

Selected Quotations from Documents of the Popes and Members of the Roman Curia on the Subject of “Gender Theory”

Pope Saint John Paul II

However, beside the comforting goals achieved, it is only right to record the violent attacks (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 46) on the institution of the family and its social role in some sectors of modern society. Certain pieces of legislation that do not correspond with the true good of the family based on monogamous marriage, and with the protection of the inviolability of human life, have been passed allowing the dangerous shadow of the "culture of death" to creep into the home.

The proliferation of international forums on misleading concepts concerning sexuality and the dignity and mission of the woman that underlie specific ideologies on "gender" are also a cause of concern.

Pope St. John Paul II
Message to the Pontifical Council for the Family on the 20th Anniversary of the
Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*
23 November 2001

Pope Benedict XVI

Since faith in the Creator is an essential part of the Christian creed, the Church cannot and must not limit herself to passing on to the faithful the message of salvation alone. She has a responsibility towards creation, and must also publicly assert this responsibility. In so doing, she must not only defend earth, water and air as gifts of creation belonging to all. She must also protect man from self-destruction. What is needed is something like a human ecology, correctly understood.

If the Church speaks of the nature of the human being as man and woman, and demands that this order of creation be respected, this is not some antiquated metaphysics. What is involved here is faith in the Creator and a readiness to listen to the “language” of creation. To disregard this would be the self-destruction of man himself, and hence the destruction of God’s own work.

What is often expressed and understood by the term “gender” ultimately ends up being man’s attempt at self-emancipation from creation and the Creator. Man wants to be his own master, and alone – always and exclusively – to determine everything that concerns him. Yet in this way he lives in opposition to the truth, in opposition to the Creator Spirit.

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An integral part of the Church proclamation must be a witness to the Creator Spirit present in nature as a whole, and, in a special way, in the human person, created in God’s image. From this perspective, we should go back to the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*: the intention of Pope Paul VI was to defend love against sex as a consumer good, the future against the exclusive claims of the present, and human nature against its manipulation.

Pope Benedict XVI
Address to the Members of the Roman Curia for the Exchange of Christmas Greetings
22 December 2008

The Chief Rabbi of France, Gilles Bernheim, has shown in a very detailed and profoundly moving study that the attack we are currently experiencing on the true structure of the family, made up of father, mother, and child, goes much deeper. While up to now we regarded a false understanding of the nature of human freedom as one cause of the crisis of the family, it is now becoming clear that the very notion of being – of what being human really means – is being called into question. He quotes the famous saying of Simone de Beauvoir: “one is not born a woman, one becomes so” (*on ne naît pas femme, on le devient*). These words lay the foundation for what is put forward today under the term “gender” as a new philosophy of sexuality. According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society.

The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious. People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves. According to the biblical creation account, being created by God as male and female pertains to the essence of the human creature. This duality is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God. This very duality as something previously given is what is now disputed. The words of the creation account: “male and female he created them” (*Gen 1:27*) no longer apply.

No, what applies now is this: it was not God who created them male and female – hitherto society did this, now we decide for ourselves. Man and woman as created realities, as the

nature of the human being, no longer exist. Man calls his nature into question. From now on he is merely spirit and will. The manipulation of nature, which we deplore today where our environment is concerned, now becomes man's fundamental choice where he himself is concerned. From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be. Man and woman in their created state as complementary versions of what it means to be human are disputed.

But if there is no pre-ordained duality of man and woman in creation, then neither is the family any longer a reality established by creation. Likewise, the child has lost the place he had occupied hitherto and the dignity pertaining to him. Bernheim shows that now, perforce, from being a subject of rights, the child has become an object to which people have a right and which they have a right to obtain. When the freedom to be creative becomes the freedom to create oneself, then necessarily the Maker himself is denied and ultimately man too is stripped of his dignity as a creature of God, as the image of God at the core of his being. The defense of the family is about man himself. And it becomes clear that when God is denied, human dignity also disappears. Whoever defends God is defending man.

