to be found?

So, there are young men who are looking for women to marry, and young women who are looking for men to marry, but for some reason they don't seem to be able to connect with each other, or perhaps when they do, they are not satisfied with 'what is on offer', so to speak. There is also the possibility that they do not know how to go about the whole business of courtship and marriage.

Another problem in this area that I have alluded to in these programmes is that many Catholics no longer understand what marriage is about. There are many reasons for this, one is the Church's apparent silence on the fact that the primary end of marriage is and always has been children. More emphasis tends to be placed nowadays on the secondary ends of marriage, perhaps as a result of the increasing number of marriages which are in trouble and because of the increasing divorce rate.

We must uphold that The Primary End of Marriage is Children

However, I would argue that such a tendency is misplaced. It is my view that it is because the primary end of marriage is no longer correctly understood and is rarely emphasised, that there is increasing disharmony in marital relationships. Therefore, marital harmony will naturally increase when the couple realise that children are the primary reason for getting married and when they live their lives according to this principle and always with this principle in mind. God is a God of order, and it was God who established the primary end of marriage when He spoke His first words to Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter one, "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:28)

When right order is established within marriage, marital harmony follows. The secondary ends of marriage should always remain at the service of the primary end, even in cases where for reasons of some physical impairment, the couple are unable to have children. As a rough analogy, if we describe the primary function of the leg as being walking, that end does not change just because there are cripples.

Again, when we fail to uphold the primary end of marriage, which is also the primary end of our human sexuality, we endanger human sexuality and open it up to other possible uses, which are in fact abuses.

Oversexualisation

We see this all around us in a culture which has become so sexualised that it screams out to us from street corner advertisements, from bus advertisements, magazines, newspapers, television, the internet, agony aunt columns and programmes. Sex is everywhere to be seen in these advertisements but children are rarely seen unless they are being used to sell a product. The culture promotes a distorted human sexuality which does not include children. Sadly, the result of this is that many of our young people become sexually active and develop a distorted view of human sexuality without marriage.

One hears of the young woman who was surprised that she became pregnant. Now that's like walking out into the rain and being surprised that one becomes wet. Human sexuality is designed primarily for the purpose of children, to give glory to God through the increase of His kingdom.

Human sexuality should only be expressed within marriage, and the natural attraction that young men feel for young women and vice versa is ordered towards children. Towards the founding of families.

This over sexualisation, has led to a corruption of the correct understanding of human sexuality in our society and this in turn is leading to an increase of marriage breakdown, which in turn can lead to a fear of commitment and marriage in our young people.

Vocation

Marriage is a sacrament. It is one of principle vocations and the one that most people are called to, and yet you hear people say, that 'eventually' they think they will get married or they would like to get married one day. The use of the word 'eventually' or 'one day', would seem to indicate that marriage is something you do after you have done the 'other stuff'. Marriage becomes a fall back position and not the primary goal of one's life.

That is probably why, in Ireland, according to the statistics released by the Central Statistics Office for the year 2014, the average age for women getting married is now 33 and for men it is 35. As an aside those statistics also tell us, worryingly, that the number of Catholic marriages fell to its lowest level ever in 2014.

Past their most fertile years

So at 33, these women are getting married when they are past their most fertile years. According to one website that I looked up on women's fertility, "Starting at about age 32, a woman's chances of conceiving decrease gradually but significantly. From age 35, the fertility decline speeds up. By age 40, fertility has fallen by half." That's from an Australian website yourfertility.org.au. I imagine that those statistics would be backed up by other websites.

Now, if children are the primary end of marriage, then this behaviour does not make sense. When you also consider that marriage is the foundation and corner stone of our society, and that our society depends for its very existence on proper marriages, you realise that as a society, we are in serious trouble.

As Catholics we have a moral duty to address these problems as a matter of urgency.

Professor Anthony Esolen

In a previous programme, I quoted some statistics from an article by Anthony Esolen. He's a professor of English in one of the American Universities. The article is titled 'Catholics, Awake. Marriage doesn't just happen' and the statistics I quoted showed that in America, in 1960, almost three out of four Americans aged 24 were married, it was 72%, and that now the number is less than one in ten, just under 9%! So in 1960, 72% of 24 year olds were married, and the last time statistics were looked at it had dropped to just under 10%.

