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Is there a Catholic Theology of Masculinity?

Peter Holmes

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy



School of Philosophy and Theology

Sydney Campus

February, 2021

Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Signature:

Peter Holmes

Date: 1st March 2021.

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Abstract

In recent times Catholic theologians have begun to speak of a ‘feminine genius’. Yet relatively little attention given to the unique and positive contribution of masculinity and manhood to relationships, the Church and society. This thesis aims to answer the question, “Is there a corresponding ‘masculine genius?’” It attempts to synthesise a specifically Catholic understanding of masculinity from the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church, to determine a basis for development of the Catholic understanding of masculinity and to propose some lines of development for Catholic theology in this area.

Chapter One will establish the need for and purpose of the thesis. Chapter Two will establish the theological approach of this thesis, including the hermeneutic for the interpretation of magisterial teaching. Chapter Three will offer an overview of the magisterial treatment of the theme of masculinity. Chapter Four will focus on the series of Wednesday audiences by Pope John Paul II, later published as *The Theology of the Body*, which represents such a significant contribution to the theology of human sexuality, in weight and volume, and sufficiently distinct in its method, that it warrants specific attention. Chapter Five will discuss what seems to be lacking in magisterial teaching thus far, and what is incomplete or unclear. Finally, Chapter Six will propose some possible developments of the doctrine, building explicitly on the theology and methodology established in prior chapters.

A definition of masculinity will be proposed, followed by a discussion of the ‘shape’ of masculinity, guided by the boundaries either explicit or implicit in magisterial teaching. This will lead to a more detailed discussion of masculinity in the main texts addressed by John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body*, namely Genesis and Ephesians. Drawing on these discussions, the thesis will conclude with a discussion of the redemptive aspect of masculinity, the priestly aspect of masculinity, and a positive discussion of masculine desire.

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Chapter One

Why it matters

a. The problem of masculinity

Much has been written in Catholic magisterial documents about the unique and positive contribution of women to relationships, the Church and society.¹ In his encyclical *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), John Paul II devotes several paragraphs to the rights and roles of women and specific offences against women's rights and dignity. In contrast to the considerable attention he devotes to defining, celebrating and defending womanhood, he includes only one short paragraph about men as husbands and fathers. Even this one paragraph is mostly concerned with men's treatment of women and children. John Paul II is not alone in this. There has been relatively little attention given to masculinity and manhood in the Church's teaching, no doubt largely because this has not been a contested matter for the Church until recently.

This focus on women and femininity took concrete form, seven years after *Familiaris Consortio*, when the Pope produced an Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), on the Dignity and

¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world*, Vatican website, May 31, 2004, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html, sec. 1: "In recent times, much reflection has been given to the question of the dignity of women and to women's rights and duties in the different areas of civil society and the Church."; John Paul II, *Letter to the Elderly* Vatican Website, October 1, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_01101999_elderly.html, sec. 4: "Then too, there has been an increasing recognition of the dignity of women. Undeniably there is still far to go, but the trail has been blazed."; cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Vatican Website, November 22, 1981, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html, secs. 22-24; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, Vatican website, August 15, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html; *Letter to Families*, Vatican website, February 2, 1994, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html; *Letter to Women*, Vatican website, June 29, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html; Michael Waldstein, Tr. *John Paul II, Man and Woman he Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006); Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, Vatican website, November 1, 1983, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html; Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*, Vatican website, December 8, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html.

Vocation of Women. The document begins with a reminder that this new focus on womanhood was heralded in the closing statements of the Second Vatican Council:

The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved.²

These discussions were intended to form a starting point for further discussion and development of “ever more authentic relationships” between persons.³

Another seven years later the same Pope’s *Letter to Women* presented to the international women’s conference held in Beijing insists that “society certainly owes much to the ‘genius of women’.⁴ While the phrase ‘genius of woman’ had been used before, the phrase was used to describe a suppression of individual talent, opinion, and individual expression in favour of subservience to husbands.⁵ In contrast, John Paul II teaches that all women, in their very femininity, bring a unique and wonderful gift to human society, relationships and to all human situations. He teaches that this genius pervades all the valuable gifts, talents, and individual expression of women, and he calls on all people to encourage full and free flourishing of this feminine genius. Since he first used the phrase ‘the genius of women’ or ‘the feminine genius’, many other thinkers and writers have developed his insights.⁶

² Second Vatican Council, *The Council's Message to Women* (December 8, 1965), 13-14. Cited in John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, 1.

³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 1: “These reflections are meant as a starting point for further examination in the Church, as well as an impetus for dialogue with all men and women of good will, in a sincere search for the truth and in a common commitment to the development of ever more authentic relationships.”

⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 9.

⁵ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860.” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 160, doi:10.2307/2711179: “True feminine genius ... is ever timid, doubtful, and clingingly dependent; a perpetual childhood.” (citing Sarah Jane Clark in a letter to an unknown woman circa. 1846.)

⁶ See, for example Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman, Volume 3: The Search for Communion of Persons, 1500–2015* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017); Prudence Allen. “Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 9, no. 3 (Summer 2006), 88-89; Matthew Levering, *The Feminine Genius of Catholic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012); and some popular works such as Erika Bachiochi, ed. *Women, Sex and the Church: A Case for Catholic Teaching* (Boston: Pauline Media, 2010); Genevieve S. Kineke, *The Authentic Catholic Woman* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 2006); Katrina J. Zeno, *Discovering the Feminine Genius: Every Woman's Journey* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2010).

What of men? If there is a *feminine genius* is there a corresponding *masculine genius*? If there is a great confusion in our society regarding the nature, roles and responsibilities of men, we would expect the Church to have something to say about the question. Since John Paul II assures us that the Magisterium has the authority and, indeed, responsibility to speak clearly on a range of topics including “human sexuality [and] the family”, what does the Church have to say to a boy or young man searching for guidance in developing a genuinely Christian manhood?⁷ Or to parents, schools and communities seeking to cultivate this in their young men? Or to the faithful seeking to understand the Church’s teachings in areas that presume a certain view of sexual differences and to apply these in public and private life?

There is a growing awareness of the need to explore the matter of masculinity, both as a necessary counterpart and complement to femininity and in its own right. In theological circles the Church’s teaching on marriage and family, on sexual morality and in bioethics, and on ordination all require distinctions between men and women, between masculinity and femininity. Since Robert Bly’s *Iron John* kicked off the short lived and reactionary ‘men’s liberation’ movement, Christian and secular authors have contributed to a genre of popular literature attempting to address the recent confusion the definition of masculinity and the consequences they believe are a result of this confusion.⁸ These texts seem to be better at observing the lamentable symptoms of the confusion

⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor*, Vatican website, Aug 6, 1993, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html, sec. 4: “At all times, but particularly in the last two centuries, the Popes, whether individually or together with the College of Bishops, have developed and proposed a moral teaching regarding the *many different spheres of human life*. In Christ’s name and with his authority they have exhorted, passed judgment and explained. In their efforts on behalf of humanity, in fidelity to their mission, they have confirmed, supported and consoled. With the guarantee of assistance from the Spirit of truth they have contributed to a better understanding of moral demands in the areas of human sexuality, the family, and social, economic and political life. In the tradition of the Church and in the history of humanity, their teaching represents a constant deepening of knowledge with regard to morality.”

⁸ Robert Bly, *Iron John: A book about men* (Cambridge, MA: Hachette Books, 2004). Examples of Christian contributors include John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the secret of a man’s soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006); Michael Harper, *Equal and Different* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997); Ken Barker, *Young Men Rise Up* (Ballan: Conner Court, 2008); John W. Miller *Calling God Father* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999); Randy Stinson and Dan Dumas *A guide to Biblical Manhood* (Louisville: SBTS Press, 2011); Tony Evans, *Kingdom Man: Every Man’s Destiny, Every Woman’s Dream* (Carol Stream: Focus on the Family, 2012); Gene A. Getz *The measure of a man* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004); Patrick Morley *Man Alive: Transforming Your Seven Primal Needs into a Powerful Spiritual Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2013); John Piper and Wayne Grudem (eds) *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Redesign): A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored: How the Gospel Makes Men Whole* (Nashville TN: B and H Books, 2013); Robert S. McGee, *Father Hunger* (Ann Arbor: Vine Books, 1993); Douglass Wilson, *Father Hunger: Why God Calls Men to Love and Lead Their Families* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013). Examples of secular

about masculinity than they are at prescribing a cure. In fact, popular literature often seems to be little more than pop-psychology appealing to pseudo-historical myths about the ‘real men’ of the past. As one academic author puts it “Backward-looking, self-centred stereotypes of masculinity were the last things we needed.”⁹

Scholars too have struggled to come to grips with the problem of masculinity, with limited success to date. Beyond the borders of specifically theological studies, other disciplines are engaging in studies of masculinity. This research is widespread and includes practical, ‘applied’ research and conclusions for the fields of education, health, violence, fathering and counselling.¹⁰ The Church is concerned about and actively involved in all of this – of course with the exception of violence.

While the quality and volume of descriptive studies is increasing, the number and quality of studies relating to the idea of masculinity and manhood remain lamentably low.¹¹ Possibly due to the great difficulty most have in defining masculinity itself.¹² Indeed, some gender theorists insist that, since

contributors include Steve Biddulph, *Manhood* (Sydney: Finch, 2002); Sam Keen, *The Fire in the Belly: On being a man* (Bantam, 2010); Robert Moore, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the archetypes of the mature masculine* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013); Owen Marcus, *Grow up: A man’s guide to masculine emotional intelligence* (Sandpoint ID: New Tribe Press, 2013); David Deida, *The Way of the Superior Man: A Spiritual Guide to Mastering the Challenges of Women, Work, and Sexual Desire* (Austin TX: Plexus, 1992); Robert A. Glover *No more Mr Nice Guy* (Jackson TN: Running Press, 2003); Dylan Thrasher *The Masculine Way: What Your Dream Girl Really Wants - Dissecting Alpha Males, Pickup Artists and Nice Guys* (CreateSpace, 2013). For a comment on the confusion in definition see Michael Harper, *Equal and Different* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), 5: “It is hard to find an English word to describe the theological complexities of the subject of gender, ... I have chosen an Italian one, which means literally ‘a confused situation, usually involving a disagreement’. *Imbroglia*”. [The Collins Italian Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2001) defines *Imbroglia* as “a tangle, a confused situation, a mess, swindle or trick]; Ken Barker, *Young Men Rise Up* (Ballan: Conner Court, 2008), 1: “Male stereotypes are either ludicrous or pernicious.”; John W. Miller *Calling God Father* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999): “Prior traditions regarding fathers have come under fire in the attacks on “patriarchy””; “On manliness, social science is hardly of one voice and is quite shaky in its conclusions, and its concerns differ markedly from those of evolutionary biology and “natural” science.” Steve Biddulph, *Manhood* (Sydney: Finch, 2002), 3-4: “There is clear and incontrovertible evidence that all through the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, men have been suffering uniquely and severely. Suicide, premature death, accidents and addiction – the statistics are all dominated by men... Modern man is deeply unhappy.”; Stephen Wood *Christian Fatherhood* (Port Charlotte: Family Life Publications, 1997), 11: “By the year 2020, half of all children in America will be raised without their dads.”

⁹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (2nd Ed.) (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2005), xii.

¹⁰ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, xv-xvi, cites research from a range of countries including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Southern Africa, Latin America, Scandanavia, the Middle East, France, Germany, and Brazil.

¹¹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, xvii.

¹² Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), footnote.1 (footnote added in 1915): “It is essential to understand clearly that the concepts of “masculine” and “feminine”, whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are among the most confused that occur in science.”; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, ix: “Even for a practised writer, this book has been difficult to write. The issues are explosive and tangled, the chances of going astray are good.”; Jack. S. Kahn *An Introduction to Masculinities* (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 2-3: “Studying masculinities as a subject can be difficult. This is partially because it is an example of what social scientists call a hypothetical construct. ... Masculinity is a

gender is fluid and changeable, to suggest a definitive definition of masculinity would be unacceptably restrictive.¹³ Perhaps this is understandable, when we consider that a great deal rests on the definition of masculinity, and that attempting to define or even discuss the matter evokes strong reactions from many disciplines and quarters.¹⁴

Studies concerning masculinity often refer to religion, specifically to the Catholic faith, as an influential factor in their field of interest. In some cases, authors refer to a general kind of ‘Catholic’ or ‘Christian’ influence, by which they seem to mean a socially conservative view of marriage, or unhealthy *machismo*, usually based on outdated social and religious patriarchy, and often seen as dangerous for other models of masculinity.¹⁵ Masculinity is often seen as a political or social tool used by various interest groups to construct society according to their agenda. In nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe, where Church and State battled for men’s hearts, the masculinity of Catholic men was called into question by virtue of their submission to the Pope.¹⁶ Nationalist antagonists portrayed the sensuality of Catholic ritual as suspiciously feminine and Pope Pius X’s intervention on this matter is considered on a purely socio-political plane.¹⁷ Those

hypothetical construct because, in and of itself, it cannot be directly observed or measured. So, not surprisingly, social scientists do not all agree on what we actually mean by masculinity.”

¹³ Subsequent to Connell’s ‘hegemonic masculinities’, Anderson’s call for ‘inclusive masculinities’ has been enthusiastically taken up by many in the field of gender studies. cf. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*; Eric Anderson, *Inclusive Masculinity: The Changing Nature of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 2009), 22; R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept”, *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005), 829-859; cf Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2011); Lisa Arellano, “The Heroic Monster: Dexter, Masculinity, and Violence.” *Television and New Media* 16 no. 2 (February 2015), 131-147: “Discursive psychology treats masculinity not as an essence to be revealed, but as sets of variable practices that are actively developed and negotiated in relation to other forms of identity in particular cultural contexts”; Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley, “A discursive psychological framework for analyzing men and masculinities” *Psychology Of Men and Masculinity* 15, no. 4 (October 2014): 355-364. EBSCOhost (accessed April 9, 2015). “We want to argue, however, that the notion of hegemonic masculinity is not sufficient for understanding the nitty gritty of negotiating masculine identities and men’s identity strategies.”; Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley, “Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-Discursive Practices,” *Feminism and Psychology* 9, no. 3 (1999): 335-356.

¹⁴ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 3: “Gender terms are contested because the right to account for gender is claimed by conflicting discourses and systems of knowledge.”

¹⁵ E.g., Robert A. Nye, “Some Recent Work on Men”, *Signs* 30, no. 3, (2005), 1937-1962: “In Catholic Latin America, the chief indicators of manhood are the virile proof of fatherhood.”; P. S. Cheng, “Gay Asian masculinities and Christian theologies” *Cross Currents* 61 (2011), 540; Dane S. Claussen, Ed., *The Promise Keepers: Essays on Masculinity and Christianity* (Jefferson NC: McFarland and Company, 1999), esp. 146-150.

¹⁶ D. Hastings “Fears of a Feminized Church and the Crisis of Masculinity.” *European History Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2008), 34-65; Tine Van Osselaer, “Masculinity and Catholicism: The Leagues of the Sacred Heart in Belgium, 1900-1940.” *European History Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2012), 422-443.

¹⁷ James Kennaway “Degenerate Religion and Masculinity in Parsifal Reception.” *Current Musicology* No. 88 (2009), 35-62; Pius X, *Il Fermo Proposito*, On Catholic action in Italy (June 11, 1905); B. Krondorfer and P. Culbertson, “Men's studies in religion”, in L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., Macmillan Reference,

writing on the same era note that Catholic beliefs exert some influence in the socio-political struggle of predominantly Catholic Irish immigrants in Chicago.¹⁸ In modern Italy, social studies of masculinity note the “relative power” of Catholic teaching, beside Fascism and Communism, in what they refer to as “the construction of gender.”¹⁹ Catholic influences in these examples are portrayed as seeking to claim masculinity as a rhetorical tool to urge loyalty to the Church or as a tool of a particular political or social group in influencing hearts and public policy.²⁰ It is not unusual for authors to dismiss religious contributions to this discussion, or to ignore it completely.²¹ Even while acknowledging the importance of clear definitions in male-female relations, and recognizing the limitations of a purely biological approach, authors look to non-theological disciplines for definitions of masculinity and femininity.²²

Christianity, specifically Catholicism, is often portrayed as having a negative view of women.²³ Giants in the Catholic tradition such as Thomas Aquinas are often unjustly accused of having systematized and entrenched this negative view of woman.²⁴ Feminists complain that restricting women to a specific role based on complete reliance on merely analogical comparison to the Trinity is a flawed approach.²⁵ Some take the view that masculine imagery is such a dominant force in the Catholic theology of Christ and the Trinity that a kind of pseudo divinization of

Detroit, vol. 9 (2005), 5861-5866; Tine Van Osselaer, “Christening Masculinity? Catholic Action and Men in Interwar Belgium.” *Gender and History*, 21, no. 2 (2009), 380.

¹⁸ Patricia Kelleher, “Class and Catholic Irish Masculinity in Antebellum America.” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no.4 (2009), 7-42.

¹⁹ David Tager and Glenn E. Good, “Italian and American masculinities: A comparison of masculine gender role norms.” *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* 6, no.4 (2005), 264-274.

²⁰ Tine Van Osselaer, “Christening Masculinity? Catholic Action and Men in Interwar Belgium.” *Gender and History*, 21, no. 2 (2009), 381; Patricia Kelleher, “Class and Catholic Irish Masculinity in Antebellum America”, *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no.4 (2009), 7-42.

²¹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 46. “Since religion’s capacity to justify gender ideology collapsed, biology has been called in to fill the gap.”

