

The Traditional Catholic Family

Legio Sanctae Familiae



I'm John Lacken, this show was broadcast on Friday 12th August 2016 and 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

The Young are not getting Married

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

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 below 10%. So that's a significant drop in the marriage rate amongst 24 year olds.

What Can We Do?

The young man who initially contacted me about this problem has been in touch again. He was over in England recently to speak with others who are concerned about this very same problem, and experiencing it, and they are now discussing the possibility of organising an event of some sort to begin to tackle this problem. I will give the details of the event here on Radio Maria, and on the True Devotions website once I have them. Please keep this initiative in your prayers. It is vitally important for our society and for Catholic civilisation that people marry and have children from a young age.

Pope Pius XII

Last week we looked at an address of Pope Pius XII to the teachings sisters that was given in 1951 and the Pope noted that after the war the young people seemed to have changed. Yes, there were the usual difficulties of inter generational understanding, but the Pope seemed to notice something more, a deeper malaise within the young whereby they had lost respect for authority and for the timeless values that were handed down from previous generations. They had become distrustful and

aloof. Now he wasn't surprised at this given the horror and scale of the war which these young people had lived through and experienced as children.

But I now want to look at another couple of addresses given by Pope Pius XII. Both were given to women and I think that they give us another piece of the puzzle into this problem that we are looking at with young people not getting married. I will begin with the second address, which was given in 1947, and it's called 'Papal Directives for the Women of Today'.

The Aftermath of the Second World War

Remember, that this is just two years after the second world war. Now in those days, nations generally had greater respect for the dignity of woman as mother, although things were beginning to change. Unlike today, the women of that time, in most nations, were not sent out to fight in the front lines of the battlefield. It was the responsibility of men to protect nations from violent threats and to protect the women and mothers in their homes.

The army was composed almost exclusively of men. Apart from Communist Russia, women were not sent to fight on the front lines in battles with the enemy. Those women that were in the army were usually in nursing posts, or clerical roles, or they were in factory units producing supplies for the army. For the second world war, some women were trained to use anti-aircraft guns in their home country where there was no risk of being captured by the enemy. This was because every able bodied man was needed for the efforts of the war abroad, so the women were recruited to man the anti-aircraft guns. Apart from the communist nations, the thought of women in the trenches shooting to kill the enemy, would not have been entertained.

Shortage of Men after the War

After the war, because most of the armies were composed of men and because of the high death toll during the war, there were many widows and there was also a shortage of men within society. A group of women formed the 'Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues' and it is this group that Pope Pius XII is addressing in 1947. He says.

“Catholic women and girls, formerly you would have thought only of worthily playing your sacred and fruitful role in the management of a wholesome, strong, and radiant home; or you would have consecrated your life to the service of God in the composure of the cloister or in apostolic and charitable works. Beautiful ideals, where woman, in her proper place, and from her proper place, exercises quietly a powerful influence. But now you appear abroad, you enter the arena to take part in the battle: you have not sought to do so, but courageously you accept your new duties; not as resigned victims nor merely in a defensive spirit; you are determined to pass to the counter-attack and conquer.”

The Role of Women

Listen to how the Pope describes the role of women either, doing the sacred and fruitful work of managing a home, or living a consecrated life in the cloister or doing other charitable works. He calls these 'beautiful ideals' saying that the woman is thereby in her proper place and that from this proper place she exercises a quiet but powerful influence.

Notice also how the Pope says that their new role has been forced on them, it was not something of their own choosing. The circumstances after the war, where many millions of men had been killed in the different battles, led to a situation where women, of necessity, had to take upon themselves roles that were usually filled by men.

The Pope, reflecting on their writings and plans of action says “This rich documentation reflects, as in a mirror, the actual situation -- one must say, alas, the actual drama of woman's world.”

So in other words, the situation that the women find themselves in after the war is not good and the pope then comments on what their role is in this new situation.

Duties of Women's Groups

“Towards the centre converge all the rays of activity of woman in her social and political life, an activity of which the object is above all else, to protect the dignity of the daughter, of the wife, of the mother; to preserve the home, the family, the child in their primordial order; to safeguard the rights of the family, and make all efforts bear toward the safekeeping of the child under the guardianship of his parents.”