Anthony Esolen comments on these figures saying, "That is not a good thing. First, it is evidence of deep and widespread loneliness. We are not talking about people who are dating during all those years; they aren't. Some of them are bed-hopping; some are shacking up; some are simply alone. That pretty much accounts for them all. Three options, all bad."

Without having the detailed statistics for Ireland to hand, I think it would be fair to say that Ireland has experienced something similar. But I want to look at this article again because, something that I too have noticed in our society, is the lack of simple, innocent, romance, and of romantic behaviour.

The article, was published online in November of 2012 and it begins, “It’s been more than ten years since I first noticed something odd about the generally pleasant, and generally Catholic, students at the college where I teach, (this is Anthony Esolen). The boys and girls don’t hold hands.

Let that serve as shorthand for the absence of all those rites of attraction and conversation, flirting and courting, that used to be passed along from one youthful generation to the next, just as childhood games were once passed along, but are so no longer. The boys and girls don’t hold hands.”

Marriage should be Treasured

He then goes on to quote those statistics above showing that young people are not getting married, there's a lack of young people getting married and then he says, and this is really beautiful the way he phrases this,

“In a culture where marriage is really treasured, that time is the supreme aim of most people’s lives. It is when the couple will plant orchards whose fruit they themselves will not enjoy - while tasting the fruit that has been made available to them by their parents and grandparents. The married couple, open to bearing and raising children, assume wholly new relations to the world around them. They need not rely upon the ministrations of a secular and soul-withering state. They themselves make a society within the larger society.”

Ireland no longer Treasures Marriage

In Ireland, marriage is no longer really treasured. Oh sure, we have the political speeches about how important marriage is and of how much the state and our politicians really care about marriage, whilst at the same time, these people enact legislation the effect of which is to make marriage and family life more difficult. Think of tax individualisation which discriminates against the single income family, think of the housing crises and the lack of state help for young married couples to buy their own home. If the state really cared for families, then it would take the mortgage business for family homes away from the profit seeking banks and make the resources available to young couples who would pay for their homes without the usurious interest rates. But time and again in western capitalist democracies, we see the state acting in the primary interest of business rather than in the primary interest of families. This will not end well for the state.

The problem has infected the Catholic Church

There is, sadly, and I have to be careful when I mention this, also a serious problem within the ranks of the Catholic Church in Ireland as regards marriage. Contraception is tolerated. Open dissent from Church teaching on marriage is tolerated and, sometimes priests, who publicly disagree with church teaching on marriage, are given a platform to speak at Catholic venues. I am thinking particularly of a recent retreat, given at a well known Catholic venue here in Ireland, by a priest who had previously published an article stating why he had voted 'yes' to same-sex marriage, contrary to Catholic Church teaching, in last year's referendum. Such actions damage marriage, they damage our young people, they damage the credibility of the Catholic Church, and these actions could be the cause of souls going to hell for all eternity. Yet this happens in Ireland and those of us who complain and ask for better are often times ignored.

Living together before marriage is tolerated. Pre-marriage courses are not authentically Catholic. This is not a new problem, I have spoken before about how I was offered advice on the contraceptive pill by one of the facilitators of my own pre-marriage course in 1988, almost thirty years ago. Those of us who uphold church teaching are branded as being rigid, or fundamentalist,

and are sometimes circumvented from taking up positions within Catholic organisations on account of this false branding.

Young People are Harmed by False Attitudes

Our young people are being harmed by this attitude and they are being deprived of the joys of an early marriage. Some of them will never marry because they leave it too late and may end up with lonely unfulfilled lives. Our society is also being harmed by this attitude.

Our young women are not being taught the supremacy of childbearing in a woman's life. Once again, silence is maintained on this matter perhaps for fear of being branded sexist, or misogynist, or of being looked down on by society. A worldly element has infiltrated our Church and this element tends to promote the ways of man and not the ways of God. Others stay silent for fear offending women by speaking the truth.

