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Review of *Catholic Perspectives on Sex, Love, and Families*

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he adopts are not easily dismissed and invite us to a conversation well worth continuing.

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Catholic Perspectives on Sex, Love, and Families. Edited by Jason King and Julie Hanlon Rubio. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2020. vii + 315 pages. \$34.95.

With a compilation of twenty-five essays split evenly among “Sex,” “Love,” and “Families” (the last part has nine chapters), Jason King and Julie Hanlon Rubio have assembled an excellent classroom text that also highlights the renewed attention these three topics have received in the Catholic tradition during the papacy of Francis. The book manages to strike the elusive balance between robust scholarly engagement and wide accessibility, producing a volume that would be an asset for undergraduate classes on the theology of marriage and family or sexual ethics. Individual chapters could also be used to great effect as additions to an introductory theology syllabus or a general ethics course.

The adjective that best captures the spirit of the book, and its scholarly contributions, is “fresh.” Like the *aggiornamento* of the Second Vatican Council, King and Rubio’s volume opens the windows on the Catholic discourse around sex and family life, bringing the fresh air of new voices and new ideas to a topic that students and teachers often find frustratingly dated. This, very clearly, was King and Rubio’s intent, as their introduction reveals the book arose from a sense that there were not enough resources to help undergraduate students explore the Catholic theology of sex, love, and family in a manner that addressed their contemporary concerns. “We invited scholars not to voice different sides of old arguments but to begin new conversations about what was facing the church and the world...,” they explain. “We wanted people who spoke not to the context of the mid-twentieth century but to the diverse experiences of today” (4).

Throughout the book, the authors live up to this summons, and the strongest essays do this exceptionally well. Jennifer Beste’s chapter on “Hookups, Happiness, and Human Flourishing,” for instance, draws on her recent ethnographic research to preserve college students’ descriptions of the hookup culture in their own voice, facilitating a nuanced engagement with this phenomenon in all its complexity, rejecting the reductionistic stereotypes that sometimes appear. Two chapters on the familial experience of contemporary Catholic immigrants, one by Victor Carmona and one by Gemma Tulud Cruz, offer an account of the struggles and opportunities that abound in this age of migration, challenging the facile assumption that a single nuclear

family is *the* normal experience for everyone and creating the conditions for a more inclusive conversation in today's diverse classrooms. Kathryn Getek Soltis's chapter dives into the data on mass incarceration and analyzes the damage to marital and parental relationships caused not just by a perpetrator's bad judgment but also by a system for which we all bear some responsibility.

While empirical data are often used to set the stage, this is neither the only way the authors engage the real world nor the only insight the book has to offer. The volume is very much a theology text, and the contributions engage the tradition deeply, thoughtfully, and creatively. For example, Timothy O'Malley's chapter, "Learning to Dwell with the Beloved: The Wisdom of the Marriage Liturgy," uses a close reading of the matrimonial rites to explain the social orientation of marital love in the Catholic tradition. Christine Firer Hinze has a rich chapter on "Work, Family, and Flourishing" from a Catholic and feminist perspective that includes a summary of work in Catholic social teaching (248–252) so succinct and approachable that it should become standard reading in any CST class. Daniel Olson's chapter on interchurch families, meanwhile, raises up the theological contributions that families in mixed-denominational marriages can offer to the Catholic tradition by virtue of their on-the-ground ecumenism.

Overall, the freshness of the volume speaks to this moment in the church. One has a clear sense that this book is speaking to a post-*Amoris Laetitia* community intent on understanding the Gospel of the Family in a way that reads and responds to the lived reality of family life. While the essays can occasionally do more to explain and refine the method for incorporating experience as a source for moral theology—none engages experience uncritically, but the explicitness of their critical hermeneutics varies—the dialogue with real life they all facilitate is precisely what Catholic theology needs in these areas. It is well worth the read in its entirety.

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Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome. By Rebecca Langlands. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xi + 368 pages. \$99.99.

Rebecca Langlands's *Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome* makes an important contribution to the current surge in exemplary studies in multiple disciplines including moral theology. Although a classicist, by entering the study of Roman exempla through ethics, Langlands invites philosophical and theological ethicists into conversation as she seeks to provide a "fully formed and coherent 'exemplary ethics' that was in operation in ancient Rome" drawing from literary, philosophical and cultural perspectives (3–5).