Pope Pius XII refers to the fact that he addressed the topic of women in social and political life two years previously, this is the first of the two addresses that I want to look at and once again, it is very interesting, particularly in light of this current problem we are looking at, to see what the Pope had to say on October 21st 1945, the year the war ended.

Modern Women May Not Like This

Let me preface this with a gentle warning to women. I believe that today, there are many women who will not like, nor want to hear, what Pope Pius XII said, let alone pay heed to it. This is because the very dangers that he warned about have come to pass. Now perhaps, I am being a little bit sexist there because there are probably very many men who would also disagree with what Pope Pius XII says. I would urge any woman who is listening to the show to try to hear what the Pope is saying at this time and to try to understand why he said it. I firmly believe that an analysis of what he said when compared with how things have turned out in our modern society, will show once again that many of our popes spoke with prophetic voices. So with that gentle warning let's have a look at some of what Pope Pius XII said, to the women of 1945.

This address was made to various women's groups on the topic of 'Women's duties in Social and Political Life'.

He first welcomes the many women saying that it is a joy to address them with his fatherly counsel and that he has looked forward to just such an opportunity, and I quote, “because the feverish unrest of a troubled present and still more the anxieties about an uncertain future have given woman's position a central interest for the friends, no less than for the enemies, of Christ and His Church”. Remember this meeting follows six years of world war which claimed the lives of many millions of people, estimated to be between 50 to 85 million killed.

He begins then as follows.

How Should We See This Problem?

“Let it be said from the beginning that for Us the problem of woman, whether as a whole or under each of its many aspects, resolves itself into preserving and exalting the dignity which woman has received from God. For Us, therefore, the problem is not merely juridical or economical, educational or biological, political or demographical. It turns entirely, however it be considered, on one question: How is that God-given dignity of womankind to be maintained and enhanced, especially today and in the circumstances in which Providence has placed us? To see the problem in any other light, to consider it one-sidedly under any of the particular aspects just mentioned, would be simply to evade it and so to profit no one, least of all woman herself. To detach it from God, to

view it apart from the Creator's wise ordinance and His most holy will, is to miss its essential point, which is woman's true dignity, the dignity which she has only from God and in God."

This pope speaks very clearly. We cannot isolate any of the difficulties which women face but we must look at these, and I would say all problems, in light of what God wills. The pope continues.

The Godless Society is not Fit to help Women

"Therefore systems which banish God and His law from social relations, and allow to the precepts of religion at best a humble place in a man's private life, are in no position to consider the problem of woman from the right standpoint. And this is why you have refused to have anything to do with the high-sounding slogans with which certain people love to advance the claims of feminism, deciding rightly, to band yourselves together as Catholic women and girls, and so respond in a proper manner to the natural demands of your sex and promote its true interests."

Would that today's women refused to have anything to do with these false claims of feminism. We see also that the Ireland of today fits in perfectly with the systems which the pope decries. In Ireland, God is banished to his Church, and laws which contravene His Divine Will have been enacted to permit contraception, divorce, sodomy, abortion, adultery, and we will soon have euthanasia if we continue along the path we are travelling. Such a society according to the pope, Pope Pius XII, is in no position to consider the problem of woman because they have a false standpoint.

The pope then asks the question, "What, then, is this God-given dignity of woman?" And he tells us, "The answer lies in human nature as God has fashioned it, elevated it, and redeemed it in the blood of Christ."

He then elaborates

The Catholic Church liberated Women

"As children of God, man and woman have a dignity in which they are absolutely equal; and they are equal, too, in regard to the supreme end of human life, which is everlasting union with God in the happiness of Heaven. To have vindicated and proclaimed this truth, and to have delivered woman from a slavery as degrading as it was contrary to nature, is one of the imperishable glories of the Church. But man and woman cannot maintain or perfect this equal dignity of theirs unless they respect and make use of the distinctive qualities which nature has bestowed on each sex: physical and spiritual qualities which are indestructible, and so co-ordinated that their mutual relation cannot be upset without nature itself intervening to re-establish it. These peculiar characteristics which distinguish the sexes are so obvious to everybody that nothing short of wilful blindness, or a doctrinaire attitude as disastrous as it is utopian, can ignore or fail to see their importance in the structure of society."

