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Sexual Identity in Marriage and Family Life

by

The Right Reverend

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"Why can't a woman be more like a man?", complained Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady". Today he wouldn't get away with the remark without some people (not necessarily feminists) retorting: "and why can't a man be more like a woman?" Others might not only reject both complaints, but even question the importance of a man having to be like a man or a woman having to be like a woman. Indeed, if asked, they might be hard put to say what being a man or being a woman properly means, apart from elementary bodily differences. We live in fact in an historical period when sexual differentiation is becoming confused, sexual character is of little value, and sexual identity is in danger of being lost.

It is difficult nowadays to talk about sex or sexual roles without appearing to be, or being labelled as, more sympathetic to men or more sympathetic to women.¹ I am equally sympathetic to both. For the purpose of my present topic, however, I am especially sympathetic to the difference. "Vive la différence!" because this difference is in danger of not surviving in our Western societies - except in a minimal physical way, and even that subjected to increased changeability.

Sexuality is being de-sexualized in contemporary Western society. It is being reduced to a merely physical relationship and to one which, at that level, is not even truly sexual. The more properly human understanding of sex is being neglected or forgotten, with little or no emphasis on the fact that man and woman should enrich each other, not primarily by the physical coupling of their bodies but by the interaction of their complementary sexual characteristics - of the specific way each has of being human.

Paradoxically, the de-sexualization of modern life is particularly obvious in the area of "sexual education". Sex education has followed a line not of development and improvement, but of impoverishment. Having mainly begun at the level of inculcating biological facts, it has become in a certain sense sub-biological, teaching young people how to engage in a physical activity, while avoiding the

natural biological consequences. Current "value-free" sexual education prescind from any philosophy or teleology of sex which can help people understand the "why and wherefore" of sex: its real importance for the enrichment of the person and of society. There is no education in a true anthropology of sex, which seeks to understand how human sexuality differs from mere animal sexuality, to discover and emphasize those sexual traits and values which go beyond the merely physical or physiological. Nor is there any education in the real psychology of sex: knowing not just how to understand this great human reality, but how to "manage" it in practice: to respond to and be realized by its potentials, not to miss them nor to be frustrated by their misuse.

We are right to protest the "sex education" being given to young people today in almost all state and many private schools. Our criticism will gain in power however if we insist that what is being given is not just *bad* sex education; it is not sexual education at all. It is "*de*-sexing" education. Young people are being educated to become de-sexed individuals, unisex citizens, not men and women. Frustration of true personal development is a main consequence of a unisex culture and education, for a first step in establishing one's human identity and personality lies in the effort to become a man or a woman, as the case may be.

The proper humanizing of the person is severely limited, if one does not learn to distinguish and appreciate masculinity and femininity. In undermining the growth of the individual, unisexism has negative effects on society as a whole. In order to be truly human, society needs both men and women. A unisex society is bound to be lacking in character and humanity, and noticeably, too, in cohesion.

This has particular application to the family, where the basic solidarity of a society is developed. A unisex philosophy makes the building of a real marriage or a real family almost impossible, for the unique experience - conducive to personal happiness and fulfilment - which marital or family relationships promise, is essentially and not accidentally tied to the difference and complementary of sexual roles.

Sexual complementarity? But - many would ask - does this idea of complementary between the sexes, or of sexual inter-dependence, not belong to a past cultural outlook? Are we not tending today to stress the right of the individual to identify himself or herself and to seek personal fulfillment as he or she wishes, without unnecessary dependencies?

Much of our modern world does seem to think of self-identification in terms of the total autonomy of the individual. But that should be recognized (at least by Christians) for what it is: a recurrence, on a generalized scale, of the original temptation addressed to Adam and Eve. Identify yourself, create for yourself the knowledge of your destiny with no subordination to God or to others². The result of this rebellion against the scheme of creation was to bring disorder into the world, threatening all the aspects of that God-given plan which fosters human development. Sexuality represents a major aspect of this divine plan, for a large part of the order of the world is in fact built around the nature and quality of the relation between the sexes. We can understand sexuality correctly or wrongly, a wrong understanding having negative effects on the personal and the social scale. Yet, today, true sexuality is being radically misunderstood and constantly

misused, with the result that it is in danger of extinction, of becoming a lost treasure of mankind.