²² E.g., J. Dadosky, “Who/What Is/Are the Church (es)?” *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no.5 (2011), 785-801; C Leek, Review of: “Masculinities and Other Hopeless Causes at an All-Boys Catholic School”, in *Men and Masculinities*, 2012, 10.1177/1097184X12452149 ; Praz, Anne-Françoise, “Religion, masculinity and fertility decline” *The History of the Family* 14, no.1 (2009), 88-106; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 46: “Since religion’s capacity to justify gender ideology collapsed, biology has been called in to fill the gap.”

²³ Peter N. Stearns, *Be a Man!: Males in Modern Society* (New York, Holmes and Meier, 1990), 33-34; see, for example Philip Gibbs, “Men’s Matters: Changing Masculine Identities in Papua New Guinea” in Aletta Biersack, Margaret Jolly, and Martha Macintyre, *Gender Violence and Human Rights: Seeking Justice in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu* (Acton Act: ANU Press, 2016), 143.

²⁴ See discussion in Michael Nolan, “The Defective Male: What Aquinas Really Said,” *New Blackfriars* 75, no. 880 (1994), 156-166.

²⁵ J. Dadosky, “Who/What Is/Are the Church (es)?” *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no.5 (2011), 785-801.

femininity in Mariology is required to offset this imbalance.²⁶ Still others have claimed that Christianity excludes women from the full dignity of the image of God by virtue of the unmarked form ‘man’ in Genesis 1:27.²⁷

Some attempts to suggest that Catholics are less patriarchal than some other theories of manhood have emphasized what they perceive to be the feminine influences and passive tendencies in Catholic spirituality and practice. Attempts to sketch tendencies in Catholic approach to sexuality by examining Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the ‘virgin’ martyrs, and of the submissive element of the sacrament of confession have led to suggestions that Catholics present a more ‘feminine’ view of masculinity.²⁸ Still others confuse masculinity by way of analogy to the second person of the Trinity. They place too high an expectation on human men, and perhaps even present Jesus’ ‘masculinity’ as an unhealthy model of ‘tortured’ masculinity.²⁹

As long as contemporary analysis of the crisis in masculinity tends towards the superficial, incidental or functionary uses of masculine imagery as a propaganda tool, instead of probing foundation questions of definition and purpose, scholarly progress in understanding of masculinity and related issues will be severely retarded. Even when analysts attempt to probe deeper, the ‘stuff’ of masculinity is not easily measured with scientific apparatus or statistical tools.³⁰

More recent debates regarding the morality of homosexual acts, political and social agitation for ‘gay marriage’ and adoption for same sex parents have imposed a new definition of sex and sexuality on all areas of discussion. Arguments used by advocates of ‘equality’ in these areas are commonly based on the presupposition that ‘male’ and ‘female’ are essentially irrelevant points

²⁶ Keith Lemna, “Louis Bouyer's Sophiology: a Balthasarian Retrieval.” *Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 4 (2011), 638. (Citing Leonardo Boff's views and Balthasar's response, based on his reading of Boyer and Teilhard de Chardin.)

²⁷ Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, *Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973) cited in Maryanne Cline Horowitz, “The Image of God in Man—Is Woman Included?” *Harvard Theological Review* 72, no. 3-4 (1979), 175–206. doi:10.1017/S0017816000020010. Horowitz claims some support for this thesis from Gratian's Decretum.

²⁸ J Gelfer “Evangelical and Catholic Masculinities in Two Fatherhood Ministries.” *Feminist Theology*, 19, no. 1 (2010), 36-53.

²⁹ Ina Rae Hark, “Tortured Masculinity: Gendering Jesus in ‘the Robe’.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 18, no. 2 (2001), 117-128.

³⁰ Harvey C. Mansfield, *Manliness* (New York: Yale, 2006), 22: “There are no scientific studies of “manliness.” Manliness, a quality of the soul, is not something that scientific studies look for by that name, for science likes to refashion and rename the objects of its inquires, and its assumptions exclude qualities difficult to measure.”

on a spectrum of sexualities.³¹ Governments and communities who adopt these presuppositions and sex related roles by dispensing with all previous definitions of marriage attempt the “re-grounding of society on an essentially ... fragmentary anthropology.”³² To some extent the change of definitions is a deliberate tactic, which ensures that the debate is over before it begins.³³ Far beyond the secular state’s definition of marriage, these changes in definitions strike at the heart of our understanding of the integrity of all human intimacy.³⁴

It is worth noting that the concept of gender as a social construct is far from settled. In general terms scholars seem to define masculinity and femininity by an ‘essentialist view’ (or evolutionary view) on the one hand, or a social construct theory on the other. According to the essentialist view it is possible to describe many differences, demonstrable by statistics, mortality rates, diseases, victims and perpetrators of various crimes, gender stereotyping, hormonal effects, gender identity development, emotional differences, the effect of relationships on gender, childhood exploration and abuse as an effect on gender, school experiences, career/work experiences, health differences and mental disorders. On the other hand, the social sciences tend to focus on gender as a construct of social and political environment, which tend to speak of multiple ‘masculinities’ which compete for dominance, interrelate, and form a spectrum or range of possible modes of manhood from which an individual male might choose, change, or find himself naturally within.³⁵

A growing number of scholars recognize that personal ideology of the researcher plays an important role in their initial assumptions, choice of methodology, analysis and interpretation of

³¹ Crawford, David S, “Liberal Androgyny: “Gay Marriage” and the Meaning of Sexuality.” *Communio* 33, no. 2 (2006), 239-265; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 45; For a representative list of this ‘spectrum’ of gender identities and expressions see discussion paper prepared by the Australian Human Rights Commission “Protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and sex and/or gender identity” (Oct, 2010), https://humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/lgbti/lgbticonsult/discussion_paper.html (accessed Nov 2014). In brief, “The phrase sex and/or gender identity is used in this paper as a broad term to refer to diverse sex and/or gender identities and expressions. It includes being [lesbian, gay, bisexual], transgender, trans, transsexual and intersex. It also includes being androgynous, agender, a cross dresser, a drag king, a drag queen, genderfluid, genderqueer, intergender, neutrois, pansexual, pan-gendered, a third gender, and a third sex. It also includes culturally specific terms, such as sistergirl and brotherboy, which are used by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

³² Crawford, David S, “Liberal Androgyny: “Gay Marriage” and the Meaning of Sexuality”, *Communio* 33, no. 2 (2006), 239-265.

³³ The discussion paper “Protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and sex and / or gender identity” (Oct, 2010), 2, prepared by the Australian Human Rights Commission argues for a fragmented definition of sexuality on the basis that “the use of inappropriate terminology can be disempowering.” Crawford, David S, “Liberal Androgyny: “Gay Marriage” and the Meaning of Sexuality”, 255.

³⁴ Crawford, David S, “Liberal Androgyny: “Gay Marriage” and the Meaning of Sexuality”, 257.

³⁵ Linda Brannon, *Gender: Psychological Perspectives* 5th Edition (New York, Pearson Education, 2008), xiii; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 45.

data in gender studies.³⁶ With this acknowledgement comes the recognition that all voices in the discussion need to be heard, understood and be subject to critique.³⁷ Gender studies tend to conflate their description of a hegemonic masculinity that happens to prevail in a given context with that of the prevalent religion of those they identify as hegemonous, Christianity, and often specifically Catholicism tend to be equated with the hegemonic masculinity, which oppresses or creates difficulties for alternative ‘masculinities’.³⁸

The distinction between men and women was a matter of concern for some theologians in the years leading up to the Second Vatican Council. Henri de Lubac, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Hans Urs von Balthasar are of particular note in that they offered a particular focus on the scriptural analogy, comparing the relationships between husband and wife with that between Christ and his bride, the Church. Hildebrand seemed primarily focused on the theological and pastoral implications for man and woman in marriage and, while de Lubac and Balthasar explored the ecclesiological implications of the analogy, they still offered much in their exploration of the theological implications of this analogy for men and women in relation to each other, particularly in marriage.³⁹ Balthasar in particular wove the spousal analogy throughout almost all of his theological writings.⁴⁰ Balthasar insists that a neglected image in ecclesiology is the Church as a person: not merely as a collection of persons, or even as a people, but a person. Specifically, as a bride of the divine Bridegroom. He draws insights from this for both ecclesiology and for the relationship between man and woman. Some Catholic writers see in Balthasar the beginnings of an authentic Catholic feminism, a proper theological distinction between men and women and a theological exploration of their relationship. They suggest that Balthasar’s examination of the

³⁶ Linda Brannon, *Gender: Psychological Perspectives*, xiii: “Gender research in particular has been plagued with personal bias”, and 2: “Few topics are as filled with emotion as discussions of the sexes and their capabilities.”; Jack. S. Kahn, *An Introduction to Masculinities* (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 5: “Each model of masculinity contains a variety of assumptions. These assumptions concern what the researcher holds to be true about human nature and how they view what masculinity is, where it comes from, and where it is going.”

³⁷ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, xix.

³⁸ Lynne Gerber “Grit, guts, and vanilla beans: Godly Masculinity in the Ex-Gay Movement”, *Gender and Society* 29, no. 1 (2015), 26-50; Edward Orozco Flores and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, “Chicano gang members in recovery: The public talk of negotiating chicano masculinities.” *Social Problems* 60, no.4 (2013), 476-490.

³⁹ See for example Henri de Lubac *The Church: Paradox and Mystery* (New York: Alba House, 1969), 23.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the spousal analogy in Balthasar see “Gender and “the Nuptial” in Balthasar’s Theology” in Karen Kilby, *Balthasar: A (very) critical introduction* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2012), 123-146.

feminine in relation to masculine, paralleled to the Church's relationship to Christ can provide a starting point for a sacramental theology of woman and femininity.⁴¹

This aspect of his writing draws the strongest criticism from feminist commentators who argue that the uneven nature of the relationship between Christ and His Church reflects poorly on the equality of man and woman in marriage. The analogy seems to suggest that man enjoys a superior status to women and perpetuates the outdated idea that he must protect, even 'save' her.⁴² It should be noted that Balthasar carefully distinguished the relationships described in the spousal analogy. He sought to preserve both the lordship of Christ over his Church while asserting the equality between husband and wife on the basis that Christ raises His Bride to his side, to rule with him in heaven.⁴³

Some feminist writers have seen Von Balthasar as a new launching point for a genuinely Christian feminism, particularly in that he emphasises both a clear sexual distinction and radical equality and mutual dependence of man and woman.⁴⁴ Other feminists are less positive. Karen Kilby, for example, points out that the spousal analogy is problematic in that it seems to present an inequality between husbands and wives.

Von Balthasar inherits from the Catholic tradition a highly symbolic and dynamic understanding of sexual symbols... *So*, while men were traditionally represented as 'masculine' and godlike in relation to women, in relation to God they were 'feminine' and creaturely.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See for example Tina Beattie, *The New Catholic Feminism: Theology, Gender Theory and Dialogue* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), Introduction.

⁴² For a feminist critique of Von Balthasar's use of the spousal analogy see Chapter 6 "Gender and "the Nuptial" in Balthasar's Theology" in Karen Kilby, *Balthasar: A (very) critical introduction* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2012), 123-146.

⁴³ In a discussion of Mary as an icon of the Church in relationship with Christ, Balthasar describes assertion that Mary's cooperation does not add anything to the work of Christ as "over-cautious", complaining that in its efforts to do justice to Christ's superiority to His Church, it takes away from "the man-woman aspect". Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, vol. 3: Theological Dramatic Theory: The Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1992), 318.

⁴⁴ E.g., Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory* (Great Britain: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 149. It is important to note that Beattie believes that Balthasar's approach is "shot through with problematic sexual stereotypes".

⁴⁵ Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory*, 162.

The protest against what they call the “mainstream image” of the male as active, seeking, self-donating, perhaps even aggressive, while the female is receptive, passive and nurturing, cannot be easily dismissed.⁴⁶ Particularly when some writers seem to equate masculinity with reason, transcendence and divinity while associating femininity with emotions, embodiment and immediacy.⁴⁷ Since Christ is perfect and sinless, and it seems that his bride is both imperfect and sinful, the analogy would seem to present man as superior in some ways to women. The equality implied by the ultimate purity of the Bride, and her spousal unity with her divine Bridegroom that complete the analogy do not sufficiently allay these feminists’ concerns about the respective starting points and roles within the relationship.

Balthasar seems aware of the possible tension between his assertion of spousal equality and insistence on different roles described in the analogy. In a discussion of Mary as a type of the Church and of the spousal analogy found in Ephesians, Balthasar offered a gentle critique of the Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentium*, calling them “over cautious” in their insistence that Mary’s motherhood neither takes away from nor adds to Christ’s “dignity and efficaciousness.”⁴⁸ He acknowledged that the qualification was technically correct, but he was concerned that it undermined the analogy’s application to spousal love. He was concerned that by insisting that Mary contributes nothing to Christ, the implication of the spousal analogy is that woman receives from man but does not contribute anything to him. The insistence that the Church contributes nothing to Christ seems to make it more difficult to argue for an egalitarian reading of the spousal analogy.

Possibly the most significant magisterial contribution to the discussion of sexuality in the last century comes from John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*, which insists that the equal dignity of man and woman cannot be compromised by false readings of St Paul’s discussion of “headship” and “submission, which imply that the woman is in some way subjugated to the man’s will or

⁴⁶ Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory*, 162.

⁴⁷ Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory*, 163.

⁴⁸ Second Vatican Council, The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican website, Nov 21, 1964, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, sec. 62.

authority, or deemed lesser in any way.⁴⁹ He reads the command that the husband “give himself up” for his wife as corresponding with St Paul’s admonition to wives “submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” as a command that applies to both man and woman, commanding them to submit *to each other*.⁵⁰ John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Recent Popes have urged Catholics to study these matters further, in order to preserve and build up our understanding of the various components of the family, which is the basic building block of society, and the indispensable building block of individual human lives.⁵¹ This crisis in understanding was acknowledged by Pope John Paul II who called for

further study of the anthropological and theological bases that are needed in order to solve the problems connected with the meaning and dignity of being a woman and being a man. It is a question of understanding the reason for and the consequences of the Creator's decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man.⁵²

Asserting that human beings “always and only” existing as a woman or a man, and the arguments that flow from that, are significant in any area of doctrine or pastoral practice which involve these human beings. Particularly where the subject matter concerns the relationship between two.

Theological articles, while much more at home with the Church’s language, tend to suffer from a lack of clarity on the matter of masculinity. Where authors explicitly refer to magisterial teaching of masculinity, they often chose one concept or image which the Church uses in support of their own thesis, or as a monochrome stereotype against which they set their own more subtly argued

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 10: “The matrimonial union requires respect for and a perfecting of the true personal subjectivity of both of them. The woman cannot become the “object” of “domination” and male “possession.” And “For whenever man is responsible for offending a woman's personal dignity and vocation, he acts contrary to his own personal dignity and his own vocation.”

⁵⁰ Eph 5:22; John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 24.

⁵¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25; Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, Encyclical Letter, Vatican website, March 26, 1967, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html, sec. 36; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican website, Dec 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, sec. 52; Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions*, Vatican website, July 26, 2000, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_20001109_de-facto-unions_en.html, sec. 9.

⁵² John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 1. (John Paul II here cites one of the recommendations of a 1987 Synod of Bishops.)

thesis. Some argue explicitly against magisterial authority as the definitive voice in Catholic theology.⁵³ Magisterial teaching is sometimes cast in the light of ‘well motivated’ but ‘paternalistic’ social construction of gender types or, worse, as being motivated by self-serving or stubbornly conservative agendas. Even authors who explicitly operate within a Catholic context, often ignore magisterial teaching in this area completely, attempt to manipulate or change it, or treat magisterial documents as personal expressions of the Pope who happened to author them.⁵⁴

Where authors seem concerned with authoritative Church teaching, some contrast the pre and post Vatican II Church, as if the latter represented a different body of teaching to the former, at least in relation to the matters of sex and sexuality or perhaps simply in acknowledgement of a changed perception of these matters among Catholic theologians.⁵⁵ The clearest definitions of masculinity offered are those explicitly named in order to be rejected.⁵⁶ Implied in these rejections is a hidden definition of ‘human’ being truly realized in autonomy and unrestricted by natural, including bodily, realities. Just as the proponents of same sex marriage seek to avoid restrictive or oppressive definitions in order to allow realization of human rights, so do some proponents of feminism.⁵⁷ In an attempt to free women from oppressive definitions of the feminine, feminists have tended to define ‘masculine’ as personal freedom, power or autonomy. The pejorative terms related to ‘patriarchy’ are more complaints that men reserve this autonomy for themselves rather than acknowledge in both men and women an equally autonomous existence. Magisterial documents acknowledge the influence of these assumptions and attempt to address them, particularly in

⁵³ “Radcliffe speaks about there being three voices of authority in the Church, each equally important when considering sexual ethics: [1] the authority of tradition, of the Gospel and of doctrine, [2] the authority of reason (here we can include Natural Law), and [3] the authority of experience. Although the current ethics of the Church clearly take great care to attend to the first two of these voices, the experience of many practising Catholics also needs to be listened to.” E. Hutton, “Sexual Ethics with Reference to the Work of Sebastian Moore OSB and Timothy Radcliffe OP: A Critical Analysis”, *The Heythrop Journal* 53, no.12 (2012), 759. (Citing JPII on love as self-gift in support of Timothy Radcliff’s use of Eucharistic imagery as having an analogous relationship with the sexual union of man and woman. Radcliffes view is cited in James Alison (Ed), “Christians and Sexuality in the time of AIDS”, 83.)