Pope Benedict XVI
Address to the Members of the Roman Curia for the Exchange of Christmas Greetings
21 December 2012

In every age, when man has not sought such a plan he has fallen prey to cultural temptations that have in the end enslaved him. . . . People today share more and more a common feeling about the inalienable dignity of every human being and about our reciprocal and interdependent responsibility for it; and this is to the advantage of true civilization, the civilization of love. However, unfortunately, our time also knows the shadows that hide God's plan. I am referring above all to the tragic anthropological reduction that repropose the age-old hedonistic materialism, but to which a "technological Prometheism" is added. From this union of the materialistic vision of man and the great development of technology a fundamentally atheist anthropology emerges.

It presupposes that man is reduced to autonomous functions, the mind to the brain, human history to a destiny of self-realization. All this disregards God, his properly spiritual dimension and the horizon of the afterlife. In the perspective of a human being deprived of his soul and consequently of a personal relationship with his Creator, what is technically possible becomes morally licit, every experiment is acceptable, every demographic policy permitted, every manipulation legitimized. The most dangerous snare of this current of thought is in fact the absolutization of man: man wants to be *ab-solutus*, freed from every bond and from every natural constitution. He claims to be independent and thinks that his happiness lies in his own self-affirmation. "Man calls his nature into question.... From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be" (*Discourse to the Roman Curia*,

21 December 2012). This is a radical denial of the nature of the creature and child in man, which ends in tragic loneliness.

Faith and healthy Christian discernment therefore lead us to pay prophetic attention to this ethical problem and to its underlying mentality. The just collaboration with international bodies in the field of development and human advancement must not make us close our eyes to these grave ideologies. It is the duty of pastors of the Church — the “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15) — to put the Catholic faithful and every person of good will and right reason on guard against the trend of these ideologies.

The Church is always committed positively to the advancement of human beings according to God’s design, in the integrity of their dignity, with respect for their two-fold — vertical and horizontal — dimensions. The action for development of Church bodies also strives for this. The Christian vision of man is, in fact, a great “yes” to the dignity of persons called to an intimate filial communion of humility and faithfulness. The human being is not a self-sufficient individual nor an anonymous element in the group. Rather he is a unique and unrepeatable person, intrinsically ordered to relationships and sociability. Thus the Church reaffirms her great “yes” to the dignity and beauty of marriage as an expression of the faithful and generous bond between man and woman, and her no to “gender” philosophies, because the reciprocity between male and female is an expression of the beauty of nature willed by the Creator.

Pope Benedict XVI
Address to Participants in the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum
19 January 2013

Pope Francis

Q.: You have spoken of “ideological colonization”. Would you expand on the concept? . . .

Ideological colonization. I’ll give just one example that I saw myself. Twenty years ago, in 1995, a minister of education asked for a large loan to build schools for the poor. They gave it to her on the condition that in the schools there would be a book for the children of a certain grade level. It was a school book, a well-thought-out book, didactically speaking, in which gender theory was taught. This woman needed the money but that was the condition. Clever woman, she said yes and made another book as well and gave both of them. And that’s how it happened.

This is ideological colonization. They introduce an idea to the people that has nothing to do with the people. With groups of people yes, but not with the people. And they colonize the people with an idea which changes, or means to change, a mentality or a structure. During the Synod, the African bishops complained about this. It was the same story, certain loans in exchange for certain conditions — I only speak of this case that I have seen. Why do I say

“ideological colonization”? Because they take, they actually take the need of a people to seize an opportunity to enter and grow strong — through the children. But this is nothing new. The same was done by the dictatorships of the last century. They entered with their own doctrine. Think of the Balilla, think of the Hitler Youth.... They colonized the people, they wanted to do it. So much suffering — peoples must not lose their freedom. Each people has its own culture, its own history. Every people has its own culture. But when conditions are imposed by colonizing empires, they seek to make these peoples lose their own identity and create uniformity.