Each Sex, a Partial Image of God

What is human sexuality really about? Are the sexes really complementary and inter-dependent? Do man and woman really need each other? And if so, for what? Is their sexual complementarity meant just for procreation? Is it just for establishing a relationship of mutual convenience or satisfaction between man and woman? A proper answer to these questions, it seems to me, shows that sexuality has broader and deeper purposes, with a scope that is richer and more challenging.

Sexuality is of God's making, and the key to its understanding lies with Him. It is urgent as never before to get back to His design for sex, His plan and purpose, as it clearly appears from the start.

"God created man in His own image", we are told in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis (1:27). It is from this being in God's "image" that humanity draws its unique dignity; in it lies the key to human identity, development and destiny. Genesis however has more to say. The text immediately adds: "in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them". Man was created in a dual mode, male and female. So it is *together* that the two sexes image God. Here lies the special dignity as well as the fundamental equality of sex. Each sex is a (partial) image of God.³ Taken together in their complementarity, they give a fuller image. "Man and woman are *created*, that is, are *willed by God*: in perfect equality on the one hand, as human persons, and on the other, in their respective being as male or female. So it is *together* that the two sexes image God. Here lies the special dignity as well as the fundamental equality of sex. Each sex is a (partial) image of God³. Taken together in their complementarity, they give a fuller image. "Man and woman are *created*, that is, are *willed by God*: in perfect equality on the one hand, as human persons, and on the other, in their respective being as male or female. 'To be a man', 'to be a woman' is a good thing willed by God. Man and woman, with identical dignity, are in "the image" of God"⁴.

This is manifested in both man and woman, and should be discovered by each in their reciprocity and in the various modes in which they should relate. Destroy the true sexual relationship, and man can no longer attain his identity. Pope John Paul II, in his catechesis on human love, says, "the search for the human identity of the one who at the beginning is 'alone', must always pass through duality: 'communion' . . ."⁵

Sexuality has a natural ordering to the particular communion of marriage, the life-long union of one man and one woman, with its two inter-linking purposes: the procreation of children as fruit and expression of marital love; and the development of the spouses as persons (the "bonum coniugum") through mutual conjugal self-donation. These purposes appear clearly in the two scriptural narrations of the creation of the sexes: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1: 28), and "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him . . . (Gen 2: 18).

Sexuality Not Only For Marriage

But one must complete the picture. Sexuality is not just for marriage. Even outside the context of marriage, it is a reality which deeply affects - *should* affect - major aspects of human and social life. While its procreational aspect ensures the future of mankind, its relational aspect is meant also to ensure the present, being a force and factor to *humanize* social relations. It is not good that man or woman should be alone. Their learning to relate together is meant to help each discover human values - and through them to discover God - by the association of masculinity and femininity⁶.

Human dignity between man and woman is identical, sexual roles are not; and the attempt to abolish the difference between these roles has highly negative effects on personal, family, social and religious life.

The assignment of specific, distinct sexual roles to man and woman, or the suggestion that certain human qualities are - or should be - specially characteristic of man and others of woman, is not popular with the unisex mentality. Unisexism tends to see in this an insinuation of priority instead of assertion of complementarity. Furthermore, to assign a particular quality as more proper to man or to woman, is not to suggest that the same quality may not be present also in the other sex. The point is rather that each sex tends to reflect or incarnate certain human, spiritual qualities - so in some way imaging God - which also serve as a model for the other sex to learn from. Complementarity implies that each sex can be a humanizing inspiration and a guide to personal growth and maturity for the other.