⁵⁴ Larry May and James Bohman, “Sexuality, Masculinity and Confession”, *Hypatia* 12, no.1 (1997), 144; Gerard Loughlin, “Sexing the Trinity”, *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 923 (1998), 18-25; M. John Farrelly, “Contraception As a Test Case for the Development of Doctrine”, *The Heythrop Journal* 49, no.3 (2008), 453-472; D. Sutton, “The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes.” *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1010 (2006), 418-433.

⁵⁵ Larry May and James Bohman, “Sexuality, Masculinity and Confession”, 138; Tina Beattie, “Insight Beyond Sight: Sacramentality, Gender and the Eucharist”, *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1014 (2007), 170.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, “Mary, Friend of God and Prophet: A Critical Reading of the Marian Tradition.” *Theology Digest* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2000), 317–325, at 317. (cited in David Schindler, “The Integrity of Cosmic Order: Symbolic Ontology and Feminism.” *Liturgy, Mary and Integrity of Persons: Communio* 28 (Summer 2001).

⁵⁷ David Schindler, “The Integrity of Cosmic Order: Symbolic Ontology and Feminism”, 26.

relation to the feminine. But of the corresponding correction of the definition of masculinity we see only a sketchy outline.

When authors are using severely limited or even mistaken understandings of magisterial teaching on masculinity as a point of reference for supporting or opposing views on a wide range of related doctrinal, practical and pastoral speculation, the problems noted thus far indicate that the ‘crisis’ of understanding of masculinity would be remedied by greater attention to the magisterial definitions of masculinity. But even among writers who explicitly seek to adhere to and articulate the Church’s magisterial teaching, there is still a certain lack of clarity in this matter. Critics of the comparison of marriage to the Trinity raise valid concerns about the failure to respect the symbolic nature of allegory.⁵⁸ Others note that the Catholic definition of femininity is more developed than the definition of masculinity.⁵⁹ The sexes are often defined in relation to each other, but without further clarification as to what this means specifically for men.⁶⁰ Masculinity remains ill-defined and is causing confusion in the Catholic Church.⁶¹

Various magisterial documents teach that families are essential building blocks, the “first and vital cell of society.”⁶² The family is the proper place in which the “dignity and vocation of the individual persons” is fostered and learned. The family is also the basic unit of the Church. So much so, it is often referred to as “the domestic Church.”⁶³ Men and women, through their respective participation in families, each offer a “unique and irreplaceable contribution” to the Church and to society at large.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Elizabeth A Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in feminist theological discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 54 (cited in David Schindler, “The Integrity of Cosmic Order: Symbolic Ontology and Feminism”).

⁵⁹ Hale Martin and Stephen E. Finn, *Masculinity and Femininity in the MMPI-2 and MMPI-A* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Nov 2010).

⁶⁰ Tine Van Osselaer, “Christening Masculinity? Catholic Action and Men in Interwar Belgium.” *Gender and History*, 21, no. 2 (2009), 380-401.

⁶¹ Thomas Kühne, “Männergeschichte als Geschlechtergeschichte”, in idem, ed., *Männergeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main 1997), 16. (Cited in D. Hastings “Fears of a Feminized Church and the Crisis of Masculinity.” *European History Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2008), 34-65.) See also discussion of the problem of sexual analogy in theology of the Trinity Letter in “Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World” by Fergus Kerr “Comment – Women” in *New Blackfriars* 85, no. 1000 (2004), 579-582.

⁶² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 42; Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions*, sec. 12: “Authority, stability and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security and fraternity within society.”; CCC, 2207.

⁶³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 22; Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 11; cf. CCC, 1655-1658; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 21.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 38; And sec. 42.

Most would agree that a healthy family is an important contribution to the Church and society as a whole. Even a cursory glance at research into broken families, particularly familial violence, and particularly by men against women, suggests that not all marriages are providing a positive contribution. In fact, it seems that the close bonds of family are far too often the context for devastating abuse and violence at rates which far exceed similar assault from those outside the immediate household.⁶⁵ Men suffer violent and sexual assaults at a rate less than half that of women, and a staggering two thirds of these women suffer this at the hands of intimate partners, compared to a tiny fraction of men. While acknowledging that the sins of men have too often led to injustice against women, the Magisterium insists that this does not reflect the created order, nor God's plan for humanity.⁶⁶ A Catholic theology of masculinity must articulate the created harmony and propose that a new level of communion is made possible in the new dispensation of grace brought by Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

The sins of particular men, and even entire cultures, against women, have rightly aroused seekers of justice, both male and female, to call for the equality of man and woman to be properly expressed and defended in concrete ways throughout the world. Catholic teachers have spoken constantly against such injustices wherever they present themselves and consistently advocated the equality of men and women to be properly carried into politics, families and in the Church.⁶⁸ Eagerness to correct an imbalance between the sexes can, however, sometimes lead to a false assumption of necessary antagonism between the sexes, and even attempts to redefine the sexes.

⁶⁵ J. Mouzos and T. Makkai. "Women's experiences of male violence: findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)." *Research and public policy series no. 56*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology (2004). <https://aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/rpp56> (accessed 16/7/2019); "Male and female assault offending in Australia." *Research in practice no. 29*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology (2012). <https://aic.gov.au/publications/rip/rip29> (accessed 16/7/2019).

⁶⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8.

⁶⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8: "It follows then that the relationship is good, but wounded and in need of healing."

⁶⁸ See for example, *Intervention by the Holy See delegation to the 23rd special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations – "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century."*, Vatican website, October 9, 2000, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_doc_20001009_women-un_en.html, speaks of protecting women from violence, sexual exploitation, (sex trade, prostitution and forced marriages), and from being forced from the home to work as offences against "gender equality."; *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 6: "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God." Cited in Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *on the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, 8; Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and "De Facto" Unions*, sec. 8.

Attempts to redefine women with masculine characteristics may not assist the achievement of dignity for women. Rather, they “deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness.”⁶⁹

This blurring of the meanings of male and female does not reflect the reality of the created order, nor is it helpful in resolving present misunderstandings about masculinity and its relationship to femininity. The word ‘gender’ is now frequently used to imply that sexual distinction is not biologically determined, but is a construction of families, societies, and cultures.⁷⁰ While the Church acknowledges that culture and families play an important role in helping individuals discover the true meaning of their sexuality, and that this has been done both well and poorly in the past, progress in discussions of sexuality has been retarded by unclear or false definitions used in public polemics.⁷¹

⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 10: “even the rightful opposition of women to what is expressed in the biblical words “He shall rule over you” (*Gen* 3:16) must not under any condition lead to the “masculinization” of women. In the name of liberation from male “domination”, women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine “originality”. There is a well-founded fear that if they take this path, women will not “reach fulfilment”, but instead will *deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness*; Cf. Pontifical Council for Communications *Ethics in Advertising*, Vatican website, Feb 22, 1997, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021997_ethics-in-ad_en.html, sec. 12: “How often is the role of women in business or professional life depicted as a masculine caricature, a denial of the specific gifts of feminine insight, compassion, and understanding, which so greatly contribute to the ‘civilization of love’”.

⁷⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *on the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 2, decries both a false antagonism between sexes and a blurring of the sexes (usually under the term ‘gender’); Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions*, sec. 8: “In the process that could be described as the gradual cultural and human de-structuring of the institution of marriage, the spread of a certain ideology of “gender” should not be underestimated. According to this ideology, being a man or a woman is not determined fundamentally by sex but by culture. Therefore, the very bases of the family and inter-personal relationships are attacked.”

⁷¹ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions*, sec. 8: “In a correct and harmonious process of integration, sexual and generic identity are complementary because persons live in society according to the cultural aspects corresponding to their sex. The category of generic sexual identity (“gender”) is therefore of a psycho-social and cultural nature. It corresponds to and is harmonious with sexual identity of a psycho-biological nature when the integration of the personality is achieved as recognition of the fullness of the person’s inner truth, the unity of body and soul” and “In this way, any sexual attitude can be justified, including homosexuality, and it is society that ought to change in order to include other genders, together with male and female, in its way of shaping social life” ... “In this way, there is a certain tendency to give the name “family” to all kinds of consensual unions, thus ignoring the natural inclination of human freedom to reciprocal self-giving and its essential characteristics which are the basis of that common good of humanity, the institution of marriage.”

The distortion of the balance and relationship between man and woman caused by sin or ideology does not disprove nor discount the essential equality and intended harmony of the created order.⁷² Man and woman were created to be equal, complementary and mutually fulfilling partners in living out their humanity in relationship with each other, together presenting themselves as the image of God.⁷³ Christians presuppose universal dignity and universal equality between man and woman. But equality is not sameness, and difference is not inequality.⁷⁴ Emphasising the differences in gifts, role and contributions of man and woman by no means makes one greater than the other in dignity or value.⁷⁵ In the same way, emphasising the complementarities of masculine and feminine

⁷² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 2; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 24, (citing Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 49); sec. 6; Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8.

⁷³ CCC, 371. “Man discovers woman as another “I”, sharing the same humanity.”; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Dilecti Amici*, Vatican website, March 31, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html, sec.10: “God created human beings: male and female, thereby introducing into the history of the human race that special “duality” together with complete equality, in the matter of human dignity”; John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 7: “It is a question here of a mutual relationship: man to woman and woman to man. Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to the other “I””; John Paul II *Letter to Families*, sec. 6: “To this common good [The Family] both man and woman make their specific contribution. Hence one can discover, at the very origins of human society, the qualities of communion and of complementarity.”; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *on the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 5: “From the very beginning therefore, humanity is described as articulated in the male-female relationship. This is the humanity, sexually differentiated, which is explicitly declared “the image of God””; John Paul II, *Papal Message to UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China*, Vatican website, May 26, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19950526_mongella-pechino.html, sec. 3: “In the Church’s outlook, women and men have been called by the Creator to live in profound communion with one another with reciprocal knowledge and giving of self, acting together for the common good with women and all of society, by deforming to losing the unique richness and the inherent value of femininity. the complementary characteristics of that which is feminine and masculine.”

⁷⁴ See, for example *Papal Message to UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China*, sec. 3: “As most women themselves point out, *equality of dignity* does not mean “sameness with men”. This would only impoverish women and all of society, by deforming or losing the unique richness and the inherent value of femininity.”; *Statement of the Holy See delegation to the economic and social council on gender equality and empowerment of women. Statement by H.E. Msgr Celestino Migliore apostolic nuntio*. Vatican website, July 1, 2010, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2010/documents/rc_seg-st_20100609_migliore-gender_en.html; *Intervention by the Holy See at the 61st session of the General assembly of the United Nations on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women*, Vatican website, March 8, 2007, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2007/documents/rc_seg-st_20070308_women_en.html.

⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 6: “*Man is a person, man and woman equally so*, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.” And sec. 10: “The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different.”; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 25: “The sexes are complementary: similar and dissimilar at the same time; not identical, the same, though, in dignity of person; they are peers so that they may mutually understand each other, diverse in their reciprocal completion.”

do not detract from the value of either or suppose them incomplete.⁷⁶ Rather, it raises them to a higher plane both individually and together.⁷⁷

A proper understanding of what constitutes masculinity and femininity is, therefore, a crucial building block for our understanding of humanity, as well as our understanding of how each individual can live out their calling in this world.

This thesis will address the question, “Is there a Catholic theology of masculinity?” Beginning with a review of magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church about masculinity, including a specific focus on John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*, it seeks to identify any significant questions that remain unanswered or insufficiently developed in magisterial teaching thus far. It uses what is either explicit or implicit in magisterial teaching regarding women and the ‘feminine genius’, with the assumption that men and women are equal and complementary, to paint a silhouette of masculinity or a ‘masculine genius’. Based on the Church’s teaching that Christ is prophet, priest and king, and that men and women share in these three aspects of Christ by virtue of their baptism, the thesis will argue that these elements can be applied in a special way to masculinity. The thesis will demonstrate that the kingly element of masculinity is explored in the magisterial discussion of headship, and that John Paul II associates the prophetic element to our spousal nature in his *Theology of the Body*, but the priestly element of masculinity seems neglected or undeveloped in magisterial teaching. This thesis will examine the redemptive aspect of masculinity, leading into a development of the priestly aspect of masculinity. Finally, acknowledging many broken and flawed examples of masculine desire and the damage these have caused, this thesis will engage in

⁷⁶ John Paul II *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 6: “Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.” (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *on the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8; John Paul II, *Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the XXVIII World Day of Peace – Women: Teachers of Peace*, Vatican website, Jan 1, 1995, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121994_xxviii-world-day-for-peace.html, sec. 3: “Even though man and woman are made for each other, this does not mean that God created them incomplete.”

⁷⁷ CCC, 371: “God created man and woman together and willed each for the other.”; 372; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 8; John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 8: “Man and woman were made “for each other” - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be “helpmate” to the other, for they are equal as persons (“bone of my bones. . .”) and complementary as masculine and feminine.” “woman and man are marked neither by a static and undifferentiated equality nor by an irreconcilable and inexorably conflictual difference. Their most natural relationship, which corresponds to the plan of God, is the “unity of the two”, a relational “uni-duality””.

a discussion of masculine desire in order further to illuminate and nuance the theology of masculinity it proposes.

b. Potential fruits of this study

In this chapter we have noted that academics of a wide range of disciplines, together with writers and commentators in popular works and forums, tend to use Catholic teaching on masculinity as one reference point for their studies, comments, or theories. These references to Catholic teaching too often oversimplify, poorly represent, or even misrepresent Catholic teaching, often as a negative counterpoint to another (preferred) view.

This lack of clarity is of even more concern in a context of a rising interest in matters of sexuality, particularly in relation to the Church's position on sexual identity and related theological and moral matters. It is hardly surprising, then, that John Paul II called for a renewed theological examination of the matter of the unique contribution of the sexes, particularly the significance of the relationship between them, a call which has been echoed and begun in earnest by his successor Benedict XVI and encouraged by their current successor. Pope Francis called for a revision of unhelpful paradigms of masculinity and seek to live a masculinity that reflects the Church's teaching on dignity of men and women.⁷⁸ He insists that the Church's view rejects false blurring of the distinctions between men and women. "It needs to be emphasized that "biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated"".⁷⁹

It seems timely and useful, therefore, to examine the question of what could be called a "Catholic theology of masculinity." As in all moments of crisis of understanding, the Church seeks to play her part in proposing clear and useful guidelines for the discussion, finding assurance in Christ's divine promises of help. As the authoritative interpreter of God's revealed truth, the Church constantly seeks to propose her wisdom to all who will listen.⁸⁰ While the magisterial documents provide helpful starting points, no concise summary or systematic treatment of masculinity in the

⁷⁸ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Vatican website, March 19, 2016, http://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf, sec. 53-54.

⁷⁹ *Amoris Laetitia*, 56. Citing "Relatio Finalis of the Synod of Bishops on the theme of "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the modern world."" (October 25, 2015), sec. 58.

⁸⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *on the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 1: "The Church, expert in humanity, has a perennial interest in whatever concerns men and women."

magisterium has yet been attempted. The present thesis takes as its starting position that the teaching of the magisterium, together with the direction and example they give us, provide a framework for a genuinely Catholic and authoritative theology of masculinity.

In answering the Church's call for further study into the dignity of manhood, a clearer identification of the Catholic teaching to date on masculinity will assist anyone attempting to study masculinity and, in combination with the excellent work done on femininity, assist studies of sexuality, human intimacy between the sexes and all related fields.⁸¹ It will also assist to distinguish between studies based on a sound understanding of Catholic teaching in this area and those based on alternate approaches and/or misunderstandings. This study will attempt to build on this sound understanding and propose its own modest contribution to the development of a Catholic theology of masculinity.

⁸¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 1, citing one of the recommendations of a 1987 Synod of Bishops, John Paul II calls for "further study of the anthropological and theological bases that are needed in order to solve the problems connected with the meaning and dignity of being a woman and being a man. It is a question of understanding the reason for and the consequences of the Creator's decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man."; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 1, which seeks to provide "an impetus for dialogue with all men and women of good will, in a sincere search for the truth and in a common commitment to the development of ever more authentic relationships."

Chapter Two

Method and Methodology

The first chapter of this thesis demonstrated a pressing need for a Catholic theology of masculinity. This chapter is a statement of the method of the thesis. Explaining the approach of the thesis will at the same time help to clarify the way that a theology of masculinity can be approached that is distinctively Catholic and at the same time might provide some answers for contemporary difficulties.

One problem is that there is no one way of approaching theology as a Catholic. There are boundaries that should not be crossed, and methods that have been ruled out, but Catholic theologians are more or less able to choose from a number of different approaches, usually according to a particular school of thought.¹ In relatively recent times, the main types of theology could be divided into the various Thomist schools, the Communio school, the Concilium school and various kinds of Liberation Theology.² With great respect to the contributions of other schools, and with reference to some of their theologians, this thesis will focus on the Communio school. The main reason for this is that the most significant contributions to sexual identity in Catholic theology has come from John Paul II, culminating in his *Theology of the Body*. Theologians from the Communio school, such as Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger (who later became Benedict XVI) have contributed to this theology, either by laying foundations or by interpreting and developing the theology further. This thesis not only takes special note of the contributions of the Communio school, but it seeks to place itself with that tradition.

The Communio approach respects St Thomas as an authentic interpreter of the tradition but is critical of some later commentary and interpretation of St Thomas. In contrast to other approaches, the Communio school seeks to synthesise ideas from “the entire intellectual treasury of the Church” drawing on the insights and approaches of a broader range of philosophical schools.³

¹ Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 1.

² Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, 3-5.

³ Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, 3.

a. The parameters of Catholic Theology

The methodology of this thesis is based on the assertion that the Catholic theologian is steeped in tradition, in the proper sense of the word.⁴ The historical nature of Christianity means that Catholic theology is deeply ecclesial. It begins and ends within the Church which Jesus Christ founded and of which Jesus is head.⁵ Nonetheless, Catholic theology is not merely descriptive of past teaching. The insistence that Christianity is an historical religion is not restricted to certain events in ancient Palestine; it is rooted in all human history. This means that theology also takes seriously the experiences, lessons, and theological insights of each age as she reflects on the challenges and questions of our own age.⁶ Theologians are called on to strengthen and build on what has been said using such logical and imaginative methods and arguments that are available to them, while taking care to preserve the essential faith that has been passed down to us, and to pass it on in turn to those who come after us.⁷

There are several excellent summaries of Catholic doctrine in print, most obviously the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium.” Which Pope John Paul II, specifically invoking his apostolic authority, declared to be “a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion and a sure norm for teaching the faith.”⁸ The value of the Catechism to this thesis is not limited to its being a collation and summation of the sources of revelation of the faith. If theology itself is reasoning on the basis of sacred revelation, and hence theological reflection must begin with “the effort to recognize the gift of knowledge that precedes the reflection.” The Catechism represents a starting point for Catholic theology in that it is an authoritative presentation of the deposit of faith that precedes us.⁹

⁴ The Latin *traditio*, and the related Greek word *παράδοσις*, mean to ‘hand on’ something. In this context, to “hand on” teaching from generation to generation.

⁵ Aidan Nichols OP, *Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction To Its Sources, Principles, And History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing UK, 2003), 22.

⁶ Nichols OP, *Shape of Catholic Theology*, 20-21.

⁷ Nichols OP, *Shape of Catholic Theology*, 15.

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications from the Editio Typica* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) (Hereafter “CCC”); John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, Vatican website, October 11, 1992, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19921011_fidei-depositum.html, sec. iv.

⁹ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Current Doctrinal Relevance of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vatican website, October 9, 2002,

It would be naïve, however, to suggest that magisterial teaching has been presented in a simple logical progression proceeding from a single coherent source. While a detailed study of the nature of the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, and the bodies that administer and oversee it would be far too complex to receive adequate treatment within the limits of this thesis, these are the main overarching points about Catholic theology that are to be kept in mind here. The remainder of this chapter will essentially deal with the kind of analysis needed to carry out the work of this thesis. It will offer a brief survey of the hermeneutical issues related to the interpretation of documents pertaining to magisterial teaching, specifically to the interpretation of sources and documents related to the present study.

First, it should be acknowledged that Catholic Theology is rational deduction from the basis of revelation of God in Scripture and Tradition. Scripture and Tradition are from the “same divine wellspring” According to Leo XIII, St Jerome’s pithy summary, ‘Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ’ has been echoed through two millennia of Christian tradition.¹⁰ He states that: “The study of the sacred page should be, as it were, the very soul of theology.”¹¹ As will be seen in what follows, Scripture as a starting point for theology is a principle of the method both reflected in our examination of the magisterial treatment of masculinity and in the theological proposals in this study.

It should immediately be noted, though, that a focus on relevant passages of Scripture is demonstrably Catholic, both as a source and a method, but that this emphasis on Sacred Scripture as the centrepiece of theology does not imply that Scripture is the sole source of revelation. The

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021009_ratzinger-catechetical-congress_en.html, sec. *Meaning and Limits of a Catechism*: “The goal of the Catechism is precisely that of presenting this given that precedes us, whose developing doctrinal formulation of the faith is offered in the Church; it is a proclamation of faith, not a theology, even if a reflection seeking understanding is a natural part of an appropriate presentation of the teaching of the Church’s faith and in this sense faith is opened to understanding and to theology.”

¹⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum – The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, Vatican website, Nov 18, 1965, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html, sec. 9; CCC, 82; Cf. Yves Congar O.P. *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 100; Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 376-424; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus: on the Study of Sacred Scripture*, Vatican website, Nov 18, 1893, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html, sec. 3.

¹¹ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini: On the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church*, Vatican website, Sep 30, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html, sec. 31; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec. 24.

Scriptures themselves have been handed down – in keeping with the etymology of the term “tradition”: *tradere* - to the present generation and will be passed on to future generations. Far from being juxtaposed to the Sacred Text, the monuments of Sacred Tradition assist us in composing an appropriate hermeneutic in reading and interpreting Sacred Scripture.¹²

Since the purpose of this study is to discover what foundation exists for a theology of masculinity, and to contribute to a theological launching pad for future study of the matter in a Catholic context, this thesis first reviews magisterial documents with a particular eye to observing the Biblical themes and specific texts of which the magisterial documents make use. All theology begins with what has been divinely revealed to us but, since proper understanding of Scripture and Tradition is the foundation of all Catholic theological argument, the magisterial documents are an essential component of a theologian’s toolbox.¹³

We cannot, however, assume that tradition has already considered all possible questions and provided all possible answers.¹⁴ The very fact that tradition has unfolded slowly through history indicates that our understanding continues to be refined and perfected as new ages bring new questions to the deposit of faith, and ask old questions in new ways. It is also possible, even likely, that developments in understanding, technology and methodology allow us to propose more precise answers to old questions. Thus, the present thesis takes as its starting position that the teaching of the magisterium, together with the direction and example they give us, provide a framework for a Catholic theology of masculinity. By “magisterium” is meant the “living teaching office of the Church”, a task which has “been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.”¹⁵ The teaching and guidance of this magisterium is both a guarantee of fidelity to, and continuity with what God has revealed to us. It provides the context in which further theological inquiry is to be situated.¹⁶

¹² Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 32: “The doctrinal content of tradition, in so far as it is distinct from Scripture, is the meaning of Scripture.”

¹³ Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, Vatican website, August 12, 1950, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html, sec. 21; Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 25.1. “*eique religioso animi obsequio adhaerere debent. Hoc vero religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium singulari ratione praestandum est Romani Pontificis authentico magisterio etiam cum non ex cathedra loquitur*”

¹⁴ Nichols OP, *Shape of Catholic Theology*, 29.

¹⁵ CCC, 85; Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec.10.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec. 10.

This does not limit the task of theological discovery to those persons directly engaged in the formal offices of the magisterium. The Church acknowledges that all those baptized into Christ have a role to play in receiving, confirming, and contemplating what has always been believed, and in bringing perennial and contemporary questions to the theological loci and searching them for answers. Theologians, in particular, have a responsibility and privilege of bringing the concerns and questions of the people of God to the eternal truth of God and closely examining the theological loci, and engaging in reasonable theological speculation based on those loci. This speculation is essential to the ongoing life and learning of the body of Christ.¹⁷

The magisterium does not, however, dictate what theology should propose, nor direct its research. While the theologian cannot ignore the magisterium, she or he is by no means restricted to be a mere transcriber of those teachings. Theology begins in the wonder of God, and uses/draws on all the curiosity, imagination, and skill that its practitioners can bring to this task. The magisterium does not insist on particular interpretations or impose particular arguments. It merely indicates where a particular proposition or line of argument contradicts or undermines that which is known to be true. This leaves open every possible line of inquiry and proposal, save those which clearly contradict or undermine what is known to be true. This inquiry, born out of the wonder and genuine desire for more understanding of, and fidelity to our Lord, is a genuine and necessary part of the Church's continual growth in understanding of what God has revealed.¹⁸ The magisterium teaches that theological inquiry is essential to the ongoing task of this same magisterium.

recent studies and findings of science, history and philosophy raise new questions which effect life and which demand new theological investigations. Furthermore, theologians, within the requirements and methods proper to theology, are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times; for the deposit of Faith or the truths are one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in the same meaning and understanding, is another.¹⁹

¹⁷ International Theological Commission, *The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*, Vatican website, 1975, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1975_magistero-teologia_en.html, Thesis 5, sec 2.

¹⁸ CCC, 94: "Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church."

¹⁹ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 62.

b. The approach to magisterial authority in this thesis

One of the foundational assumptions of Catholic theology is that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, established an authoritative teaching office in the persons of the twelve apostles united in communion with St Peter and that Peter was given a place of primacy.²⁰ According to the design of its founder, this office and its related authority was passed down to candidates in direct succession from the apostles, remaining in communion with the individual successor of St Peter.²¹ While the authority invested in the apostolic office is not able to create new teachings, it bears the authority and grave responsibility to correctly interpret, clarify and commend the truth which has been revealed to us in the Sacred Scriptures and in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.²² The authority of this office is the authority of none other than Christ himself, the second person of the Divine Trinity, and that the faithful are obliged to “to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent.”²³ This “submission of mind and will” can only be sincerely attempted when proper attention is given to the “mind and will” of the author of a particular document. This mind and will can be determined “either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.”²⁴ It is, therefore, both possible and proper for a theologian to “raise questions regarding the timeliness, the form, or even the contents of magisterial interventions” if the intent is to participate in further clarification of the expression and teaching of doctrine.²⁵ This is essentially what is at stake in magisterial teaching,

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Dei verbum*, sec. 33; CCC, 76; First Vatican Council, *First dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ*, (July 18, 1870); Fourth session 1.6.

²¹ Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan Books, 1960), 282; First Vatican Council, Session 4 : 18 July 1870; *First dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ*, Chapter 4.9.

²² *Dei verbum*, sec. 10 (CCC 85): “the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.” Cf. CCC 86-87 for clarification on the authority of that office. See also CCC 763-766 on Christ founding His Church; Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 25.1.

²³ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 25: “For then the Roman Pontiff is not pronouncing judgment as a private person, but as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, in whom the charism of infallibility of the Church itself is individually present, he is expounding or defending a doctrine of Catholic faith.” (Citing Cfr. *eplicatio Gasser* in Conc. Vat. I: Mansi 52, 1213 AC.); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction: Donum Veritatis; On the ecclesial vocation of a theologian*, Vatican website, May 24, 1990, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html, sec. 24: “The willingness to submit loyally to the teaching of the Magisterium on matters per se not irreformable must be the rule.”; Pius XII *Humani generis*, sec. 18.

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 25.1

²⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction: Donum Veritatis; On the ecclesial vocation of a theologian*, sec. 24.

which is very often conveyed through the kinds of documents that form the basis for most of the research of this thesis.

Given that magisterial teaching most often addresses specific questions or pastoral circumstances at the time of promulgation, some future questions on the same matter, raised by new circumstances or questions, require further clarification of the relevant aspects of the doctrinal matter. This further clarification does not replace but is added to the previous understanding of the Church. It is, therefore, essential to note not only the content, manner, and form of address in specific documents, but also the manner in which all magisterial teaching is presented and promulgated. In order to faithfully represent a Catholic theology of masculinity, it is necessary to observe not only the content of magisterial documents, but also to observe and be guided by the hermeneutic in which they are delivered. Particular attention, then, needs to be paid to the ecclesial and social factors that surround the promulgation of any given magisterial document.

Throughout all of this, an important tenet of Catholic teaching needs to be kept in mind. While Catholic doctrine “develops”, this does not imply that the truth described in doctrinal formulae, or even formulation of the doctrine changes over time. Instead, it refers to developing a greater understanding of those truths and formulae.²⁶ It may be, for example, that we must take into account that the writings of Pope Leo XIII are written into a specific historical context and seem to assume and address certain social conditions and expectations commonly accepted by society at that time. It may be true that we are required to take proper care to distinguish, in Pope Leo XIII’s words for instance, assumptions that can no longer be described as universally accepted, especially in modern Western societies. Nevertheless, any attempt to present a Catholic theology of masculinity cannot dismiss prior magisterial teaching on this or any other basis. Following this *magisterial hermeneutic*, we can observe the context, the specific pastoral circumstances the teaching sought to address, the manner in which the same doctrines and teaching have been expressed in different contexts and eras and propose these same teachings in language suitable to

²⁶ Pius XI *Mortalium Animos*, Vatican website, Jan 6, 1928, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html, sec. 9: “But in the use of this extraordinary teaching authority no newly invented matter is brought in, nor is anything new added to the number of those truths which are at least implicitly contained in the deposit of Revelation, divinely handed down to the Church: only those which are made clear which perhaps may still seem obscure to some, or that which some have previously called into question is declared to be of faith.”; cf. Pius X, Encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis* Vatican website, September 8, 1907, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html, sec. 28.

this context and era. In this case, the teachings will be drawn out and developed with direct reference to a Catholic theology of masculinity.

It will be important also to keep in mind the way that dogma is directly relevant to Catholics in their everyday lives. This impacts on the different ways in which the Church promulgates its teaching, such that a document needs to be read in relation to its intended audience and purpose. To understand this, one can first keep in mind that the Church, through its teaching office, is able to make formal definitions of dogma which are binding on the faithful.²⁷ The teaching office is not restricted to the promulgation of formal dogma. In the first place there is a hierarchy of related truths such that, while all are interwoven, some hold a more important, foundational or central place in the body of doctrine.²⁸ The Church also promulgates various other teachings, with varying levels of authority, to both general and specific audiences.²⁹ While these levels of authority have been the subject of much debate, especially in recent times, even the most liberal interpretation of papal authority acknowledges that these levels of authority relate mostly to the question of the development of these teachings over time, not so much to the requirement of the faithful to respect and submit to them in the present moment.³⁰ In other words, some teachings are considered to be *de fide*, meaning that the faithful must believe them to be counted within God's people.³¹ Other teachings are so closely related to the dogma of the Church that, though they are not formally defined themselves, they are so intimately intertwined with doctrines that have been formally defined that they are considered theologically certain.³² There are yet more teachings and instructions which the majority of the Church's bishops, theologians, teachers and faithful hold to

²⁷ CCC, 88.

²⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis redintegratio: Decree on Eccumenism*. Vatican website, Nov 21, 1964, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html, sec. 11. "in Catholic doctrine there exists a "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith." Cf. CCC, 90.

²⁹ Pius X, Encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis*, sec. 28 (Citing the First Vatican Council): "*The doctrine of the faith which God has revealed has not been proposed to human intelligences to be perfected by them as if it were a philosophical system, but as a divine deposit entrusted to the Spouse of Christ to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted.* (Emphasis original.)

³⁰ In Catholic teaching, the term "development of doctrine" does not refer to the truth or even formulation of the doctrine changing but to developing a greater understanding of those truths and formulae. cf. Pius X, Encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis*, sec. 28: "Nor is the development of our knowledge, even concerning the faith, impeded by this pronouncement - on the contrary it is aided and promoted."; Cf. Pius XI *Mortalium Animos* Vatican website, Jan 6, 1928, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis*, sec. 24.

³¹ Sometimes *fides ecclesiastica* is distinguished from *dei fide* but for the purposes of this study we will assume that both are binding in a manner similar enough to be, practically speaking, treated the same.

³² *sententia ad fidem pertinens*.

be true without significant dispute.³³ Still further, some teachings, while not encouraged, are generally tolerated as not contradictory to the faith.³⁴

With the exception of the latter category the faithful are obliged to give an obedience of intellect and will to all Catholic teaching. While distinctions between dogma, doctrine and current practical teachings remain important, the purpose of this thesis is to answer the question “Is there a Catholic theology of masculinity?” It would seem that to be considered ‘Catholic’ in the proper sense, an answer to this question should consider those teachings that can be considered binding on the Catholic faithful, related to the topic being discussed. The answer could note some *opinio tolerato* related to otherwise established teaching, but not as sole evidence for something proposed as authoritative ‘Catholic’ teaching.

The distinctions between unchangeable dogma, developing doctrine, practical pastoral instruction, and administrative rulings, will become important in the chapters of this thesis containing speculation about future directions in this doctrine – i.e., Chapters Five and Six. The distinction has less impact, on a practical level, in relation to the chapters describing the positive and even implied teaching of the Catholic Church. - i.e., Chapters Three and Four. An individual Catholic owes obedience of intellect and will to all Catholic teaching, regardless of its potential to be further developed in the future.³⁵ This principle underlies the methodology and supports the intent of the thesis, which is to provide some foundation and developments within the area of a Catholic Theology of masculinity.

c. Various kinds of Papal and Curial pronouncements

Bearing in mind the various ways that the Church teaches, in various areas, it is unsurprising that Magisterial teaching is not recorded in one volume. Its variegated modes of promulgation affect the way that this thesis is organized and proceeds. Magisterial teaching is not contained within a set of encyclopedia volumes with handy contents pages or an index. A brief glance at the Vatican

³³ *sententia fidei proxima*.

³⁴ *opinio tolerata*.

³⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, Motu Proprio *Ad Tuendam Fidem*. May 18, 1998 and accompanying Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Professio fidei*. Vatican Website, June 29, 1998,

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1998_professio-fidei_en.html.

website, or the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, reveals a wide range of documents under different categories, promulgated by different authors.³⁶ Even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which Pope John Paul II declared to be “a sure norm for the teaching of the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion” is a compilation of brief summaries of original magisterial documents arranged in some semblance of order for convenience.³⁷ It represents a brief summary of magisterial teaching but does not override or replace the original authoritative sources.

A brief survey of the various kinds of magisterial documents is beneficial in deciphering various teachings of the magisterium, and so for understanding the method used in this thesis. An overview of the documents is significant not because the type of document or pronouncement automatically determines the doctrinal weight of specific propositions contained within a particular document, but insofar as it provides us with some indication of a context and intention of a particular document. The main documents to be used are as follow, together with various factors to be borne in mind throughout the remainder of the thesis.

A **Decretal Letter** is one of the most solemn forms of proclamation, but in modern times it is used most often to formally proclaim a canonization of a saint. **Encyclical Letters** are papal ‘acts’ in the form of letters.³⁸ While they are generally addressed to the entire Church, the letters are not usually used to promulgate dogmatic definitions, but to clarify, to offer explanations or practical counsel on how certain dogmas should be understood, taught and lived by the faithful. While the Encyclical Letters are not usually taken as dogmatic definitions in and of themselves, they refer to, clarify and explicate dogmatic positions of the Church and thus the ‘weight’ of a particular Encyclical Letter, or even of a particular argument within that Encyclical Letter is best determined by the weight of the subject matter itself.³⁹ As Pope Pius XII taught, “the positions advanced and

³⁶ Francis G. Morrisey, *Papal and Curial Pronouncements: Their Canonical Significance in light of the 1983 Code of Canon Law* (Ottawa: St Paul University, 1992).

³⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum*: on the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Vatican website, October 11, 1992, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19921011_fidei-depositum.html, sec. 3.

³⁸ Circular letters of congregations of the Roman curia were sometimes referred to under the title of ‘encyclical’ but these were distinguished from the Encyclical Letters of the pontiff by their authorship. The practice has fallen into disuse in the past century. Cf. Morrisey, *Papal and Curial Pronouncements*, 12.

³⁹ Morrisey, *Papal and Curial Pronouncements*, 12. Morrisey distinguishes between the promulgation of new dogmatic definitions or canons and the authoritative clarification or modification of existing canons.

the duties inculcated by these encyclical letters are already bound up, under some other title, with the general body of Catholic teaching.”⁴⁰

Apostolic Constitutions are possibly the most serious form of document issued under the Pope’s own name and authority. They deal with serious doctrinal and/or disciplinary matters on weighty matters. The dogma of the Assumption of Mary was defined in an Apostolic Constitution named *Munificentissimus Deus*, as were many of the liturgical changes made after the Second Vatican Council, and the *Code of Canon Law* and various corrections and modifications to the same.⁴¹ While these constitutions are legislative texts, since Paul VI they have clearly laid out the doctrinal underpinning of their legislation, and thus the explanatory arguments carry the not insignificant weight of the constitutions themselves. A **Motu Proprio** is an apostolic letter written on the Pope’s own initiative and authority. It deals with a matter that is significant but does not warrant a constitution. While it is possible for a constitution or address to be directed to a particular group or category of persons, the *motu proprio* is directed to the entire Church.⁴² Some examples include establishing an investigation into Legionaries of Christ and establishing new parameters for the use of the Old Latin Rite, both of which instituted direct changes to Canon Law.⁴³

⁴⁰ Pius XII, *Humani generis*, sec. 12.

⁴¹ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, Vatican website, Nov 1, 1950, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus.html; Re: liturgical change see, Paul VI, *Pontificalis romani*, Vatican website, June 18, 1968, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_19680618_pontificalis-romani.html; Pope Paul VI, *Sacram unctionem infirmorum*, Vatican website, Nov 30, 1972, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_19721130_sacram-unctionem.html; Pope Paul VI, *Missale romanum*, Vatican website, April 3, 1969, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_19690403_missale-romanum.html. Re: canonical change see, John Paul II, *Sacrae disciplinae legis*, Vatican website, January 25, 1983, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_25011983_sacrae-disciplinae-leges.html; Pope John Paul II, *Divinus perfectionis Magister*, Vatican website, January 25, 1983, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_25011983_divinus-perfectionis-magister.html; Pope John Paul II, *Pastor bonus*, Vatican website, June 28, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19880628_pastor-bonus.html.

⁴² Morrissey, *Papal and Curial Pronouncements*, 17.

⁴³ While the document announcing an investigation into the Legionaries of Christ is called “A communique of the Holy See”, it cites the authority of John Paul II, *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, Norms on the more grave derelicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican website, April 30, 2001, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_20020110_sacramentorum-sanctitatis-tutela.html; Benedict XVI, *Summorum pontificum* On the use of the Roman Liturgy prior to the reform of 1970, Vatican website, July 7, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html.

Apostolic Epistles, sometimes called apostolic letters, are sent to a specific group or category of persons, usually addressing the practical or pastoral application of Church teaching within the context of those groups, nations, or circumstances. **Apostolic Exhortations** do not provide definitions in themselves, but instead offer pastoral encouragement and counsel regarding particular aspects of Church teaching. More recently they have been used by the Pope to present teaching that has arisen out of a synod of bishops. **Addresses to Consistories** are not generally regarded as holding doctrinal weight; but the content of the address often carries weight in itself. Some examples of significant statements in these lower order documents are the decree of Paul VI on the number of Cardinals permitted to participate in a papal election, or Pope Pius XII's address to midwives, both of which address significant matters and been picked up in subsequent teaching and practice.⁴⁴ **Papal pronouncements** come in many different forms. Some examples include a 'common declaration' issued together with a leader of another religious community, while other pronouncements may come in the form of letters, homilies, and messages to particular groups such as priests, devotional movements, religious communities and so on.

The Holy Father is also the head of state of the Vatican State, and thus makes formal announcements regarding civil law in that state and legal agreements with other states which have some impact on the mission and management of the Church in certain circumstances, the civil authority of bishops and other Church authorities over the temporal goods and practical works of the Church in particular places. These agreements interpret Church teaching in a practical setting and thus lend weight to interpretation of some magisterial teaching.⁴⁵

The Council Fathers, in communion with the presiding pontiff, promulgated several kinds of documents with the authority of the sacred Council. These documents included constitutions, decrees, declarations, and messages. While the relationships between these various kinds of documents are no simple matter, the **constitutions** offer fundamental definitions and are addressed to the entire Church, the **decrees** explain and build upon the foundations laid in those constitutions, usually concerning a specific application of the doctrines, and addressing the relevant category of

⁴⁴ Paul VI *Allocuzione del Santo Padre Paulo durante il concistoro segregato*, Vatican website, March 5, 1973, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/speeches/1973/march/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19730305_concistoro-segreto.html; Pius XII, *Allocution to Midwives*, Vatican website, Oct 29, 1951, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1951/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19511029_ostetriche.html.

⁴⁵ Morrisey, *Papal and Curial Pronouncements*, 18.

the faithful. The **declarations** have been described as ‘policy statements’ on complex aspects of the application of the doctrines promulgated in the constitutions, and the **messages** where pastoral advice and exhortations to various categories of persons in the Church, coming out of the teaching of the Council.

d. The magisterial authority of particular propositions in magisterial documents

While observation of the general purpose and habitual use of particular forms of documents can provide something of a context for our interpretation, the problem of interpreting the weight or importance of particular propositions in magisterial documents cannot be determined by these observations alone. As we have already observed, careful attention must be paid to the context in which the proposition itself appears, the intention of the author, the style and forcefulness (or weight) of the language used, and subsequent clarification, citation, and development of the teaching in later magisterial teaching.⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II’s *Letter to Women*, for example, seems to be a relatively minor document if we consider the style and form of the type of document alone. If we consider certain theological themes from the Second Vatican Council, developed in later documents of Pope John Paul II, in which he used the phrase “feminine genius”, and that the *Letter to Women* specifically picked up the phrases “feminine genius” and “genius of women” and unpacked them in the context the letter is addressing, we can see the significance of that document is determined more by the content, language and continuity within magisterial documents than by any particular form of delivery.⁴⁷

Even with this care and intent, it must be acknowledged that, while the substance of doctrine may be considered irreformable, the manner in which it is expressed and explained is not always

⁴⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 25.1: “Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.”; See also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction: *Donum Veritatis*; On the ecclesial vocation of a theologian, sec. 24: “the authoritativeness of the interventions which becomes clear from the nature of the documents, the insistence with which a teaching is repeated, and the very way in which it is expressed.”

⁴⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, secs. 8-9, 52, 60; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, secs. 22-24; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, secs. 30-31.

perfect, nor is it necessarily expressed in the only way possible, nor even the way which is most clear to the present readers.⁴⁸ It is entirely acceptable to argue for improvements in clarity or expression, for greater refinement of argument, or even for a further development of doctrine. This does not mean that we can presume there are easy improvements to make in every case. Indeed, the possibility of misunderstanding, personal obstinacy, misinterpretation, and cultural confusion must be seriously considered before entertaining the possibility of even the most innocent of suggested changes. An interpreter's attention should not be to make the best estimation of the author's intent but should be read in harmony with the entire tradition. It should be guided by a "willingness to submit loyally to the teaching of the Magisterium."⁴⁹

Those participating in magisterial teaching commit themselves to the responsibility of that office, which is to say they commit themselves to the hermeneutic of continuity and clarity. They are committed to the development of understanding, based on what is already clearly and authoritatively taught. If this thesis is accurately to reflect and to seek to contribute to the magisterium's teaching on the subject of masculinity, it must respect this hermeneutic.

The distinctions and concerns raised in this chapter will be guiding principles for the selection, consideration and use of magisterial sources. Sources of greater significance will remain the starting point and touchstone for all interpretation of the intended meaning of magisterial teaching. But these sources will not be determined solely on the basis of the kind of document referred to. The gravity of the matter being addressed, the forms and phrasing of the declarations, and reliance on previous teaching, whether the teaching is based on previous teaching and/or has been picked up and developed by subsequent teaching documents, will be the indicators of the weight of a particular argument. It will be necessary, in some cases, to cite examples of seemingly lesser significance to demonstrate Magisterial repetition and development of ideas and arguments raised in earlier documents. These principles will be the hermeneutic by which the following chapter will

⁴⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction: *Donum Veritatis; On the ecclesial vocation of a theologian*, sec. 24: "When it comes to the question of interventions in the prudential order, it could happen that some Magisterial documents might not be free from all deficiencies. Bishops and their advisors have not always taken into immediate consideration every aspect or the entire complexity of a question."; John XXIII, *Inaugural speech of Second Vatican Council*, (Oct 11, 1962). Cited in Walter M. Abbott *Vatican Council, The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 715.

⁴⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction: *Donum Veritatis; On the ecclesial vocation of a theologian*, sec. 24.

examine the current state of affairs in Magisterial teaching on masculinity, and directly related topics.

e. The structure of this Thesis

The chapters that follow will reflect this method in the way that they predominantly make use of particular kinds of documents. The following chapter (Chapter Three) will offer an overview of the magisterial treatment of the theme of masculinity. The chapter will begin with a brief examination of the use of analogy in theology, to examine the use of masculine analogies to describe God, specifically God as “father”, “son”, “bridegroom” and “lord”, attempting to discern any theological significance for human masculinity. The same chapter will examine the treatment of masculinity, where humans are the subject, first addressing the matters of equality and complementarity with femininity, and then reflecting on the treatment of man as father, son, lord, and bridegroom. The chapter will conclude with an examination of love as self-giving, and an examination of the fruits of self-giving masculinity.

Chapter Four will focus on the series of Wednesday audiences by Pope John Paul II, later published as *The Theology of the Body*. This series of audiences represents such a significant contribution to the theology of human sexuality, in weight and volume, and sufficiently distinct in its method, that it warrants specific attention. The starting point, methodology and scope of these catechetical teachings are distinct enough to warrant such individual attention, and those differences are reflected in the structure of the fourth chapter. A brief examination of John Paul II’s approach to analogy in Scripture is followed by reflections on man as a body, and the light that faith and love shed on this matter. The chapter continues to unpack John Paul II’s themes of equality, difference, communion, and some careful discussion of “headship”. The chapter will conclude with some observations about the three main texts that John Paul II draws from in his catecheses, specifically identifying the few places where he makes theological points that are unique to masculinity. Clearly the primary source of this chapter will be the published text of the *Theology of the Body*, although some subsequent commentary will be drawn on for clarification.

Chapter Five will discuss what seems to be lacking in the magisterial documents thus far, and what is incomplete or unclear in present teaching documents. In recent debates, for example, the meaning of terms such as ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ have been debated. Although Chapter Three has

already given a brief overview of what the magisterial teachings say on this topic, this chapter will begin by outlining some unclarities in the teaching and the related difficulties faced by Catholics seeking to engage with other academics in this field. Given that the magisterial teachings clearly refer to a *feminine genius*, or a *genius of women* the thesis will ask whether there is a corresponding and equally worthy *masculine genius*, and whether the magisterial teaching offers us a starting point for exploring that idea. A brief examination of John Paul II's development of the concept of 'receptivity' will expose what seems to be a gap in the teaching on masculinity so far. The chapter discusses some of the problems with the changing use of language in magisterial literature. The word "man" has been used as an unmarked form, indicating at once the human race, an individual human being, all male human beings, and sometimes an individual human male. The accepted structure of families has changed so rapidly that older documents must be read with some care to distinguish where a man is referred to in his capacity as representative of his family, breadwinner and legal owner of family property, or when he is being treated as an individual male. The chapter will take the magisterial concept of *spiritual motherhood* (applied to all women) and *spiritual fatherhood* (applied to the priesthood) and ask whether we can speak more generally of a spiritual fatherhood or spiritual participation in the spousal aspect of the bridegroom. A discussion of the exegesis John Paul II utilizes in his use of the key Scripture texts will follow, and examine possible omissions, unclarities and oversights, before moving to more general discussions of magisterial teaching on bodily masculinity, specifically masculine love, a definition of love, brokenness and physical love.

Finally, Chapter Six will propose some possible developments of the doctrine, building explicitly on the theology and methodology established in prior chapters. A definition of masculinity will be proposed, followed by a discussion of the 'shape' of masculinity, guided by the boundaries either explicit or implicit in magisterial teaching. This will lead to a more detailed analysis of masculinity in the main texts addressed by John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body*, namely Genesis and Ephesians. Drawing on these discussions, the thesis will conclude with an examination of the redemptive aspect of masculinity, the priestly aspect of masculinity, a positive discussion of masculine desire, and the problem of the unequal analogy.

Chapter Three

What the Magisterium offers by way of a theology of masculinity

This chapter is a review of what has been said about masculinity in magisterial teaching. The review is restricted to the magisterial documents which offer the most significant contribution to this subject, with particular attention to the arguments and assumptions underlying the arguments made. It is not intended to be mere collation of texts, nor an exhaustive analysis of magisterial documents, nor to create a ‘Denzinger’ on this matter.¹ The subject matter is arranged in categories, to grasp the intent of the documents in citing them in order to provide a clearer understanding of the magisterial assumptions and arguments and to search for possible foundations and/or inspiration for future exploration of this topic.

This review will provide the context and setting in which to understand the most extensive treatment of marriage and sexuality in magisterial documents, the catechetical series given by Pope John Paul II, commonly called *Theology of the Body*, represents such a profound development that it warrants a separate discussion. This will be attempted in the following chapter. The fifth chapter will examine what is implied and explicit magisterial teachings will provide the framework for an outline of or, at least, provide boundaries for any future contributions to the theology of masculinity. The final chapter will sketch these boundaries and propose a framework, shape or ‘silhouette’ of a Catholic theology of masculinity, and to propose some specific contributions to a Catholic theology of masculinity.

The structure of this chapter

The aim of this review is to critically analyse authoritative magisterial teaching on the roles and qualities specific to men. A large portion of the magisterial treatment of masculinity seems to fall into categories corresponding to the allegorical comparison of masculinity to the persons of the Blessed Trinity. This chapter will examine various theological arguments and imagery used in the attempts to describe and define masculinity by comparison to what God has revealed about

¹ A “Denzinger” is a term denoting a kind of ‘handbook of doctrines’ compiled from various magisterial sources without analysis. cf. Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, 9.

himself. First, God has revealed Himself as “Father.” The name itself is masculine, and the imagery and analogy associated with this ‘fatherhood’ are relevant to the subject of this thesis.² Second, God has revealed Himself as “Son.” Once again, the revealed name is a masculine name, and the related imagery and analogy have masculine elements. Intimately related to God’s revelation as Son, indeed, a part of it, is the incarnation of the second person of the Blessed Trinity as a male human being, Jesus. Third, God reveals Himself as “the Lord.” This chapter will examine ‘lordship’ in the Biblical and Magisterial literature to determine any specifically masculine element of the ‘lordship’ of God. Fourthly, God has revealed Himself as a divine husband of His people, in the Hebrew Scriptures and Christ as Bridegroom of the Church in the New Testament.

A second section will move from the allegorical to the concrete, in order to analyse what the magisterium has explicitly said about human masculinity. Beginning with the equality of male and female, their relationship with each other, the complementarity of the sexes, we will explore magisterial teaching on human masculinity in relation to man as father, son, lord and lover (bridegroom). Finally, the review will examine masculinity in terms of its fulfilment in the total gift of self and the fruitfulness of man and woman in complementarity.

a. The problem of analogy to persons of the Trinity

The image of God

Humankind’s very identity is founded in the fact they are created “in the image of God” (*imago dei*).³ Each individual’s creaturely integrity, dignity and relational nature, is found in the God in whose image he or she was created.⁴ The very nature of masculinity (and femininity) is directly derived from this imaging.⁵ Magisterial documents and Scripture consistently insist that all

² While acknowledging there are also passages that use feminine imagery to describe God the focus here is on masculine imagery and analogy for the sake of this study of masculinity.

³ Gen 1:27; Gen 9:6.

⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 6: “on the basis of an analogy, thanks to which we can discern, at the very beginning of the Book of Genesis, the reality of fatherhood and motherhood and consequently of the human family. The interpretative key enabling this discernment is provided by the principle of the “image” and “likeness” of God highlighted by the scriptural text (*Gen 1:26*)”.

⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: “If there is a likeness between Creator and creatures, it is understandable that the Bible would refer to God using expressions that attribute to him both “masculine” and “feminine” qualities.”; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world*, sec. 5: “[T]he image and likeness’ of God constitutes the immutable *basis of all Christian anthropology*”; cf. John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 6; St.

fatherhood derives from God the Father, and exhort earthly fathers to strive to imitate and exemplify the Heavenly Father in their earthly fatherhood.⁶ The Church finds the divine model and example of human fatherhood in the first person of the Blessed Trinity insofar as God has revealed himself as the “Father” from whom all fatherhood takes its name.⁷ Genuine fatherhood reflects and reveals the fatherly love of God the heavenly Father for us, insofar as earthly fathers generously give of themselves for those in their care.⁸

While acknowledging that human fatherhood, at its best, reveals something of the nature of divine fatherhood, the fatherhood of God is not defined by every aspect of our experience (individual or collective) of human fatherhood.⁹ Communication and/or understanding of the divine nature is not independent of human experience. Our understanding of the concept of ‘fatherhood’ begins in our experience of earthly fatherhood. Even the language of revelation concerning God the Father utilizes human concepts, imagery and language to represent divine reality.¹⁰ Scripture and Tradition utilize imagery and allegory to express heavenly realities, and Catholic teaching engages with these images in its attempt to express the truth clearly. It seems that a human being may reach beyond his or her experience for an ideal, perhaps even the very source of all the imperfect good

Ireneus, *Adversus haereses*, 5,6,1; 5, 16, 2-3: SC 153, 72-81; 216-221; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, 16: PG 44, 180; *In Canticum homilia*, 2: PG 44, 805-808; St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum*, 4, 8: CCL 38, 17; John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 6: “[The] truth about man which is confirmed by the very experience of humanity. Man is created “from the very beginning” as male and female: the life of all humanity —whether of small communities or of society as a whole—is marked by this primordial duality. From it there derive the “masculinity” and the “femininity” of individuals.”; John Paul II *Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family*, Vatican website, June 4, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1999/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_04061999_family.html, sec. 1; John Paul II, *Message to those taking part in the recitation of the Rosary on the eve of Pro-Life Day in Italy*, Vatican website, Feb 6, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/pont_messages/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19990206_festa-famiglia.html, sec. 2: “God is the protagonist of all motherhood and fatherhood, through which husband and wife open themselves to the gift of new life.”

⁶ CCC, 2214: “Divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood.” (Citing Eph 3:14.)

⁷ Eph 3:14-5; cf. John Paul II *Address to the members of the Pontifical Council for the Family*. June 4, 1999; John Paul II, *Message to those taking part in the recitation of the Rosary on the eve of Pro-Life Day in Italy*, sec. 3; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25; John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 6.

⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25: “In revealing and in reliving the very Fatherhood of God ... he will perform this task with by exercising generous responsibility”.

⁹ John Paul II, General Audience, *God gradually reveals his fatherhood*, Vatican website, Jan 13, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_13011999.html.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: “This observation on the limits of the analogy - the limits of man's likeness to God in biblical language - must also be kept in mind when, in different passages of Sacred Scripture (especially in the Old Testament), we find *comparisons that attribute to God "masculine" or "feminine" qualities.*”

he or she sees from day to day.¹¹ While acknowledging the role human experience plays in understanding, we must also acknowledge the limits of analogy, and the transcendence of God.¹²

The first problem with analogy is that it proposes a certain likeness between two things, while acknowledging some dissimilarities. We might suggest that two things are more alike than dissimilar, but how can we apply this to God, who is wholly unlike His creation? God is creator, not created. God is almighty, beyond creation and above it.¹³ While God dignifies human fathers by inviting them to participate in a small but significant way in the creation of individual persons, God is the creator of all, and all creation owes its existence to him.

Second, the divine Son, who, in being eternally begotten, reveals God's eternal Fatherhood, is also so far beyond human understanding that makes even allegorical comparison problematic. The Son of God is 'eternally begotten' and 'true God from true God'. The gift of self that the divine Father and Son give is infinite, precisely because the divine Father and Son are infinite. The gift of self that the divine Father and Son give is flawless, because the Father and Son are perfect. The gift of self that the divine Father and Son give is beyond complete (from a human perspective), because everything and everyone owes their existence to God and finds itself in God, and yet God is complete without creation.

The relationship of persons within the Trinity is unique. The eternal unity of the divine Father and Son, within the Triune Godhead, is a mystery so profound that human language struggles to describe its simplest parameters. When the persons of the Trinity give themselves to each other in love, and give themselves to humanity, the gift is so infinitely removed from human ability and understanding as to make direct comparison impossible. While God the Father and God the Son can be said to be differently related (Father-Son, Son-Father), they are dogmatically defined as equally God. Though the Catechism clearly states that "divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood" it acknowledges that the relationship between father and child is not reciprocally

¹¹ John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family*, sec. 2 and sec. 4.

¹² John Paul II, General Audience, *God gradually reveals his fatherhood*. Sec. 1: "It is true however that, on the basis of his experience, man is sometimes tempted to imagine the divinity with anthropomorphic features that too closely reflect the human world. The search for God thus continues "gropingly", as Paul says in his discourse to the Athenians (cf. Acts 17:27)."

¹³ CCC, 40, 42.

equivalent.¹⁴ Both divine and human ‘fatherhood’ are defined in relationship, the Father’s divine fatherhood is revealed in the fact that he begets a Son, while human fatherhood is defined in a comparable manner, the subject, object and nature of the begetting are so different from divine to human that direct comparison is unhelpful.

Another problem of analogy is that God the Father is pure spirit. Any comparison of God’s ‘fatherly’ nature, even analogical comparison, must be offered in the context of a non-corporal relationship. Indeed, we can speak of both mothers and fathers participating in divine ‘Fatherhood.’¹⁵ While human fatherhood is founded in the physical reality of a man, with his wife, begetting another human being who is of his flesh, we can properly speak of human males participating in a kind of spiritual fatherhood. But even this fatherhood is either participation in God’s divine fatherhood by divine invitation and ordination.

The non-corporal nature of God comes into sharp focus when we consider the analogies to God as divine husband and bridegroom. God is first described as husband of His people in the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁶ God is pure spirit and so not only does any analogy which refers to physical intimacy need to be taken in the same careful manner as other anthropomorphisms in Scriptural analogy. This relationship is obviously not conjugal in the sense of a physical, sexual intimacy. Care also needs to be taken in relation to analogies which necessarily involve sexual identity. We cannot speak of God as ‘father’, ‘son’ or ‘bridegroom’ without at least implying a kind of analogical masculinity. Yet this masculinity is clearly analogical in the case of the God the Father, and similarly in conjugal imagery.¹⁷ Even when the New Testament describes Christ as the divine Bridegroom of his Church and the divine Son does take on human flesh and becomes in every way ‘like us’ except for sin, the Scriptures make clear that Christ’s relationships did not include the physical intimacy of a conjugal relationship. Conjugal imagery, even in relation to the incarnate

¹⁴ CCC, 2214 (citing Eph 3:14); CCC, 2215 cites Sir 7:27-28: “through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?”

¹⁵ CCC, 2367: “Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God.” (Citing Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 50:2); John Paul II, *Angelus address*, Vatican website, Feb 7, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/angelus/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19990207.html, sec. 1; John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 8: “Thus every element of human generation which is proper to man, and every element which is proper to woman, namely human “fatherhood” and “motherhood”, bears within itself a likeness to, or analogy with the divine “generating” and with that “fatherhood” which in God is “totally different”.”

¹⁶ E.g. Isa 54:5, Jer 2:2, 31:32, Ez 16:8-14, Hos 2:7, Joel 1:8.

¹⁷ CCC, 239: “We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father.”

Christ, must be taken in the same careful manner as other anthropomorphisms in Scriptural analogy.

Finally, human beings are affected by sin.¹⁸ We cannot look to a direct analogical comparison with any person of the Godhead to discover how to navigate the mess that sin makes of human situations and relationships. Each human father struggles with the same original sin and concupiscence in attempting to live out his fatherhood. In what way can he look to the divine analogy in this? Perhaps only in seeing the persons of the Trinity as analogous examples of the perfect ideal towards which we strive? Even this analogical ‘ideal’ needs to be proposed with careful respect to the sheer impossibility of this majesty and perfection in human males.

We rely on our imperfect powers of observation, perception, and intellect in abstracting from imperfect examples to perfect abstraction. This also assumes that we have some moral capacity to recognise the good from bad, characteristics which can be properly attributable to a good God and those which should never be attributed to Him. But even this uncertainty does not necessarily preclude us from knowing something by means of such a comparison.¹⁹

It is important to distinguish between the nature of human personhood and the limitations imposed upon it by sin. The definition of personhood should first be refined within the context of the discussion of the persons of the Trinity and the personhood of Christ. The Church regards Christ, and the Blessed Trinity as the normative model of personhood, against which all other personhood should be measured. The image of the divine persons in human persons may be constrained by the

¹⁸ CCC, 239: “[E]xperience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood.”; Pius XII, *Humani generis*, sec. 2: “[T]he human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.”;

¹⁹ *Summa Theologiae* 1a.1.9. reply Obj 2: “The ray of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sensible imagery wherewith it is veiled”; CCC, 37; CCC, 38: “[E]nlightened by God’s revelation, ... those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason ... can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.” (citing Pius XII, *Humani generis*, sec. 2); cf. First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius: Dogmatic Constitution on God, revelation and faith* (1870), sec. 2; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec. 6; *Summa Theologiae*, I, I, I.

restrictions of creaturely limitations, but these limitations should be properly distinguished from the detrimental impact of sin on that image.²⁰

The use of analogy

It may seem from the above that we cannot describe or know God from analogy. Yet the Church confidently claims that it is God's will to be understood and that we are able to set forth our understanding of God from revelation.²¹ Revealed truth, however, is not delivered in the form of perfect knowledge of God, infallibly infused directly into our minds. Revelation, in its various forms, uses human language, concepts, thoughts and analogy to reveal the truth of God.²² While acknowledging the limitations of human understanding, the magisterial documents treat certain aspects of the knowledge of God as certain. Given the problems mentioned above, how can we use analogy to obtain understanding of masculinity for the purposes of this study?

The answer to this problem may lie in understanding what Catholic theologians mean by 'analogy'. The Catechism reflects magisterial tendency to follow St Thomas Aquinas on the definition of analogy. Aquinas is cited in Catechism sections on knowing God, on the allegorical and other senses of Scripture, on faith allowing us to see dimly the heavenly reality, and on the difference between God's perfection and human beings' imperfection.²³

Analogy in relation to persons of the Trinity, while problematic for all the reasons above and more, still indicates there are some qualities in God and in human beings that can be compared, even while acknowledging that this quality exists perfectly in God but only proportionally in human beings.²⁴ Most particularly, taking from revealed truth that God created humanity in his own

²⁰ See Joseph Ratzinger "Concerning the notion of persons in theology", *Communio* 17 (Fall 1990), 439-454, for a brief discussion of the notion of persons in theology.

²¹ CCC, 35; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec. 2 and sec. 6.

²² CCC, 40; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec. 12; cf. *Summa Theologiae* 1a.1.9: "It is befitting Holy Writ to put forward divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with natural things."; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: "God too is in some measure "like man", and precisely because of this likeness, he can be humanly known."

²³ CCC, 34, 38, 116, 163, 310. See also CCC, 43: "Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity."

²⁴ cf. *Summa Theologiae* 1a.1.9; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: "God too is in some measure "like man", and precisely because of this likeness, he can be humanly known."; CCC, 40; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, sec. 12; *Dei Veritate* Q.2, Art. XI, R: "[U]nless there were at least some real agreement between creatures and God, His essence would not be the likeness of creatures."

image, we can legitimately compare aspects of the human person as the image of God, in an analogous way, to the God of whom he is an image, since humankind can be said to be like God not only in some accidental way, but in his very essence.²⁵

In saying that we can describe God by means of an analogous comparison, we mean that we can observe a certain virtue or quality in creation or in human beings specifically, that we can abstract that virtue or quality from these imperfect examples in order to speak of a 'perfect' idea of that virtue or quality (insofar as we are capable of comprehending perfection) and propose that such perfection exists perfectly in the being with all perfection, whom we call God.²⁶

When God chooses to reveal his own nature to us by means of analogous comparison to something we know, the result is a clearer understanding of God. When God uses an analogy, He has perfect knowledge of our own experience, the limits of our capacity to understand the things we observe and identifies those virtues and qualities in what we see and experience which best describe those of his own qualities which he holds necessary for us to understand.

God created human beings in his own image. The closest analogical comparison to God that we have access to is ourselves.²⁷ When God refers to himself by analogy to attributes we can readily observe in human beings, it is not merely abstracting that attribute and proposing its perfection in God, it is an acknowledgement that God has created us as an image of himself and, by pointing to those attributes in us, God reveals something of his own nature. This kind of analogy is effective precisely because, by virtue of our creation in the image of God, we participate in what we are attempting to know.

²⁵ CCC, 41: "All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. the manifold perfections of creatures - their truth, their goodness, their beauty all reflect the infinite perfection of God. Consequently we can name God by taking his creatures' perfections as our starting point." (citing Wis 13:5); John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 8.

²⁶ cf. *Summa Theologiae* 1a.1. Q4, Art 2, Ans. (whether the perfection of all things is found in God). "All created perfections are in God."; *Summa Theologiae* 1a.4.3, reply Obj 2: "God is not related to creatures as though belonging to a different "genus," but as transcending every "genus," and as the principle of all "genera.""

²⁷ *Summa Theologiae* 1a.4.3, Ans. (whether any created being can be like God). "On the contrary, it is written: "Let us make man to our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26), and: "When He shall appear we shall be like to Him" (1 Jn. 3:2)."

When God calls himself by a particular name, this seems to be an analogical use, in that it indicates an imperfect attribute in us which is perfect in God, but the comparison is stronger than, surpassing even, other analogies.²⁸ In naming himself ‘Father’, God identifies an aspect of his own nature that is essential to our understanding of God.²⁹ It is this aspect of God’s nature, and its relationships with human masculinity that we will examine in this chapter.

It should be noted that several attributes which are commonly described as ‘feminine’ are used analogously of God.³⁰ It could be said that motherhood also derives from God in an analogous sense, so is there any difference between the analogy for human fatherhood and the analogy for human motherhood? This question has two parts. First, we ask if there is evidence that there are differences between fatherhood and motherhood (content). Second, we ask if there is a difference in the weight or authority of the analogy between fatherhood and motherhood (authority). Does the fact that God not only has father-like qualities but is specifically revealed as “Father” carry more weight than the feminine qualities attributed to God? Not, of course, implying that this makes fatherhood greater than motherhood. The question is about the relative weight of definitions based on analogy and the self-revealed name of God.

Whatever the specific nature of the analogy, the analogical link between human fatherhood and the Fatherhood of God is crucial to the definition of and to practical concerns of human fatherhood.

b. Analogical attributions

i. Analogical attributions of the term “Father” to God

The name into which Christians are baptised, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forms the basis of their participation in the sacramental life of the Church.³¹ Christians insist that God is one and that a Christian baptism is into one name, not three.³² Christians teach that God is three distinct persons

²⁸ *Summa Theologiae* 1a.13.5. “Univocal predication is impossible in creatures. Naming is not univocal, it is an analogy, but analogy of proportion [of God’s perfection.]”

²⁹ *Summa Theologiae* 1a.13.2.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: “This observation on the limits of the analogy - the limits of man's likeness to God in biblical language - must also be kept in mind when, in different passages of Sacred Scripture (especially in the Old Testament), we find *comparisons that attribute to God "masculine" or "feminine" qualities*”.

³¹ CCC, 232: “The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity.”

³² CCC, 233.

in one God. God is three persons but one substance. God is named Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The relationship between these persons, within the one Godhead, is one of the defining features of Christian theology.³³ It is natural, therefore, that we review the Catholic understanding of the persons of the Trinity and their relationship before we explore how these persons and their relationship are relevant to our study of masculinity.

In discussing the persons of the Trinity, Catholics distinguish between the internal life of the Trinity (θεολογια) and the external work of the Trinity (οἰκονομια), speaking of God the Father, in the sense that he is distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit, in terms of his relationship with them within the Trinity.³⁴ In the interests of our study, we should, therefore, examine what is revealed of God the ‘Father’ in relation to the other persons of the Trinity, before we draw any analogical comparisons with human fathers.

According to the Christian tradition, God is revealed as the divine “Father” first and foremost in relation to the Son.³⁵ This aspect of God’s ‘fatherhood’ is not shared with the other members of the Trinity as if it were an external work but is particular to the first person of the Trinity. In eternally ‘begetting’ the Son, the first person of the Trinity is eternally and truly “Father”. What does this ‘fatherhood’ reveal to us about fatherhood in general? God eternally begets a Son, who is consubstantial with himself. There is no implication that the Father’s begetting the Son makes him superior to the Son. The Father and Son are consubstantial, equal in power and majesty and equally glorified. In a similar way, the authority of the Father is set within the same Trinitarian equality. The Son submits himself completely to the Father’s will. Even given the eternal equality, mutual love and consubstantiality of the Father and Son, there is a proper submission of the Son to the Father and that this submission is not exclusive of the perfect equality of Father and Son. In their proper and perfect manifestations neither authority nor submission destroy equality. Rather, they reveal and serve true equality.

By this explanation of Trinitarian relationships, there is nothing self-seeking or self-serving in the Father’s authority. The Father’s ‘authority’ is more properly described as an expression of his

³³ CCC, 234: “The mystery of the Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life.”; CCC, 249.

³⁴ CCC, 236; cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, Q.39, A.7.