But let me ask the question, which is the greater offence? To offend a woman's feelings by speaking the truth, or to cause damage to the joy and happiness a young woman might have had if she had been taught the truth, and realised her vocation to marriage at an earlier age? When the womanly gift of motherhood has been degraded to such an extent that many societies, including our own, have passed legislation which allows a woman and mother, to kill the child growing in her own womb, sometimes solely on the basis that the child is sick and already dying, then silence is not an option. Silence then becomes co-operation in the sins of others.

Some are dismayed by the way society has gone and shrug their shoulders as if there is nothing we can do to change things. This reminds me of a line from a film where there was a car crash. The wife is upset at witnessing the crash and says she feels sick whereby the husband says,

“Aw, take it easy honey these things happen you know”

Another woman in the car then replies,

“Now what kind of an attitude is that, 'these things happen'. They only happen because the whole country is just full of people who when these things happen, they just say these things happen and that's why they happen.”

We must proclaim the Gospel Truth about Marriage fearlessly

So again we have that attitude where when faced with these elements in society that are tearing down society, we fail to dig deep into our Catholic faith, we fail to nourish our faith in Jesus Christ and to go forward and to proclaim the Gospel and to proclaim the truth about the beauty of marriage, especially to our young people

Anthony Esolen continues in his article concerning this lack of young marriages “it implies a divorce of love from the crazy vigour and cheerfulness of youth. And this is what I specifically want to stress. Young people should be oriented toward love; that is natural. Grace perfects nature; but that means there has to be a nature to perfect. But where, now, is the natural expression of this search for love? There aren't any boys climbing the mountains to pick edelweiss for their sweethearts. There aren't any sweethearts. There aren't any boys singing “Annie Laurie,” nor any Annies for them to sing to. A whole mode of being has been lost, a mode of being that in every culture but our own produces a wealth of beauty, and sweeps young people along with its strong tide, into marriage and a world of families.”

Sex has replaced Romance

In our modern society, it would seem that sex has replaced romance and that many sincere young Catholics, who wish to avoid the sexual culture, are also avoiding marriage where sexuality is expressed in its full fruitfulness and where love between a man and a woman blossoms as God intended it to.

No Vocation to the Single Life

There is no real vocation to the single life outside of a religious life or private vows of virginity. Most of us are called to marriage and the ideal age to get married is in the late teens or early twenties, when fertility is at its peak. Another piece of evidence that our society does not really treasure marriage is that it is now become very difficult if not almost impossible for a young man to support a family at a young age on a single wage.

Lowered Relative Earnings

This was not so just a generation ago in my father's time. I discussed this before, my father worked as a technician he was able to buy a house and support a family on a single wage. My mother was a civil servant at that time and at the time they got married a woman who got married had to give up her job in the civil service. Now many people decry that as being sexist etc, but if you actually look at what was happening there it showed that society cared about marriage, it cared about the role of mother, and it wasn't going to allow the State's need for a worker to deprive the family of the mother in the home. But again we have lost sight of that.

There are many factors that have caused this inability to earn money, but the lessons from the book of Genesis, remember those lessons which I said we should always keep to hand, give us the answers.

Turning Away from God

Modern man has turned away from God, he has listened to the lies of the serpent who is the enemy of man, he has forgotten his fallen nature and he seeks to live independently of God and of His laws.

What Can We Do?

The young man who contacted me is eager to do something about this situation. He wants to organise gatherings where young Catholics can meet and get to know each other. Now, we are not talking here about a 'singles' club, for the very idea of a singles club indicates a problem. We are talking about creating a space where young Catholics can be free to be young Catholics and where they can once again come to know the beauty and the truth of Catholic marriage, of courtship, of romance as God intended it from the beginning. Where they can learn how to be romantic in a way that expresses a love of life and is not just seeking physical pleasure.

I would like to look at some other aspects of this problem next week, because I think, on account of this, we are touching on something here that shows us, when you realise the fact that young people in their late teens and early twenties are not choosing to get married and that the average of marriage now for women is 33 and men is 35, and that may have increased that's 2014, we're two years down. So I would like to look at some other aspects of that problem and again, anyone who is interested in helping out with this project then please get in touch and I will put you in contact with the young man in question and please God something will come of that.

That's all for today

I'm John Lacken

May God bless you

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