Traditional sexual psychology and education worked from the idea that man's tendency is to assert and fulfill himself more in the external environment, woman's more in the home. Nowadays this anthropological judgement is not popular. However it might not be right to reject it out of hand, without weighing its possible deeper implications. After all, such an analysis can be taken to mean that man is more thing-directed or situation-directed, and woman more person-directed⁷. Similarly, if one were to reflect on another frequent generalization - that man has greater aptitude for the technical aspects of life, and woman for the human aspects - it could follow from this, if valid, that woman has a greater capacity than man for *humanizing* life.

I happen to hold this latter view; and therefore, while fully supporting the modern idea that woman must be free to pursue whatever career she chooses in the professional and working world, I firmly believe that both society and she herself will be the losers if she does not bring her particularly feminine and humanizing talents to those jobs. Her presence, with those talents, in public affairs is all the more urgent today when human values are in danger of being submerged in technology.

Sexually Characterized Relationships

I have put forward the suggestion elsewhere that spouses who avoid the procreational consequences of sex may be impoverishing their marital and sexual relationship⁸. My present concern is rather how all of us can fail to mature and to be enriched, in the process of developing our personal sexual identity and of

learning to relate sexually to others in all the modalities of male-female relationships: single person to single; single to married and vice-versa, girlfriend-boyfriend, celibate to other sex. It is this relational aspect of sex that I wish to consider. Although sexuality and sexual roles affect the whole area of personal growth and social life, I will restrict attention just to family relationships: husband-wife, father or mother to son or daughter and vice-versa; brother to sister, sister to brother. And the treatment will necessarily be summary and incomplete.

Husband-wife. A man needs to find the woman in his wife; his masculinity should grow in complementary response to her femininity. And a woman needs to find the man in her husband; her femininity should grow in response to his masculinity. So, as each responds to what is complementary in the other, each grows, finds himself or herself, also by growing in sexual identity.

The woman in the wife should stimulate the husband sexually; the man in him should stimulate her sexually. Something is seriously wrong with a marriage where the partners are not capable of evoking a sexual response in each other. Why is it, I wonder, that a statement like that tends to make us think just in terms of physical response or bodily arousal? Is this not to accept an extraordinary narrowed view of sexuality?

Sexuality - sexual character - ought to be a source of continuing motivation and inspiration between husband and wife. It has been said that there is nothing surprising in a young couple in love; the surprise is offered by an old couple in love. I know many older couples who are very much in love and who certainly are a sexual inspiration to one another. Perhaps their physical relations do not mean as much to them as decades ago, but their sexuality is alive and potent and productive of a more deeply united conjugal love than ever before. The husband's love has been inspired by the development of the woman—in the wife that a lifetime of striving to measure up to the fullness of womanhood has brought about, and similarly her love by his struggle to be a man.

The idea is current that the spouses, rather than regarding one another as different, should simply look at each other as equals. This latter attitude is not enough, for there can never be a truly happy and lasting marriage unless the husband can look *up* to his wife and admire her for qualities which he may well feel he lacks (or certainly does not possess in equal measure), and unless she can look *up* to her husband and admire him for qualities that come as a strength and an addition to her life.

Certainly they can look up to each other for qualities that are in no way sexual: good humor, for instance, or intelligence. If both spouses are very intelligent, this can produce interaction and support; but it may also spark off envy. This can particularly happen if one is more intelligent than the other, and the latter offers no "compensatory" quality in return. As a rule it is not good if husband and wife compete against one another in the same field (the exception would be when they compete in giving love to each other). Masculinity and femininity are not meant to compete *against* one another. One way of explaining this is to say that they are not in the same class and therefore should not be in the same race. Another and perhaps better way to put this is to say that they *are* in the same class and race; not as competitors however, but as team mates, running together. It is

man as man who motivates woman to be woman. When a man truly runs as man, he provokes his wife's admiration; and she, when she runs as a woman, provokes his. Further, the more a woman the wife is, the more she motivates the husband to be a man; and vice-versa. Sexual excellence stimulates emulation. It is as a team that they can win.