Pope Francis
In-Flight Press Conference from The Philippines to Rome
19 January 2015

The family is in crisis: this is true, it is not news. . . . The crisis of the family is a social reality. Then there is ideological colonization on the subject of the family, ways of thinking and acting that are a reality in Europe and are even reaching overseas. This error of the human mind that is the theory of gender, that creates such confusion. And thus the family is under attack. What are we to do, with the secularization that it active? What are we to do with this ideological colonization? What are we to do with a culture that doesn't consider the family, that prefers not to marry? I don't have the answer, but the Church is aware of this and the Lord has inspired the convoking of the Synod on the Family, on its many problems.

Pope Francis
Address to Youth during the Pastoral Visit to Naples
21 March 2015

Catechesis on the family -- Male and female (I)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today's catechesis is dedicated to an aspect central to the theme of the family: the great gift that God gave to humanity with the creation of man and woman and with the sacrament of marriage. This catechesis and the next one will treat the difference and complementarity between man and woman, who stand at the summit of divine creation; then the two after that will be on other topics concerning marriage.

Let us begin with a brief comment on the first narrative of creation, in the Book of Genesis. Here we read that God, after having created the universe and all living beings, created his masterpiece, the human being, whom He made in his own image: “in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27), so says the Book of Genesis.

And as we all know, sexual difference is present in so many forms of life, on the great scale of living beings. But man and woman alone are made in the image and likeness of God: the biblical text repeats it three times in two passages (26-27): man and woman are the image and likeness of God. This tells us that it is not man alone who is the image of God or woman alone who is the image of God, but man and woman as a couple who are the image of God. The difference between man and woman is not meant to stand in opposition, or to subordinate, but is for the sake of communion and generation, always in the image and likeness of God.

Experience teaches us: in order to know oneself well and develop harmoniously, a human being needs the reciprocity of man and woman. When that is lacking, one can see the consequences. We are made to listen to one another and help one another. We can say that without the mutual enrichment of this relationship — in thought and in action, in affection and in work, as well as in faith — the two cannot even understand the depth of what it means to be man and woman.

Modern contemporary culture has opened new spaces, new forms of freedom and new depths in order to enrich the understanding of this difference. But it has also introduced many doubts and much skepticism. For example, I ask myself, if the so-called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it. Yes, we risk taking a step backwards. The removal of difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution. In order to resolve the problems in their relationships, men and women need to speak to one another more, listen to each other more, get to know one another better, love one another more. They must treat each other with respect and cooperate in friendship. On this human basis, sustained by the grace of God, it is possible to plan a lifelong marital and familial union. The marital and familial bond is a serious matter, and it is so for everyone not just for believers. I would urge intellectuals not to leave this theme aside, as if it had to become secondary in order to foster a more free and just society.

God entrusted the earth to the alliance between man and woman: its failure deprives the earth of warmth and darkens the sky of hope. The signs are already worrisome, and we see them. I would like to indicate, among many others, two points that I believe call for urgent attention. The first. There is no doubt that we must do far more to advance women, if we want to give more strength to the reciprocity between man and woman. In fact, it is necessary that woman not only be listened to more, but that her voice carry real weight, a recognized authority in society and in the Church. The very way Jesus considered women in a context less favourable than ours, because women in those times were relegated to second place. Jesus considered her in a way which gives off a powerful light, which enlightens a path that leads afar, of which we have only covered a small stretch. We have not yet understood in depth what the feminine genius can give us, what woman can give to society and also to us. Maybe women see things in a way that complements the thoughts of men. It is a path to follow with greater creativity and courage.

A second reflection concerns the topic of man and woman created in the image of God. I wonder if the crisis of collective trust in God, which does us so much harm, and makes us pale with resignation, incredulity and cynicism, is not also connected to the crisis of the alliance between man and woman. In fact the biblical account, with the great symbolic fresco depicting the earthly paradise and original sin, tells us in fact that the communion with God is reflected in the communion of the human couple and the loss of trust in the heavenly Father generates division and conflict between man and woman.