Wilful Blindness

In these days of so-called gender equality and multiple gender theories where men can be women, women can be men, men can marry men and women can marry women, the pope is telling us that there is a wilful blindness, a doctrinaire attitude which is disastrous. It is very interesting to note how he speaks of a 'doctrinaire attitude'. Those of us who seek to uphold the perennial and unchanging teachings of the Catholic Church are often accused of being 'doctrinal' and of not being 'pastoral', whereas the opposite is the case. It is those who wish to change or to ignore Church teaching, who seek to force their ideologies on nations and peoples, and who will impose criminal sanctions in law on those who refuse to co-operate in their wilful blindness.

The pope then says that he is only going to look at two aspects of a woman's life namely marriage and consecrated virginity. Here we will concentrate on what he says with regard to marriage.

The Benefits of Wedded Life

“The benefits of true wedded life do not consist only in the offspring which God may grant to the married pair, nor only in the material and spiritual blessings which family life confers upon humanity. 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.”

Wow!

Marriage Benefits the Whole of Civilisation

“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.” That's Pope Pius XII addressing women.

Our Youth no longer understand or respect Marriage

Here then is the nub of our problem. Our youth, 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 end of their lives and the pope speaks about this 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.”

Many getting Married are not Virgins

This is powerful stuff and so relevant to the problem we are looking at today. I would not be surprised to find out, although there is no real way of knowing, that most of the thirty something's who get married in Ireland today are not virgins. They usually live together before getting married and this highlights the pope's statement that, “man and woman are nothing more to each other than the object of selfish desire”.

Next the pope looks at the single life before coming back to marriage and to sex in particular.

Woman's Role is as Mother

“Be she married or single, woman's function is seen clearly defined in the lineaments of her sex, in its propensities and special powers. She works side by side with man, but she works in her own way and according to her natural bent. Now 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.

To this end the Creator has fashioned the whole of woman's nature: not only her organism, but also and still more her spirit, and most of all her exquisite sensibility. This is why it is only from the standpoint of the family that the woman, if she is a true woman, can see and fully understand every problem of human life. And this is why her delicate sense of her own dignity causes her a thrill of apprehension whenever the social or political order threatens danger to her vocation as a mother, or to the welfare of the family.”

The Silence about the nature and dignity of Women Today

Why is this message not being taught to the young girls in our Catholic schools today? Why are our priests and bishops generally silent on this tremendous dignity of woman as mother? As the pope said above, the whole of human society and the Church feels the benefits of good marriages. Conversely, when society no longer values marriage and women as mothers within those marriages, the whole of society feels the negative consequences. 50 million babies murdered in their mother's wombs each year, with the co-operation of the State legislature in the countries where they are murdered, is just one of the negative consequences of downplaying the role of women as mothers and therefore as wives.

The Dangers Facing Women in Public Life

Pope Pius XII then begins to highlight some of the dangers of the fact that women must necessarily enter into public life with a view to defending the family.

“That public life has now for some time been developing in a manner unfavourable to the true welfare of the family and the true welfare of woman, is beyond dispute. It is to woman that various political movements are now turning in the hope of gaining her support. A certain totalitarian regime tempts her with marvellous promises: equality of rights with men; assistance during the period of gestation and labour; communal kitchens and other public services relieving her of domestic burdens; public crèches and other institutions, maintained and administered by the State and local authority and exempting her from her maternal obligations towards her children; education without fees, public assistance in the case of illness.”

Is this not the Ireland of today? Public creches and all of that! The pope continues

Do Women Really Benefit?

“We have no wish to deny the advantages to be derived from certain of these social measures, provided they are administered in a proper manner. We have in fact Ourselves insisted that, for the same work and the same service rendered, women have a right to equal pay with men. But what We have called the essential point of the question still remains: Has all this improved woman's condition? Equality of rights with men has led her to abandon the home, in which she used to reign as queen, and subjected her to the same burden and the same hours of work. No heed is paid any longer to her true dignity, to that which is the firm foundation of all her rights: her distinctive quality of womanhood and the essential co-ordination of the sexes. The Creator's purpose for the welfare of human society, and especially of the family, has now been forgotten. In the concessions that are being made to woman it is easy to see, not so much the respect which is due to her dignity and her vocation, as rather a desire to build up the economic and military power of the totalitarian State, to which everything must be inexorably subordinated.”