Parents and children. Male and female personality development is essential for family functioning. To be a father, one has to be a man; and not just in a physiological sense alone. To be a mother, one has to be a woman. One of great challenges of married life is the development on the part of the couple from being spouses to being parents. To become (or to avoid becoming) a parent is easy; to *be* a parent is difficult. Many parents consciously or unconsciously pass up the challenge this poses.

Most people seek to have the esteem of others. The esteem which should be most important is that of a person's spouse and of his or her children. A man may strive for the regard of his colleagues, often without getting it; or, if he gets it, without keeping it. And all the time he can have it much more easily from his son or daughter. "There's no one like my Dad". It is true that time and close contact put this esteem to the test; and he will have to keep striving to retain it. Yet it is easier to achieve, and more satisfying at a deeper human level, than social or professional esteem. A father should feel the challenge of being a father to his son or daughter. The same applies to mothers, though what each is challenged to is different according to his or her proper sexual role.

Children naturally tend to have respect for their parents, although they obviously need parents they can look up to. This respect is closely connected to the fact that they expect something special from their parents, though it should be borne in mind that they don't usually expect, nor should they normally receive, exactly the same from their father as from their mother.

When, as seems frequent today, people fear looking up to God or look at him with mistrust, their lives are marked by a loneliness which if not obvious at the surface, is deeply present underneath. Looking up to God and trusting him is so facilitated by having looked up to and trusted one's parents. And conversely, when a person cannot look up to or trust his or her parents, his attitude to God scarcely ever develops adequately.

Young people need a father who can in some way incarnate God's fatherliness: trustworthy authority coming from love. They have no less need of a mother who can incarnate God's motherliness: his understanding and support for our weakness, God as our loving refuge⁹. Roles have been badly misunderstood when parents compete to wield authority, but do not compete to give support. There is an instinct in woman to be a comfort and refuge, but many women today are neglecting to develop it; and even reject the idea of woman having a special capacity for being supportive, as if to accept it were an admission of woman's weakness, and not rather an affirmation that - all of us being weak - we need the support that so often only a woman can offer.

It is an immense strength to family life when sexual complementarity has been well developed in the parents¹⁰. Children will be much more likely to bring their problems to parents to whom they have alternative access on different grounds.

They are not likely to have much confidence in parents whom they sense to be engaged in a power struggle.

One cannot pass on from this particular theme without noting the widespread loss today of the sense that parenthood is a privilege. Here let me put forward a very tentative impression. One still meets men who are keen on fatherhood, looking forward to becoming a father or proud of being one already. While I may be wrong, I am inclined to think that one meets fewer women who are keen on motherhood; fewer girls who sense that there is a lot of fulfilment in becoming a mother. This, if so, is especially serious to the development of feminine sexual identity.

To lose the sense that parenthood constitutes a major means of personal fulfilment is worse in the case of a woman, because the good pride of motherhood is of a deeper order than that of fatherhood. Motherhood asks more of woman; the woman gives more of herself in becoming a parent, she has a greater part in bringing about a work of creation¹¹.

Men realize this. Of all the reasons that can make a man feel that a woman is unique, none is deeper than the fact that she is the mother of his children. Yet many women renounce or would reduce this particular claim on their husband's admiration. There is a primary truth of sexuality here which our modern world seems to be losing sight of: if nothing makes a man respect a woman so much as motherhood, this is because motherhood takes her out of the category of an object to be possessed, and introduces her to that of what should be revered. Sex, divorced from its reference to parenthood, is robbed of its dimensions of mystery and sacredness; a fact which applies with special force to motherhood. Nowhere else does the mystery and glory of being a woman appear as in her capacity to be a mother. Few men are not stirred by this mystery. Yet today not many women seem to glory in it.

Boyhood and girlhood. For a child or adolescent to grow into an adult who has achieved proper sexual identity, the passage of the years alone are not enough. Mind and will are constantly involved in the process. *Models* to be emulated must be before the young person's eyes, particularly at the adolescent stage, and those models must be adequate. It is so important that teenagers have heroes and heroines worth imitating. One wonders what inspiration some current pop stars - for instance - offer for sexual development and identification.