The great responsibility of the Church, of all believers, and first of all of believing families, which derives from us, impels people to rediscover the beauty of the creative design that also inscribes the image of God in the alliance between man and woman. The earth is filled with harmony and trust when the alliance between man and woman is lived properly. And if man and woman seek it together, between themselves, and with God, without a doubt they will find it. Jesus encourages us explicitly to bear witness to this beauty, which is the image of God.

Pope Francis
General Audience Catechesis
15 April 2015

Catechesis on the family -- Male and female (II)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the preceding catechesis on the family, I meditated on the first narrative of the creation of the human being, in the first chapter of Genesis, where it is written: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (1:27). Today, I would like to complete the reflection with the second narrative, which we find in the second chapter. Here we read that the Lord, after having created heaven and earth, “formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (2:7). This is the culmination of creation. But something is missing: then God places man in the most beautiful garden that he might cultivate and look after it (cf. 2:15). The Holy Spirit, who inspired the whole of the Bible, momentarily evokes the image of man alone — something is missing — without woman. And the Holy Spirit evokes God’s thoughts, even His emotion, as He gazes at Adam, observing him alone in the garden. He is free, he is a lord... but he is alone. And God sees that this “is not good”: as if what is missing is communion, he lacks communion, the fullness is lacking. “It is not good” , God says, and adds: “I will make him a helper fit for him” (2:18).

And so God brings all the animals to man; man gives to each its name — and this is another image of man’s dominion over creation — but he sees that not one of the animals is like himself. Man continues alone. When finally God presents woman, man exultantly recognizes

that this creature, and this creature alone, is a part of him: “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23). Finally, there is a reflection, a reciprocity. When a person — to give an example to help us understand — wants to shake hands with another, he must have that person before him: if he holds out his hand and no one is there... his hand remains outstretched, there is no reciprocity. This was how man was, he lacked something to reach his fullness; reciprocity was lacking. Woman is not a replica of man; she comes directly from the creative act of God. The image of the “rib” in no way expresses inferiority or subordination, but, on the contrary, that man and woman are of the same substance and are complimentary and that they also have this reciprocity. And the fact that — also in that parable — God moulds woman while man sleeps means precisely that she is in no way man’s creation, but God’s. He also suggests another point: in order to find woman — and we could say to find love in woman — man first must dream of her and then find her. God’s faith in man and in woman, those to whom he entrusted the earth, is generous, direct and full. He trusts them. But then the devil introduces suspicion into their minds, disbelief, distrust, and finally, disobedience to the commandment that protected them. They fall into that delirium of omnipotence that pollutes everything and destroys harmony. We too feel it inside of us, all of us, frequently.

Sin generates distrust and division between man and woman. Their relationship will be undermined by a thousand forms of abuse and subjugation, misleading seduction and humiliating ignorance, even the most dramatic and violent kind. And history bears the scar. Let us think, for example, of those negative excesses of patriarchal cultures. Think of the many forms of male dominance whereby the woman was considered second class. Think of the exploitation and the commercialization of the female body in the current media culture. And let us also think of the recent epidemic of distrust, skepticism, and even hostility that is spreading in our culture — in particular an understandable distrust from women — on the part of a covenant between man and woman that is capable, at the same time, of refining the intimacy of communion and of guarding the dignity of difference.

If we do not find a surge of respect for this covenant, capable of protecting new generations from distrust and indifference, from children coming into the world ever more uprooted from the mother’s womb. The social devaluation for the stable and generative alliance between man and woman is certainly a loss for everyone. We must return marriage and the family to the place of honour! The Bible says something beautiful: man finds woman, they meet and man must leave something in order to find her fully. That is why man will leave his father and mother to go to her. It’s beautiful! This means setting out on a new path. Man is everything for woman and woman is everything for man.