So again that's another powerful thing, the concessions that are made to woman are not so much respect due to her dignity and vocation as rather the desire to build up the economic and military power of a totalitarian state. Sometimes it's just a desire for money. I mentioned, on this programme the fact now that in Heuston Station in Dublin, women are sent in to clean the men's toilets while

the men are actually using the urinals. It's disgusting. It degrades women, they are actually being abused, but the minister is not interested, the CEO of Iarnróid Eireann is not interested in this, they don't actually see this as an abuse of a woman.

A very brief look at capitalism follows.

What about Capitalism?

“And what of a regime in which capitalism is dominant? Does it offer a prospect of real welfare for woman? We have no need here to describe the economic and social consequences of this system. You know its characteristic signs and you yourselves labour under the burden it imposes: the excessive crowding of the population into the cities; the ever-growing and all-invading power of big business; the difficult and precarious condition of other industries, especially the crafts and even more especially agriculture; the disquieting spread of unemployment.”

He then continues.

“Restore woman as soon as possible to her place of honour in the home as housewife and mother! This is the universal cry today. It is as though the world had suddenly awakened in alarm and horror to see the results of a material and technical progress of which it had hitherto been so proud.”

Sadly, this cry that the pope speaks of to restore the woman to her place of honour in the home has all but fallen silent today to the great detriment of our society which is tottering on the brink of moral collapse and ruin.

The pope then looks at some of the effects of these policies.

The Wife who leaves her home to Work

“Here is the wife who, to augment her husband's income, also goes out to work in a factory, leaving the home neglected during her absence. Already squalid and confined enough, perhaps, the house becomes even more desolate for lack of care. And here are the members of the family, working separately at different hours in different parts of the city and hardly ever meeting one another, not even for the principal meal or for the rest at the end of the day's work, much less for family prayers. What remains of family life? And what attractions has it to offer the children?”

I remember an Irish bishop recently exhorting families to have at least one meal together each week. I was surprised at this because, in our family, we generally eat together three times a day. Once a week I thought? Is it possible that there are families who hardly ever eat together? So it would seem in this society of ours.

Pope Pius XII continues with another aspect very much relevant to our current problem

The Effects on the Children

“In addition to these unhappy consequences, the mother's absence from the home has another and more lamentable result: it affects the children's education, especially the girl's training and preparation for real life. Accustomed to her mother being always absent from home and to seeing the home itself so dismal in its neglected condition, she will not be able to find anything attractive in it; nor will she feel the slightest inclination for the austerities of housework, any appreciation of its dignity and beauty, any desire to devote herself to it one day as wife and mother.”

If women, for the sake of having a career or getting a degree which is not needed to be a good wife and mother, decide to marry later in life, and to have less children, then those children will not value marriage or motherhood. This is what has happened to our society today. These things which Pope Pius XII spoke of back in 1945 have all come to pass.

But the Pope is not finished.

The Worldly Woman's Daughter

“The same is true of every class of society and of every condition of life, The worldly woman's daughter, seeing the management of the home left entirely in the hands of strangers while the mother busies herself with frivolous occupations and futile amusements, will follow her example; she will want her own freedom as soon as possible, she will want, according to that unfortunate expression, 'to live her own life.' How, in such circumstances, can she possibly conceive the desire of becoming one day a true 'domina,' mistress of a home in a family which is happy, prosperous, and worthy of the name?”

The Working Class Woman's Daughter

“As for the working classes, obliged to earn their daily bread, careful reflection would perhaps convince the housewife that in many cases the additional wages, which she earns by working away from home, are soon swallowed up by other expenses and even by ruinous waste in housekeeping. The daughter, who also goes out to work in factory, shop, or office, finds herself deafened by the turmoil in the midst of which she lives; dazzled by the glamour of a tawdry luxury; hungry for equivocal pleasures which distract without giving satisfaction or repose; frequenting the music halls and dancing palaces which, often for purposes of party propaganda, are springing up everywhere to corrupt the morals of the young. She is a 'lady of fashion' now, and has no use for the moral standards of two centuries ago. How can she fail to find her modest home uninviting and even more grim than it is in reality! To take any pleasure in her home, and to want to make one for herself in the future, she would have to be able to counterbalance a natural impression by a serious intellectual and moral outlook, by the strength of mind that springs from a religious education and a supernatural ideal. But what sort of religious education, in conditions such as these, can she have received?”

Once again we're looking at Ireland today. Our religious education is disastrous. Our young women are not being taught the supreme value of their role as mothers, as wives, they are not taught the value of home.