No boy develops into a man unless he passes through an adolescence where he knows what is proper to a man, learns the challenge of masculinity, and is helped to face up to it. A similar challenge faces girls - who are having a harder time than boys about sexual identity. No girl can develop into a woman without a model, or models, that set her an example of femininity. True sex education must identify the distinctive qualities of manliness and womanliness, hold up models of them to young people, and seek to evoke a personal and voluntary response in them.

Understanding, sensitivity, tenderness, gentleness . . . Consciously or unconsciously, a man looks for qualities such as these in a woman. If he goes to marriage and does not find them in his wife, disillusionment sets in; the marriage will probably head for a breakdown. Are girls encouraged today to understand that their ability to relate to others depends on their developing not just human

skills, but also feminine sense, feminine character, feminine qualities: that their goal is not to be as masculine as men - that is exactly what marks destructive feminism - but to be as feminine as women? Society at large does not provide them with this encouragement. Do they find it at school? Most important of all, do they find it at home?

Education. The Church has always sought to remind parents that the education of children is not just a matter for the school. On the contrary, the parents themselves are the main educators, not because they will teach their children mathematics or physics: and not only because they can teach them about life in general. But especially because they will teach them certain unique human relationships, the experience of which is a key to a properly integrated social life later on: the family relationships of son to father and mother; of daughter to father and mother, of brother to sister and sister to brother.

John Paul II, in *Familiaris Consortio*, says: "In the area of sex, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment if the whole person - body, emotions and soul - and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self on love."¹²

Can one say that boys and girls today are better educated sexually: more aware of what the true human sexual identity and make-up of a boy or girl is, and striving for the qualities that can identify them in their respective sexual role?

"Come on, be a man." Most boys, and for that matter most men, have a clear enough idea of what this means. Boys need to hear it frequently. And usually they are conscious of whenever they fail to live up to the challenge to act as a man.

"Come on, be a woman." How is it that this has never been a common encouragement? Is it because girls in the past were not taught to be women, or were afraid to be women? Or could it perhaps be because girls and women up to recently had a more naturally developed sense of their own feminine identity, and it was not so necessary to put to them the challenge of womanhood (which is of course as great a challenge as that of manhood)?

Today this is a challenge that needs to be put. Peculiarly enough, the last persons to put it are the feminists. It is a significant point. Feminists would seem to take no joy in what is characteristic of woman; possibly they cannot even identify it. If, as I think, they are challenging women *to be women*, it is - I think - because they are not proud to be women.

Few fathers - as yet - would be afraid to tell their sons to be tough or brave, pointing out to them that courage is a manly quality. Yet more mothers today might be reluctant to tell their daughter to be caring or considerate, pointing out that a tender concern for others is a feminine quality. Could it be that they implicitly assume tenderness to be inferior to courage? It seems obvious to me that the two qualities are distinct, and also that one is typically feminine and the other masculine. But I certainly do not accept that one is humanly inferior, or less important to personal and social life, than the other.

Sons and daughters towards parents. As a child begins to grow, its response to his or her parents normally becomes modulated according to the qualities of fatherliness or motherliness that he or she finds. A filial attitude towards parents should be marked by a special type of friendship, based on respect and reverence.

If one were to generalize and say that the father evokes more respect and the more mother reverence, here again we are facing an expression of complementarity; only a defective anthropology would wish to debate which attitude is superior.

One of the main points in the teaching of Blessed Josemaria Escrivá on the family is that parents should learn *to be friends* to their children. This takes a lot of effort, since children's outlook and tastes keep changing quickly, especially in the more critical years of their adolescence; and parents will not be their friends if they are not flexible or agile enough to attune accordingly. If parents attune, children normally keep responding.

Probably, as time passes, a son will tend to be closer to his father, and a daughter to her mother. But it is not necessarily so; and not for every type of communication within friendship. Whichever parent is closer to one of the children at a particular moment will often have to help him or her relate better to the other parent. For of course, despite all the efforts of parents, children at times do not respond and keep their distance. Parents who are true men and women, and who love one another, will generally find the way to overcome these passing difficulties.