The responsibility of guarding this covenant between man and woman is ours, although we are sinners and are wounded, confused and humiliated, discouraged and uncertain; it is nevertheless for us believers a demanding and gripping vocation in today’s situation. The same narrative of creation and of sin ends by showing us an extremely beautiful icon: “The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them” (Gen 3:21). It is an image of tenderness towards the sinful couple that leaves our mouths agape: the tenderness God has

for man and woman! It's an image of fatherly care for the human couple. God himself cares for and protects his masterpiece.

Pope Francis
General Audience Catechesis
15 April 2015

Secretariat of State

The Catholic Church has traditionally been in the first line in the promotion of the authentic health of women, by helping them to harmonize their physical, psychological and social well-being with moral and spiritual values. In this line, the Catholic Church is also convinced of the God-given, equal, and complementary dignity of women and men. The Catholic Church also prioritizes the most fruitful expression of complementarity between woman and man – that is, the family which is founded upon lifelong and mutually faithful marriage and which continues to serve as the mainstay of human society. . . . Furthermore, the Holy See wishes to invite the WHO member states once again to understand the term "gender" as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female.

Most Rev Silvano M. Tomasi
Intervention by the Holy See at the 60th World Health Organization Assembly
16 May 2007

The Holy See appreciates the attempts made in the *statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity* –presented at the UN General Assembly on 18 December 2008– to condemn all forms of violence against homosexual persons as well as urge States to take necessary measures to put an end to all criminal penalties against them. At the same time, the Holy See notes that the wording of this *statement* goes well beyond the abovementioned and shared intent.

In particular, the categories 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity', used in the text, find no recognition or clear and agreed definition in international law. If they had to be taken into consideration in the proclaiming and implementing of fundamental rights, these would create serious uncertainty in the law as well as undermine the ability of States to enter into and enforce new and existing human rights conventions and standards.

Despite the *statement's* rightful condemnation of and protection from all forms of violence against homosexual persons, the document, when considered in its entirety, goes beyond this goal and instead gives rise to uncertainty in the law and challenges existing human rights norms.

The Holy See continues to advocate that every sign of unjust discrimination towards homosexual persons should be avoided and urges States to do away with criminal penalties against them.

Statement of the Delegation of the Holy See at the 63rd Session of the
General Assembly of the United Nations on the Declaration on Human Rights,
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
18 December 2008

Pontifical Council for the Family

It must also be noted that many young people form an idealistic or even erroneous vision of the couple as a living unclouded happiness where their own wishes will be fulfilled. They can reach a latent conflict between the desire to be one with the other and the desire to protect their own freedom. A growing misunderstanding of the beauty of the genuine human couple, and of the richness of the difference and the complementarity of man and woman leads to a growing confusion about sexual identity, a confusion which has culminated in the feminist ideology of what is known as "gender." This confusion complicates the assumption of roles and the sharing of tasks in the home.

Pontifical Council for the Family
Conclusions of the Fifteenth Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family
19 October 2002

On the contrary we can say that a systematic deconstruction of the institution of Marriage and Family is at the fore; to wit, in some countries, marriage does not mean anymore the union between man and a woman but "between persons".

How is this possible? Simply by denying the existence of two different ways of being human, masculine and feminine; and sexual difference is reduced to a mere question of choice and culture. It is exactly what the ideology of the gender proposes. But where does this bring us?

. . . Any disregard of the natural law boils down to the relativization of the public good and the foundations of human life held for centuries. Let us look into the so called "new models of family"; the extension of the term "family" and of the term "marriage" to all kinds of social realities: reconstructed families, free unions (with no other founding act other than the sole

wish of the partners), homosexual unions, etc.. What underlies all these? That living together, is founded no longer on an objective good of a communal scope (an objective good of the society), but only upon the individual desires of persons; desires which invoke the principle of equality, meant not in the classical sense of the term but in its ideological sense. The genuine principle of equality between men is an equality of dignity that, when it is recognized by the law, means that the citizens are equal in fact by right. The rights that are recognized of a family founded upon marriage are, normally, a recognition that the family unit is a good for society, this unit favors a progressive socialization of future adult citizens by means of the education of children, and finally the family participates in the stability of the social bond. Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, affirms that the family is the fundamental core of society and of the State and, as such, it must be recognized and protected. This allows us to affirm that, if the family has so great an importance for society and for the State, it is because it fulfills a public and general interest.