The Effect on the Cost of Housing

I looked at another aspect of this situation which the pope has not mentioned because it was not yet a reality so soon after the war, and that is the cost of housing. My father was able to get a mortgage and buy his house in South County Dublin, on a single wage back in 1966. He wasn't a rich man by any standard. At the time he worked as a technician in RTE. He did not have a university education.

When I got married in 1988, he was puzzled as to why I could not buy a house. Now, I don't remember the exact figures that we used, but when he calculated what he was earning as a technician at the time he bought his house, relative to the price of the house, and then compared my wage as a chef at the time, we realised that the ratio between wages and house prices had changed dramatically and that had he been a technician at the time I got married in 1988, there is no way that he could have afforded a house. Yet at that time, on a technician's wage with a single income, my father was able to buy a four bedroomed house on a quarter of an acre of land in Foxrock in Dublin.

This is another, often overlooked, economic aspect of what happens when you take women from the family home in order to get them into the workforce. The price of things increase, spending power of families increases. A man with a piece of land who's going to build houses, if he can build three houses for a high price rather than four houses at a lower price, he goes for the higher price and sell them to the double income families. We are living in this age.

The Effects on the Elderly

Pope Pius XII then looks at old age

“And this is not all. Her mother with the passing of the years has become old before her time; she is worn out and broken by sorrows, anxieties, and work that has overtaxed her strength. When she sees her daughter return home very late at night, far from finding in her a prop and a support, she must herself arise and discharge all the duties of a domestic servant for one who is unaccustomed and unequal to the work of a woman and housewife. The father will be no better off when advancing years, illness, infirmity, unemployment have forced him to depend for his meagre support on the good or ill will of his children. How is the august and sacred authority of father and mother dethroned from the seat of its majesty!”

Our Young People do not know how to keep House

I think it's very relevant, when you see that thing there, where the mother has to get up to look after the daughter when the daughter comes home because the daughter is incapable. I came across myself. As I mentioned there I was a chef. But I remember one time working down, I was actually working down in south Cork and, during the summer I had two young girls both about eighteen coming into me and I remember on two separate occasions asking each of them a simple thing, to make up a little bit of custard, we were having maybe an apple pie or something like that for dessert. And they gave me the blank stare. Neither of these girls knew how to make custard.

I've been making custard since I was about twelve years of age, in our house we were trained how to cook. All of my children can cook, but nowadays there are children growing up who have... they're not domesticated, they don't know how to fend for themselves in the kitchen, they don't know how to cook, they don't know how to run a house and naturally enough they are not interested in getting married because it's very much like hard work, and the Pope was talking about that and he's saying in old age because of this you know, things go bad.

Materially Better Off, Spiritually Poorer

So, in some ways, things are not as bad from an economic point of view as they were back in 1945. However, sometimes that's because parents, including most Catholic parents it would seem, are now using contraception in order to have less children so they can maintain a higher material standard of life. But this is at the expense of their spiritual well being and children, at some level, pick up on the fact that more children are seen as a burden and this becomes ingrained into the psyche of the children. They realise that their family is small and at some stage they will realise that their parents chose not to give them brothers and sisters and it's because children are a burden. And again these children are not going to want to get married, they're not going to want to have large families.

The Battle Ahead

So you can see, we are faced with a major battle if we are to change the culture back to honouring motherhood, fatherhood, marriage and families. There are many vested interests who profit financially from the current situation and who will use every means at their disposal to block our progress. But as Pope Pius XII tells us, we must focus on the things of God. When we seek first the kingdom of God, all else will be given to us. The problems are not insurmountable. The problems

they're not going to be healed over night, this is a generational thing but, the sooner we start, the sooner we'll correct it. It's easy to throw our hands up and say 'Oh things have gone too far'. We can never say that. If you look back to the Arian crisis, if you look back to the Diocletian persecution you'll find Christians were being fed to the lions, you know, they could have just said 'Oh that's it, we can't survive'. But the Church did survive because Christ has given us a promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church

Tune in Next Week

That was a bit of a roller coaster today which opens up many fascinating points and insights for future discussion but I think that many of the points made by Pope Pius XII go a long way to explaining why it is that our young people are no longer interested in marriage. Next week I hope to have a look at what the Pope said to these women after highlighting these problems. Did he offer any solutions? Join me next week to find out.

I'm John Lacken

And May God bless you.

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