It is normal for a son to have a special reverence for his mother; and, as he grows, also to assume a protecting attitude towards her. Is this an insult to her weakness, or a tribute to her femininity? Should we not watch the danger of carping at what we can perhaps be proud of? The same holds for the frequent phenomenon that, as a daughter grows, her father will tend to look to her and not only to his wife for tenderness: a tribute to his fatherly masculinity and to her daughterly femininity.

Brothers and sisters. An especially important area is that of the relationship of brothers and sisters between themselves. Samuel Johnson, the great philosopher and scholar of 18th century England, who had neither brothers nor sisters, confessed to a friend how he envied those who had, and how amazed he was to see that they appreciated the gift so little and so often let it be spoiled. "We tell the ladies that good wives make good husbands; I believe it is a more certain position that good brothers make good sisters" (Life, I, 198). I agree with Johnson, but think it is even more certain still, and a particular part of God's plan for family life, that good sisters make for good brothers. Few boys can fully get away from the influence of a good sister.

The importance of the brother-sister relationship has a social as well as a personal dimension. This is brought out if one adverts to the situation when such a relationship is not possible because, as happens more and more today in our one-child families, there is a son or a daughter, but *no sibling* to relate to. In the past such situations tended to be the exception; today in many parts of the West they are very close to the rule. Perhaps we have not yet weighed (though we are beginning to experience) the social effects of this lack of natural domestic induction into the experience of fraternity. The danger is increasing that the very term "fraternity" will be left with a purely ideological content, existentially incomprehensible to the majority of persons who, as children and adolescents, never knew what it means to have a brother or sister¹³. Whence will they draw the inspiration or example that can teach them what it means to treat others fraternally?

Brothers and sisters naturally tend to fight among themselves, but to defend each other before outsiders. It should be normal for a boy to defend his family: especially his mother and, in a different way, his sisters. This is a sign of manliness, not of superiority. It is a sign of inter-dependence and solidarity¹⁴. Beneath it all, it is a sign of the greatness of the debt he feels towards them.

Here, while I think that sisters today will still defend their brothers, I have a certain impression that brothers are no longer so quick to defend their sisters. If they are losing their natural instinct in this, it is perhaps partly because they are not taught to understand and respect the mystery of girlhood, which a boy can most easily discover in his sister. It is also true that when girls are encouraged to be attractive sexually and not femininely, they seem to other boys, and even to their brothers, to be renouncing a claim to respect.

The relationship between man and woman is meant to be one of mutual enrichment in personhood, not a user relationship nor a profiteering relationship. We spoke at the start of sexual education. If education is used in its proper meaning of preparation for civilized life, one is sexually uneducated if one has not learned that respect is essential if relations between the sexes are to be human. The same is true if one has not learned that such respect has to be created, and can easily be destroyed. No boy is respected by girls if he is sensed simply to want to use them; and no girl is respected by boys if she lets herself be used.

Some girls today seem not to know the difference between making oneself attractive femininely, and provocative sexually. Not to be aware of the nature of the attraction one can exercise, of the difference between being admired and simply being desired, shows a lack of understanding of sexuality - a failure on the girl's part to understand not only male sexuality, but also an element important to her own growth in truly feminine sexual identity. Modesty is something deeply ingrained in a girl's nature, and designed to play no small part in her development as a person. But it can be gradually eroded through the force of fashion or peer pressure, combined with a lack of parental guidance or brotherly advice.

A woman's good instincts are a tremendous source of strength. But, as in the case of a man, those good instincts need to be evoked. When Blessed Josemaria Escrivá, in his conversations with women and girls, touched on this point of feminine sense and feminine modesty, he would often sum up his arguments in one simple formula: "It should be enough for you to be women." His appeal was to authentic femininity. It was a simple call to proper self-identification: to draw from one's inner nature the desire to find one's true identity, also in sexuality, and not to lose that identity under constraint from media, peers or fashion.