Banalization of Human Sexuality

Corollary to the first problem we have just mentioned, the systematic deconstruction of the structures of marriage and family, is the obscuring of the true meaning of human sexuality.

Marriage has always been esteemed as the only and proper locus for the exercise of man's sexual faculty. This has been put into question by present realities. Human sexuality is perceived nowadays only from the perspective of personal gratification and feeling, therefore, forgetting the intrinsic value of the conjugal act as intrinsically aimed at transmitting life; at the moment sexuality is emptied of its social significance, from the transmission of life within the stable relation between man and woman, what you have is a mere revindication of pleasure. Thus, it results to contraceptive sex and the practice of homosexuality for the sake of seeking a maximum sexual satisfaction. In this manner, sexuality ceases to be a language of total self-giving and the importance of the complementarity of the sexes is lost.

Furthermore, if sexuality is exercised only for the sake of pleasure, then marriage and family become just a private locus where the individual continues to find gratification for his sexual and affective aspirations. And all the attempts to extend the meaning of marriage and family to whatever kind of social realities that resemble marriage and the family are connected to this: same sex unions, de facto unions etc.. Unfortunately, the State begins to consider it as an exercise of one's right; afterwards, it enacts laws to guarantee it as liberty of private choice. In effect, the individual is considered to be possessing "the right" to form a family, according to the so-called "new models" of family; nevertheless, since this "so-called right" rests only on the personal desire of the person, then everything is arbitrary. In the end, marriage and the family wouldn't require absolute commitment anymore. Commitment comes to be a limited responsibility. The gift of oneself signified by the sexual act is denatured and transforms itself into a loan, of provisional duration, if it intentionally includes the hypothesis of a subsequent change.

The exercise of the sexual faculty itself loses its richness of meaning from the moment when it no longer expresses an irrevocable gift, solely and exclusively of the spouses.

If the physical union of the spouses is not founded upon an absolute fidelity, excluding absolutely everything seeking the unity of marriage, it ceases to express symbolically (nuptial symbolism) conjugal love; though rewarding, it limits itself thus only to be an affective expression.

From a Sexual Revolution to a Political Revolution

The above mentioned challenges nevertheless are born of the sexual revolution of the 20th century, a cultural revolution which effectively has turned itself to a political revolution.

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The sexual discourse that had always remained accompanied with reservation and modesty became little by little a subject of public debates, provoking a series of studies and researches and even a political revindication. Before, a discourse on sexuality was always connected to procreation; now, the discourse on the exercise of the human sexual faculty is only considered in its pure physical and gratifying dynamism; and in a way, it has become totally autonomous from its relation to a possible transmission of life. Sooner or later, such theories turned to concrete practices within the society. Meanwhile, other subjects related to sexuality never discussed before continuously occupy public debates and discussions; homosexual practices, the search for maximum pleasure in a relation and the revindication of a sexuality outside of any commitment and responsibility.

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Consequently, even the position of the Church who is the main promoter of an ethical and spiritual discourse on sexual matters, had been challenged. All these elements help us understand that a discourse that banalizes the exercise of sexuality in diverse and contradictory forms contributes to the radical destruction of all the values that have been structuring society for centuries: the exclusivity of loving relations between spouses, the veneration of human life, which was always considered a blessing, the love for the child, the respect of the precedent generation, the sense of belonging to a familial history, etc..

Obviously, the emergence of this permissive morality is accompanied by the destruction of any form of authority in all its aspects: family, politics, education, religion. Systematic refusal and defiance of figures of authority follows; the paternal figure at the womb of the family, the figure of a government leader at the heart of the nations, the figure of the educator at the educational system; at the end, the figure of the moral and spiritual authority of the priests, bishops and the magisterium of the Church in general.

In reality, the passage from the discourse founded on natural law to a truly social revolution leads little by little to a political revolution in all possible aspects of human life.

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Human love and hope: the teachings of the Church

... Benedict XVI in his second encyclical *Spe Salvi*, speaks of the nature of hope as something rooted on anything that is constant and stable. The fact that the church has never wavered on her teachings on sexuality, marriage and family, the Church becomes the basis of our hope and she remains the only institution that has the capacity to direct and guide us. I believe, contrary to the actual circumstances, as Christians and people of good will, these realities become a providential invitation for us to profoundly deepen our perceptions and understanding of human life and its transmissions thru the exercise of human sexuality.

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The nature of marriage

The Church always speaks of marriage as an intimate community of life and love founded by the Creator with its own proper laws.

She understands that man and woman have been structurally created in such a way that they are capable of giving oneself totally to another for the rest of their lives. It is man's nature to tend to communion, as he was created by God according to God's nature which is a communion of Divine Persons. John Paul II speaks of man's fulfillment not in man's solitude but when he is in communion. Truly man becomes an image of God when he is experiencing a true communion with the other. This means that when the Church speaks of marriage and family, she is doing it from the logic of nature which is accessible to human reason. In effect, the human being created as masculine and feminine, is called to a communion of persons.

Most Rev. Jean Lafitte, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Family
Address to the *Couple to Couple League*
19 September 2010

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

224. *Faced with theories that consider gender identity as merely the cultural and social product of the interaction between the community and the individual, independent of personal sexual identity without any reference to the true meaning of sexuality, the Church does not tire of repeating her teaching: "Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarities are oriented towards the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarities, needs and mutual support between the sexes are lived out" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2333). According to this*

perspective, it is obligatory that positive law *be conformed* to the natural law, according to which *sexual identity is indispensable*, because it is the objective condition for forming a couple in marriage.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church
 26 May 2006

Synod of Bishops

Present-Day Problems Related to the Natural Law

21. In light of what the Church has maintained over the centuries, an examination of the relation of the Gospel of the Family to the experience common to every person can now consider the many problems highlighted in the responses concerning the question of the natural law. ... [22.] The adjective “natural” often is understood by people as meaning “spontaneous” or “what comes naturally.” Today, people tend to place a high value on personal feelings and emotions, aspects which appear “genuine” and “fundamental” and, therefore, to be followed “simply according to one’s nature.” The underlying anthropological concepts, on the one hand, look to an autonomy in human freedom which is not necessarily tied to an objective order in the nature of things, and, on the other hand, every human being’s aspiration to happiness, which is simply understood as the realization of personal desires. Consequently, the natural law is perceived as an outdated legacy. Today, in not only the West but increasingly every part of the world, scientific research poses a serious challenge to the concept of nature. Evolution, biology and neuroscience, when confronted with the traditional idea of the natural law, conclude that it is not “scientific.”

23. Generally speaking, the notion of “human rights” is also seen as highly subjective and a call for a person to self-determination, a process which is no longer grounded in the idea of the natural law. ... Situated in this context is the increased diffusion of the ideology called *gender theory*, according to which the *gender* of each individual turns out to be simply the product of social conditioning and needs and, thereby, ceasing, in this way, to have any correspondence to a person’s biological sexuality.

26. The responses point to a general belief that the distinction between the sexes has a natural foundation within human existence itself. Therefore, by force of tradition, culture and intuition, there exists the desire that the union between a man and a woman endure. The natural law is then a universally accepted “fact” by the faithful, without the need to be theoretically justified. The demise of the concept of the natural law tends to eliminate the interconnection of love, sexuality and fertility, which is understood to be the essence of marriage. Consequently, many

aspects of the Church's sexual morality are not understood today. This is also a result of a certain criticism of the natural law, even by a number of theologians.

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