In conclusion, then, human sexuality, not only in individual identification (and consequently differentiation) as feminine or masculine, but also in the complementarity between the two, gives an image of God. One cannot say that masculine traits "express" or "image" God *more* than do feminine; or vice-versa. Each, we repeat, is a partial image. Together, in their mutual complementarity, they form the more complete (though always limited) image God intended.

This also means, of course, that growth in personality and humanity is severely limited unless each person, in becoming fully identified according to his or her proper gender, not only understands but also seeks to imitate and acquire the

the virtues more "typical" of the other sex. This too enters into the necessary process of sexual identification, for there are masculine modes of living feminine qualities, and feminine modes of living masculine ones. It is an impoverishment for each sex not to understand this and to respond to the challenge it offers.

A lack of true masculinity or of true femininity means a lack of human variety and richness. A world which does not encourage men to be more masculine, and women to be more feminine, is not the world as God meant it to be. It is a poorer place for growing up in, for learning to be human, and for finding God imaged in the masterpieces of his visible creation.

The relationship between the sexes is thus designed to be a fundamental factor for humanizing persons and society. Men - and boys - learning to appreciate, admire and be enriched by those features that are specially "God-like" in well-developed feminine nature. And women - and girls - similarly coming to a positive and enriching appreciation of those other distinct features, also "images" of God, that appear in true masculinity. And both men and women, through the contrast and the complementary, acquiring a deeper understanding of life: of its origin, its meaning, and its ultimate end.

REFERENCES

1. This is especially true if one emphasizes feminine roles, even if - as I wish - to admire them.
2. cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, nos. 35ss
3. Always bearing in mind that "God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman. He is God"; *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.239.
4. *ibid*, no. 369.
5. General Audience, Nov. 21, 1979.
6. Our Lord's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), mark a law for human development and happiness. It is more important to give than to take. Growth in humanity -humanization of individuals or of society - depends on one's capacity for giving and on the actual giving each one makes. Sexual situations should be filled with demands on our capacity for giving. The problem with sexuality in its present condition is that it is a force more inclined to take and less inclined to give. Sexual education or formation must tend towards motivating people to respond nobly to the challenges of giving which are present in the various sexually-differentiated situations that characterize life, and to resist the urges of selfishness that they can also provoke; and to understand when and how - to what degree and in what way - one can take from what sex has to offer, and so be fulfilled by it.
7. "It is commonly thought that women are more capable than men paying attention to another person": John Paul II: *Mulleris Dignitatem*, no. 18.
8. cfr. *Covenanted Happiness: Love and Commitment in Marriage*, Ignatius Press, 1990, pp. 30-52.
9. cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 239. In passing, one could here note the special weakness of the one-parent family where children miss the experience of learning to relate to father and to mother; and of perceiving the difference.

10. A reference might be made here to the interplay of logic and intuition. Men are said to be more logical (although I know many men who would seem to disprove the assertion), and women generally have greater gifts of intuition. Neither logic nor intuition should be confused with intelligence, although each can lead to an understanding of persons or situations. While it is easier to be logical than to be properly intuitive, we should all try to be both and to combine the resources of both. In many optimal family situations, one sees an effective interplay between the two. It is necessary to be logical, but it is even more important to have a grasp of the human factors involved. Family situations in particular are seldom well solved by mere logic; intuition often fills in the gaps, so as thus to arrive at a deeper intelligence.

11. Motherhood "involves a special 'gift of self' on the woman's part", and so a mother has special "joy and awareness that she is sharing in the great mystery of eternal generation": *Mulleris Dignitatem*, no. 18.

12. no. 37.

13. cf. A. Sicari: "The family: A place of fraternity" *Communio* 20 (1993), p. 303.

14. Only a philosophy of self-sufficiency - which is destructive of inter-personal relations, of affection, of family, of society - denies inter-dependence, in the various modes and expressions it can take.