³⁵ CCC, 240: “Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father”; CCC, 255.

eternal and perfect self-giving love for the Son. The Son submits himself to the Father's will, which is pure and perfect love, and the Father gives himself eternally in paternal love to the Son. The Spirit proceeds from the love of the Father and Son with the same equality and intimacy which exists between the persons of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is described as the life of the Church and the family, which promotes and preserves true conjugal love.³⁶

Beyond the internal life or 'theological' Trinity are the external works, or economic Trinity. Some of these 'works' are attributed to God the Father by appropriation.³⁷ We can speak, for example, of the Father as 'creator' without denying that the entire Godhead is engaged in the creative act. These attributes, assigned to the persons of the Trinity 'by appropriation' do, in this special way, reveal something of the nature of those persons. Not by way of suggesting that the other persons of the Trinity are excluded from those works, but that, in attributing those particular works to the Father, God has chosen to reveal what He means in inviting us to call him 'Father'.³⁸

There seems to be some understanding of divine 'fatherhood' in many different expressions of religion from the earliest times.³⁹ The origin of things in God, various aspects of His role in creating the world, his continuing authority over heaven and earth and his ongoing fatherly authority over creation are not uncommon themes in religious writings.⁴⁰

The most obvious work of the Trinity appropriated to God the Father is that of creation itself. The Christian creeds name him "maker of heaven and earth", even while acknowledging that all things

³⁶ CCC, 264: "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095)." John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family*, Vatican website, June 4, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1999/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_04061999_family.html, sec. 2: "Just as the Holy Spirit is the life of the Church (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, sec. 7), he must also be the life of the family, the *little domestic church*. For every family he must be the inner principle of vitality and energy, which keeps the flame of conjugal love ever burning in the spouses' reciprocal gift of self."

³⁷ *Summa Theologiae* I, Q.39, A.7, R.1. "The essential attributes are not appropriated to the persons as if they exclusively belonged to them; but in order to make the persons manifest by way of similitude, or dissimilitude, as above explained. So, no error in faith can arise, but rather manifestation of the truth."

³⁸ CCC, 236.

³⁹ Second Vatican Council, Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions *Nostra Aetate* Vatican website, October 28, 1965, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html, sec. 2: "From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father."; CCC, 238. "Many religions invoke God as "Father". The deity is often considered the "father of gods and of men"."

⁴⁰ For a discussion of fatherhood in ancient near Eastern myths see John W Miller *Calling God Father* (Malwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 35-44.

were created “through [Christ]” and that the Holy Spirit is the “Lord and giver of life.”⁴¹ Parents are dignified in sharing in the mystery of creation in that they are entrusted with the conception, raising and education of children.⁴² Mother and Father each have their equally essential participation in this reflection of the creative act of the Godhead. Both are necessary to properly reflect the full ‘image of God’ in this particular respect. While the unique and specific role of a mother is discussed in some detail in some magisterial documents, there are only fleeting references to fatherhood in the same and similar documents.⁴³

The particularity of God’s fatherhood begins to be revealed in the Old Testament where God is described as ‘father’ to specific persons, families, peoples, and nations. Most clearly God describes Israel as his “son”, and uses the analogy of a father-son relationship to describe his relationship to Israel, and to urge them to call on him as divine father.⁴⁴ This fatherhood is not accidental or imposed upon God, it is willed by God. While the relationship between God and his ‘son’ Israel is clearly unequal, this fatherhood is not expressed primarily in terms or even in the context of demands for obedience. The image of God’s fatherhood is almost always revealed in terms of his intimate concern, his claim of fatherhood over against the oppressive ‘ownership’ of worldly authorities or false deities, his acts of redemption, healing, restorative discipline and salvation in relation to his ‘son’, and the ‘son’s’ privileged relationship with the Father.

The image of God as Father is significantly developed in the New Testament and in Christian theology. So that the fathers of the Second Vatican Council can say that God is revealed as the loving Father of all, indeed of all creation.⁴⁵ The Father reveals his salvific love in sending Jesus

⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Part I Section II *Profession of Faith*),

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/credo.htm (accessed 4 July 2018)

⁴² Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 14; sec. 166: “For God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity.”

⁴³ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, secs. 23-25; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, secs. 10 and 24.

⁴⁴ CCC, 238. (cites Ex 4:22); John Paul II, General Audience *God is Father to all Humanity* Vatican Website, October 16, 1985, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19851016.html, secs 1-2. (John Paul II cites Ex 4:22-23, Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14, Is 64:8, 63:16); CCC, 238: “He is “the Father of the poor”, of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection.” (Citing 2 Sam 7:14, Ps 68:6); John Paul II, *God is Father to all Humanity*. sec. 3: “God’s fatherhood is manifested in merciful love, both in regard to Israel and to individuals.” (Citing Ps 27:10, 103:13, Prov 3:12, Sir 23:1-4, Wis 2:18, Jer 31:9).

⁴⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24; Benedict XVI *Angelus*, Vatican website, Jan 8, 2012 http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20120108_battesimo.html.

Christ, through whom he saves us.⁴⁶ Christ introduces us to the Father in a new way, inviting us into the intimacy of his own filial relationship with his Father. Certain of his fatherly attributes are revealed to us explicitly in Christ's teaching. Jesus speaks of God's fatherly care for creation, and specifically for human beings. Most clearly Christ the Son invites us to join him in the intimacy of calling God "Our Father."

The analogous images of the Father's 'grief' over the suffering of the Son are, perhaps, reflected in the cost of parenting. The divine Father's 'sending' of the Son might be seen as a model for parents preparing children for self-sacrificial love and sending them to reflect Christ's ultimate good in the world by their acts of service and love.

When discussing the 'fatherhood' of God can we argue that the divine Father is the model by which all human paternity is defined? Or are we projecting a human pattern of male (or female) parents on an asexual God? If the latter is true, are we projecting a true portrait of human fatherhood or merely a social construct of masculine parenthood? If the former is true, how could we attribute the qualities of a perfect, omnipotent, and infinite spirit onto a decidedly imperfect and finite human male?

On the one hand, Scripture and the magisterial documents insist that all fatherhood derives from God the Father, and exhorting earthly fathers to strive to imitate and exemplify the Heavenly Father in their earthly fatherhood.⁴⁷ The Church finds the divine model and example of human fatherhood in the first person of the Blessed Trinity insofar as God has revealed himself as the 'Father' from whom all fatherhood takes its name.⁴⁸ By analogy to God the Father of all creation, we can deduce a pattern for human parenthood, shared between fathers and mothers in their unique ways.⁴⁹ Is there any significance in the fact that the name itself is masculine. Is the masculine form of the divine name merely grammatical? Is the masculine here merely an unmarked form which implies

⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *General Audience*, Vatican website, June 20, 2012 http://www.vatican.va/latest/sub_index/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120620_en.html: "God the Father [is] the source of the goods of salvation."

⁴⁷ CCC, 2214 (citing Eph 3:14); John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25.

⁴⁸ Eph 3:14-5; cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family*, sec. 1: "In the light of the paternity of God ... human fatherhood and motherhood acquire all their meaning, dignity and greatness."

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane*, sec. 6: "In the light of the New Testament it is possible to discern how *the primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself*, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life." And "This can be said, of course, on the basis of an analogy, thanks to which we can discern, at the very beginning of the Book of Genesis, the reality of fatherhood and motherhood and consequently of the human family."; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 13.

personhood but not specifically male personhood? Or is there some significance in the insistence of God, according to revelation, that God is specifically named “Father” and not “Mother”? Even if we grant some significance in the masculinity of the revealed name, is this significance a relic of a past age, no longer relevant in our more egalitarian society? In his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul II insists that because God is spirit, the Father does not possess physical characteristics of masculinity. He nevertheless insists that “we must nevertheless seek in God the absolute model of all "generation" among human beings.”⁵⁰ This understanding of fatherhood seems limited to the generative capacity of man, when combined with woman. Together man and woman image the creative unity of the Trinity and find in the Trinity their own model and perfect expression, yet John Paul II does not specify any uniquely masculine or feminine attributes.

Our understanding of the concept of ‘fatherhood’ begins in our experience of earthly fatherhood.⁵¹ The revelation of God the Father utilizes human concepts, imagery and language to represent heavenly reality via allegory or example. Scripture and tradition make use of anthropomorphic imagery in their attempts to describe certain aspects of the divine nature and persons.⁵²

The language, imagery and allegory of Scripture and Tradition necessarily utilise our knowledge gained through human experience to express heavenly realities. We must also acknowledge the limits of analogy, especially in relation to the role human experience plays in understanding.⁵³ Even the hurt caused by flawed human fatherhood can point beyond these failures to a model of perfect fatherhood, so that, as Pope John Paul II says, “God's fatherhood seems more solid than human fatherhood.”⁵⁴ Though our understanding of ‘fatherhood’ begins with our experience of human fatherhood, our understanding is by no means restricted to this experience. Analogous comparisons to human fatherhood do not restrict our understanding of what they signify in the divine Trinity to earthly limitations of human fatherhood. The analogous comparisons allow us to

⁵⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8.

⁵¹ John Paul II, General Audience, *God gradually reveals his fatherhood*. sec. 1.

⁵² John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: “Speaking about himself, ... *God speaks in human language*, using human concepts and images. If this manner of expressing himself is characterized by a certain anthropomorphism, the reason is that man is “like” God: created in his image and likeness.”

⁵³ John Paul II, General Audience, *God gradually reveals his fatherhood*. sec. 1: “It is true however that, on the basis of his experience, man is sometimes tempted to imagine the divinity with anthropomorphic features that too closely reflect the human world. The search for God thus continues “gropingly”, as Paul says in his discourse to the Athenians (cf. Acts 17:27). It is therefore necessary to bear in mind this chiaroscuro aspect of religious experience by recognizing that only the full revelation in which God manifests himself can dispel these shadows and ambiguities and make the light shine brightly.”

⁵⁴ John Paul II, General Audience, *God gradually reveals his fatherhood*. sec. 3.

rise to an understanding of the divine truth far greater than could ever be manifest in an earthly father.⁵⁵

ii. Analogical attributions of the term “Son” to God

Continuing our review of analogical comparison of masculinity to the persons of the Blessed Trinity, we must consider magisterial teaching about the second person of the Trinity, God revealed as “Son”. In the Hebrew Scriptures the term ‘son of God’ is used of angelic beings, and certain humans specifically chosen by God, as an expression of their intimacy with God.⁵⁶ Even when used to refer to future ‘messiah’ king the terms it seems to portray an earthly reflection of God’s heavenly authority, but not necessarily that the king was divine in himself.⁵⁷ It is in the New Testament that Christ is revealed clearly as the divine Son.⁵⁸ Christians begin with the incarnation of the Son as the starting point for concrete understanding of God.⁵⁹ According to *Gaudium et spes* “the mystery of the Father and his love fully reveals man to himself and makes clear his supreme calling”, which is to share in the divine mystery of the life of the Trinity.⁶⁰

While both the fatherhood of the first person of the Trinity and the sonship of the second person can be described in relational and analogous terms, the core of Christian doctrine is that the second person of the Trinity became incarnate in human flesh. In our consideration of what is revealed about God, and how that can be applied analogously to human masculinity, we cannot overlook the fact that the second person of the Blessed Trinity was incarnate as a human male. The Son’s humanity is a male humanity, and the Church clearly regards this as not irrelevant to his person and work. In 2004 The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith warned against blurring of the

⁵⁵ *Summa Theologiae* I, Q.1, A.9, R.2. “The ray of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sensible imagery wherewith it is veiled, ... and its truth so far remains that it does not allow the minds of those to whom the revelation has been made, to rest in the metaphors, but raises them to the knowledge of truths”.

⁵⁶ CCC, 441: “It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature.”

⁵⁷ CCC, 441: “When the promised Messiah-King is called “son of God”, it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human.”

⁵⁸ CCC, 442-445.

⁵⁹ John Paul II Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio: on the Relationship between Faith and Reason* Vatican website, Sep 14, 1998, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html, sec. 12.

⁶⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 22. c.f John Paul II *Fides et ratio*, sec. 13.

sexes precisely because it renders irrelevant and unimportant Christ's male humanity.⁶¹ Identifying the boundaries of its significance, particularly for the purposes of this study, is problematic to say the least.

Is Christ's human masculinity merely an expression of the cultural expectations and limitations of first century Palestine? Or is it a significant aspect of the revelation of God the Son? Aquinas suggests, for example, that since Christ came as teacher, guide and champion of the human race, it was proper that He was incarnate as a male, not a female, because these do not belong to her.⁶² But is this an obsolete view in a world society where teachers, guides and champions may also be female?

While God remains completely 'other' to creation, the analogies of the revelation of God as both Father and Son are stronger than mere poetic imagery. Some scholars suggest that "Sonship", within the context of biblical revelation, entails that the son is the heir to the goods of the father, not merely in the sense of possessions, but in the sense of all that belongs to the father.⁶³ According to this theory, these goods include the good name (reputation, authority), heritage, inheritance, and access to anything which has been promised to a father's line. While not excluding females from this inheritance, it is clear that this imagery of sons carries much weight, not only in the biblical accounts but also in much of the Church's history until recent times. On the son, particularly on the firstborn, fell the burden of carrying on the family name, by living up to that name, by honouring and preserving all the goods associated with that name, by begetting and raising a son, and by faithfully passing on those goods to the next generation.

⁶¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world*, sec. 3, warns against blurring the distinction between the sexes on the basis that (among other things) "... this tendency would consider as lacking in importance and relevance the fact that the Son of God assumed human nature in its male form."

⁶² Aquinas, Sent.III.D12.Q3.A1.qa2.2. "*De congruitate autem loquendo, quia Christus venit ut doctor et rector et propugnator humani generis, quae mulieri non competunt; ideo nec competens fuit quod sexum femineum assumeret.*"

⁶³ See, for example Brandon D. Crowe, *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 118-119; Stefan-Sebastian Maftci, "'Sonship' and its relevance for Jewish and Non-Jewish Mystical Literatures." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 8, no. 23 (Summer, 2009), 141-153; Jacques van Ruiten "Divine Sonship in the Book of Jubilees" in *The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity*, ed. Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 85-113; Chi Ming Yam, "Jesus's Eternal Sonship, Kingship, and High Priesthood in Hebrews." Order No. 13841025, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2018. <http://ipacez.nd.edu.au/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ipacez.nd.edu.au/docview/2182787127?accountid=41561>.

Even so, it could be argued the biblical themes, and the analogous comparisons built upon them, rest within social conditions that insist on a masculine heir. In a culture where females and males may both inherit, are considered equally important in carrying the family responsibilities and name, is the maleness of Jesus Christ still a necessary component of this revelation of the second person of the Trinity as “son”? What would be lost to refer to the second person of the Trinity as the “only begotten child”? This non-gendered term seems to account for some of the relational aspect of the analogy, but it fails to account for the gendering in the naming of both the Father and the Son. It also fails to account for the specific masculinity of the incarnate Jesus Christ.

If we can apply the image of “son” as heir to the second person of the Trinity, Christ’s sonship entails his faithfulness to what he has received from the Father, his ownership of all that is the Father’s, name, reputation, heritage, and all that has been promised by God in relation to himself. The divine Son carries the name and lives out the incarnate reality of the love of the divine Trinity, and faithfully passing that love on through those he made ‘sons of God’ through belief in him. These son’s and heirs of God now carry his name and with it the privilege and responsibility to honour, preserve and pass on the ‘goods’ of this divine heritage.⁶⁴ This aspect of the ancient concept of ‘sonship’ as heir to the father is analogous to God the Son, and in turn reveals something of the attributes of sonship that human sons seek to imitate and fulfil insofar as is possible. If we grant this in the context of ancient civilisation, is the value of the analogy limited to those civilisations? Does this analogy speak to a society in which inheritance and related categories are not necessarily determined according to the masculine heir?

The love of God the Father for and through his Son reveals that God’s love is not merely general overarching love of all creation, applied equally across all things. Love without a focus becomes merely general goodwill to all. The particularity of love is revealed in the incarnation. The love of God for his Son and through his Son reveals that divine love seeks out its object. This kind of love is specific. True love, God’s love, seeks out a specific object and loves with the passion of Father to a Son and Son to Father. The Father’s most clear demonstration and specific definition of love

⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 22.

is that He sent his only Son to save sinful, fallen, and lost humanity.⁶⁵ The extent of God's love is demonstrated by Christ. The depth of Christ's extraordinary love is revealed in the "speech and imagery" of the most mundane elements of ordinary life, but most clearly demonstrated in His suffering and death for us.⁶⁶

iii. Analogical attribution of the term "Bridegroom" or "Husband" to God

One of the images used in Scripture and Tradition to describe the nature of God's love for humanity is the image of God as a Bridegroom.⁶⁷ The image of the God, who is 'other', as bridegroom is problematic in that it presents the almighty God as a spouse of finite human beings yet expresses some essential aspects of the nature of God's love for his people.⁶⁸ The analogy portrays the relationship between God and his people in terms of a bond of mutual self-giving love, a marriage, which draws the bride closer to the heavenly Bridegroom.⁶⁹ When the analogy is addressed to Israel's rejection of God through sinful behaviour, the depth and nature of this betrayal is described in terms of marital infidelity.⁷⁰ God is described as a "jealous" husband, claiming exclusive right to his bride's love and devotion.⁷¹ Human infidelity is described in terms of adultery, unfaithfulness and even prostitution often contrasted to God's eternal and unchanging love.⁷²

⁶⁵ John 3:16.

⁶⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 32: "He revealed the love of the Father and the sublime vocation of man in terms of the most common of social realities and by making use of the speech and the imagery of plain everyday life." (citing wedding at Cana.); Phil 2:5-11; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 32: "as the redeemer of all, He offered Himself for all even to point of death. "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13)".

⁶⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 12; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, 9.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane*, sec. 19: "For rationalism it is unthinkable that God should be the Redeemer, much less *that he should be "the Bridegroom"*, the primordial and unique source of the human love between spouses."; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9.

⁶⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor*, sec. 10: "[T]he One who, faithful to his love for man, gives him his Law (cf. Ex 19:9-24 and 20:18-21) in order to restore man's original and peaceful harmony with the Creator and with all creation, and, what is more, to draw him into his divine love: "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (*Lev 26:12*)."; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 20.

⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 12.

⁷¹ The claim of exclusive and intimate relationship of His people is expressed frequently in Scripture. (Ex 20:5, 34:14, Duet 4:24, 5:9, 6:15, Josh 24:19, Nah 1:2, cf. 2Co 11:2). A jealousy provoked by the infidelity of his 'bride' (Duet 32:16, 21, 1Ki 14:22, Ps 78:58) and occasionally expressed as human zeal for God (1Ki 19:10, 14, Jn 3:29-30) or of a jealous husband for his wife (Num 5:14); Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9.

⁷² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9: "If, in this relationship, God can be described as a "jealous God" (cf. Ex 20:5; Nah 1:2) and Israel denounced as an "adulterous" bride or "prostitute" (cf. Hos 2:4-15; Ez 16:15-34)."

God's love and fidelity is expressed in terms of a marital relationship, as the model of both spousal relationships and of fidelity between God and humankind. While the intimacy of spousal love is expressed in both masculine and feminine ways, both in their own way an image of the intimacy of the communion within the Holy Trinity, recent magisterial documents do not hesitate to describe the image of God as the Bridegroom is a specifically masculine image.⁷³ This view is not universally shared among biblical scholars. Othmar Keel, for example, commenting on the Hebrew Scriptures, suggests that the spousal analogy (when describing God and Israel) is limited to the "legal aspects of the relationship" and does not include "sexual or erotic symbolism."⁷⁴ Other scholars see explicitly sexual, even pornographic imagery used in Hosea and Ezekiel, for example, but see this imagery as overwhelmingly negative.⁷⁵

While the analogy of God as the jealous lover of his bride is one among many analogous images used to describe the relationship between God and humankind in the Old Testament, the analogy of Christ as Bridegroom to his Church takes prominence in Catholic theology as a revelation of this spousal aspect of God.⁷⁶ According to this analogous representation of Christ, the Bridegroom purifies His bride, the Church. This combines the image of bridegroom with that of a redemptive sacrifice. In this gift of self, this definitive act of love, the Bridegroom's self-sacrifice purifies her and wins her for himself.⁷⁷ The purpose of God's sacrificial and spousal love is to restore to himself a pure bride who will join him in rejoicing over the blessed union between her and the Bridegroom.⁷⁸ This rejoicing is not described in abstract terms but the analogy of conjugal love

⁷³ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: "In many passages God's love is presented as the "masculine" love of the bridegroom and father (cf. *Hosea* 11:1-4; *Jer* 3:4-19), but also sometimes as the "feminine" love of a mother."; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9, speaks of "the male figure of the suffering Servant as well as to the female figure of Zion."

⁷⁴ Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), Kindle Edition, Introduction: Typological and Allegorical Recasting.

⁷⁵ Hosea 2, Ezekiel 16:15-19, 23-29; 23:1-21, See Athalya Brenner, "On Jeremiah and the Poetics of (Prophetic?) Pornography." *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 26, no. 2 (1993), 9-14. Accessed September 30, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41443137>; Mahri Leonard-Fleckman, "Scribal Innovation, Education, and the Female Body in Ezekiel and Proverbs." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no. 1 (2019): 35-50. muse.jhu.edu/article/723461.

⁷⁶ CCC, 796, 808.

⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 13.

⁷⁸ Eph 5:25-27: "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her..., that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish"; Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 10; "John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 19; cf. John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 23- 25; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9; On God's rejoicing see Is 62:5, and the human

extends to describe the joy of intimate union between God, the Bridegroom and his bride, which is his people, or his Church.⁷⁹ The Eucharistic feast which is the heart of Christian life, is described in terms of a sacramental union between Christ the Bridegroom and His bride, the Church.⁸⁰ This conjugal, even erotic image of love indicates the reciprocity and specificity of love. Reciprocity in that love is not limited to the adoration and devotion that God is due simply by virtue of being God, but that He loves *first* in order that His bride may love Him completely in return. Specificity in that God's love is not merely a generic benevolence toward creation as a whole but a love that actively seeks out its object and passionately engages with her.⁸¹ The way this conjugal analogy is used cannot be reduced to a mere metaphor but reveals something of the Christian belief about the nature of the relationship which God enables and enters with his Bride.⁸² While Christ is incarnate and representative of all humanity, His self-revelation as the Bridegroom, in relation to his bride, the Church, is properly masculine. Christ's masculinity portrays Him as the fulfilment of the Bridegroom imagery of the Old Testament, and the incarnate reality of God's desire for conjugal intimacy with his bride.⁸³

response Hos 2:17; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9.

⁷⁹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est: on Christian Love*, Vatican website, Dec 25, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html, sec. 10, indicates that the unmistakably conjugal love celebrated in the *Song of Songs* is “well known to the mystics” and that its place in the canon can be “explained by the idea that these love songs ultimately describe God's relation to man and man's relation to God.”; cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 73.

⁸⁰ Benedict XVI Post Synodic Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Vatican website, Feb 22, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html, sec. 27: ““The Eucharist is the sacrament of our redemption. It is the sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.” Moreover, “the entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church.””; citing Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26 and CCC, 1617; cf. Eph 5:31-32.

⁸¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 6. Benedict XVI distinguishes between love described by the Hebrew word (אהבה) (Greek ἔρως) and the love described by the Hebrew (אהבה) (Greek ἀγάπη), but insists that these work together to complete the image of God's love. Seeking love initiates and focuses love, which is then completed and fulfilled, not in the renunciation of seeking, but in its purification in unity with steadfast love.

⁸² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9.

⁸³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 10: “On the one hand, Mary, the chosen daughter of Zion, in her femininity, sums up and transfigures the condition of Israel/Bride waiting for the day of her salvation. On the other hand, the masculinity of the Son shows how Jesus assumes in his person all that the Old Testament symbolism had applied to the love of God for his people, described as the love of a bridegroom for his bride.”

iv. Analogical attribution of the term ‘Lord’ to God

The Catechism of the Catholic Church cites the Scriptures ascribing to Christ the Holy Name of God (יהוה) used in the Old Testament. Such was their reverence for the divine name that Israelites habitually substituted the holy name with ‘adoni (אֲדֹנָי), usually translated as ‘Lord’. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, this word is translated κυριε (Lord). Although the use of κύριε in the New Testament warrants more complex discussion, there is at least an element of the Old Testament meaning in its use there.⁸⁴ The Scriptures record Christ claiming the title for himself and many characters in the Gospels proclaim him Lord in both a veiled and an open manner.⁸⁵ This lordship is asserted over-against worldly authorities and over all creation.⁸⁶

While there are various theological aspects to this name, and of Christ’s claim to it, for the purpose of our study we will focus on where it intersects with the human family, described in magisterial documents as “a domestic Church”. In this context, magisterial documents explicitly compare the role of the husband analogously to Christ as the “Lord” of the Church.⁸⁷ The specificity of this ‘Lordship’ seems to lend weight to the thesis that Lordship carries a masculine hue. The Lordship of Christ reveals something, albeit analogously, of the nature of masculinity within a Christian marriage. While there has been relatively little attention given to this aspect of divine analogy in recent magisterial teaching, there have been some historical attempts to use this title to attribute a kind of dominance to the husband and to demand the submission of his wife to his “lordship”. In addition to examining its application to human masculinity in the second half of this chapter, the fourth chapter of this thesis will examine John Paul II’s examination of some misinterpretations of masculine “lordship” in his *Theology of the Body*.

⁸⁴ CCC, 446-448; For a discussion of the use of “lord” in the New Testament and its relationship with the tetragrammaton, see Jason A. Staples “Lord, Lord: Jesus as YHWH in Matthew and Luke.” *New Testament Studies* 64, no. 1 (2018): 1-19; Cristian Daniel Cardozo Mindiola. “Transfondo del Título Kyrios: un Debate Revisitado.” *Cuestiones Teológicas* 45, no. 103 (Jan, 2018): 97.

⁸⁵ CCC, 447 (citing Ps 110, 1 Cor 2:8); CCC, 448 (citing Mt 22:41-46; Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13, Lk 1:43, 2:11, Jn 20:28, Jn 21:7).

⁸⁶ cf. Phil 2:5-11.

⁸⁷ CCC, 2204, (citing John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 21; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 11); Cf. Eph 5:21b: 4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Pet 3:1-7.

c. Human masculinity

While the above consideration of analogies to masculinity in the Trinity are often interwoven with human examples, of husband, fathers and men in general, the paragraphs that follow will explore the Church's teaching specifically related to human masculinity. First by examining the magisterial texts on the of men and women, their equality, complementarity and communion, and then by relating each of the analogical comparisons to God, described above, to human masculinity.

i. Equality of male and female

Masculine (or feminine) analogies to the Trinity notwithstanding, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, citing Scripture, insists that God is pure spirit and therefore clearly neither male nor female.⁸⁸ Yet the distinction between man and woman is still presented as God's intention, created by God, and expressing something of the nature of the same God.⁸⁹ According to this logic, male and female are intended to exist in communion and complementarity with each other, but each is a 'perfect' instance of humanity in him/herself.⁹⁰ While each is perfectly human, man and woman more completely express "something of the infinite perfection of God" when joined together as husband and wife, mother and father.⁹¹ Neither equality nor personal freedom are retarded by the mutual bonds of marriage and family. They are, rather, a means by which equality and freedom are properly expressed.

Following this logic, any attempt to justify dominance of husbands or males over females in general, either by violence or other forms of power are categorically rejected as incompatible with the equal dignity assigned to both sexes.⁹² In fact, since they must be equal in dignity, respect and

⁸⁸ CCC, 370, citing Isa 49:14-15; 66:13; Ps 131:2-3; Hos 11:1-4; Jer 3:4-19.

⁸⁹ CCC, 372: "Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons."

⁹⁰ CCC, 371: "Man discovers woman as another 'I', sharing the same humanity."

⁹¹ CCC 370.

⁹² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 53: "Surely it is legitimate and right to reject older forms of the traditional family marked by authoritarianism and even violence."; sec. 54: "Unacceptable customs still need to be eliminated. I think particularly of the shameful ill-treatment to which women are sometimes subjected, domestic violence and various forms of enslavement which, rather than a show of masculine power, are craven acts of cowardice. The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union."

worth, any attempt to reduce either masculinity or femininity reduces both. Any true attempt to raise the dignity and worth of one sex equally raises the other, since they are defined by each other.⁹³

This nuanced position is incompatible with any false distinction, antagonism, or confusion between the sexes. Letters and ambassadorial interventions of representatives of the Vatican have expressed concern over false distinctions which may be hidden under the term ‘gender’.⁹⁴ The concern is that some use the term “gender” in a manner that seems to be based on an ideology that denounces or ignores physical differences between the sexes as definitive in any way and prefers to describe the differences between man and woman as cultural and/or social constructs.⁹⁵ While this blurring of the objective distinction between man and woman may derive from some good intentions, namely the desire to speak out against a false elevation of either male or female, or to avoid unhelpful and damaging stereotypes, or even direct discrimination against women, the term ‘gender’ or, more specifically, the ideology often hidden within or even underpinning its use, includes a denial of the reality that every individual human being is necessarily incarnate in one of the two sexes.⁹⁶ The attempt to free women from a perceived ‘biological determinism’ has tended to result in the lessening or even denial of the biological and other distinctions male and female,

⁹³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 53.

⁹⁴ cf. John Paul II *Message to the Pontifical Council for the Family on the 20th anniversary of the post synodal apostolic exhortation Familiaris Consortio*, Vatican website, Nov 22, 2001, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/pont_messages/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20011123_card-trujillo-family.html, sec. 3: “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 a cause of concern.”; *Statement of the Holy See delegation at the 63rd Session of the general assembly of the United Nations on the declaration of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity* Vatican website, Dec 18, 2008, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2008/documents/rc_seg-st_20081218_statement-sexual-orientation_en.html; *Intervention by the Holy See at the 60th World Health assembly Geneva*, Vatican website, May 16, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2007/documents/rc_seg-st_20070521_who_en.html, sec. 2.

⁹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 2; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 56: “It needs to be emphasized that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated”.

⁹⁶ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, sec. 12; *Intervention by the Holy See delegation to the 23rd special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations – “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century”*, refers to protecting women against violence, sexual exploitation, (sex trade, prostitution and forced marriages), and from being forced from the home to work as offences against “gender equality” and that “[f]acing these challenges and reaching these goals are the responsibility of the entire human community”.

and the communion between them which forms the basis of all human society, the family.⁹⁷ The attempt to free women (or men) from biological determinism often proposes the alternative of direct self-determination. Rejecting the created order, men and women seek to define themselves or, at the very least, their ‘gender’, according to their own self-perception, desires or needs.⁹⁸

Another attempt to address inequality has been to imagine that the sexes are involved in some sort of power struggle. Magisterial concern has been expressed over various attempts to promote the value of men or women which have resulted in undermining the importance, equality and value of the opposite sex.⁹⁹ Still more concerns were expressed when these well intentioned efforts to combat discrimination against women result in attempts to portraying women as masculine.¹⁰⁰ These attempted answers do not reflect the truth about men and women, nor do they provide a way for men and women to know and seek their own fulfilment.¹⁰¹ An equal right to political and

⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 11; *Statement of the Holy See delegation to the economic and social council on gender equality and empowerment of women. Statement by H.E. Msgr Celestino Migliore apostolic nuntio*, Vatican website, July 1, 2010,

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2010/documents/rc_seg-st_20100609_migliore-gender_en.html; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 2: “This theory of the human person, intended to promote prospects for equality of women through liberation from biological determinism, has in reality inspired ideologies which, for example, call into question the family.”; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 56: “Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family.”

⁹⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 3: “According to this perspective, human nature in itself does not possess characteristics in an absolute manner: all persons can and ought to constitute themselves as they like, since they are free from every predetermination linked to their essential constitution.”; Benedict XVI, *Address to the members of the Roman Curia for the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings*, Vatican website, Dec 22, 2008, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081222_curia-romana.html, sec. 1: “If the Church speaks of the nature of the human being as man and woman, ... [t]o 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.”

⁹⁹ *Intervention by the Holy See at the 61st session of the General assembly of the United Nations on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women*, Mar 8, 2007: “It seems, in fact, that oftentimes the ideas on the equality of rights between men and women have been marked by an antagonistic approach which exalts opposition between them. This approach juxtaposes woman against man and vice-versa, while the identity and role of one is emphasized with the aim of merely diminishing that of the other.”

¹⁰⁰ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, sec. 12: “How often is the role of women in business or professional life depicted as a masculine caricature, a denial of the specific gifts of feminine insight, compassion, and understanding, which so greatly contribute to the ‘civilization of love.’” Cf. John Paul II, Message for the 30th World Communications Day, *The Media: The Modern Forum for promoting the Role of Women in Society*, Vatican website, Jan 24, 1996, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_24011996_world-communications-day.html.

¹⁰¹ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 8; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican website, April, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_comp

economic opportunities should not mean that individuals should ignore or renounce their sexual identity. On the contrary, whatever task or role they take up should be expressed according to their masculinity or femininity.¹⁰²

Several documents point out that emphasising the differences in gifts, role and contributions of man and woman by no means makes one greater than the other in dignity or value.¹⁰³ Indeed, “equality is not sameness, and difference is not inequality.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, following the line of magisterial teaching, it is the denial of the distinction between man and woman that in fact leads to a respective lessening of the value of each sex. Portraying woman as a ‘masculine’ character denies the unique and irreplaceable contribution of her femininity.¹⁰⁵ Recent Catholic teaching has emphasised the positive and unique gifts each sex offers to the whole, speaking specifically of a “feminine genius”, an equal and irreplaceable contribution offered by women, which is downplayed, suppressed or undermined by attempts to blur the distinctions between men and women.¹⁰⁶ The cure for the malady of sexual inequality against women is not a blurring of the distinctions but an identification and celebration of the gifts unique to women.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, it seems

[endio-dott-soc_en.html](#), sec. 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.” (Emphasis original.) Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 8.

¹⁰² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 23.

¹⁰³ For example, John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 10; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 22: “Above all it is important to underline the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men. This equality is realized in a unique manner in that reciprocal self-giving by each one to the other and by both to the children which is proper to marriage and the family.”

¹⁰⁴ *Statement of the Holy See delegation to the economic and social council on gender equality and empowerment of women. Statement by H.E. Msgr Celestino Migliore apostolic nuntio* July 1, 2010; cf. *Papal Message to UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China*, sec. 3.

¹⁰⁵ John Paul II, Message for the 30th World Communications Day, *The Media: The Modern Forum for promoting the Role of Women in Society*. “How often is the role of women in business or professional life depicted as a masculine caricature, a denial of the specific gifts of feminine insight, compassion, and understanding, which so greatly contribute to the civilization of love?” cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, sec. 12; *Statement of the Holy See delegation to the economic and social council on gender equality and empowerment of women. Statement by H.E. Msgr Celestino Migliore apostolic nuntio* Jul 1, 2010; cf. *Papal Message to UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China*, sec. 3.

¹⁰⁶ cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, Vatican website, March 25, 1995,

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html, sec. 99; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 30; The Latin phrase “*ingenii muliebris*” does not imply merely intellectual superiority on the basis of sex but refers to a quality, disposition and natural character; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 31.

¹⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, sec. 99, calls the media “to promote a “new feminism” which rejects the temptation of imitating models of “male domination”, in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society.”; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 30.

that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the victories won by the heroic faith of individuals are not indifferent to sexual distinction. Virtues, gifts and sanctified lives produce fruits in keeping with the sex they properly belong to.¹⁰⁸

Far from being unconcerned with equality, magisterial interventions insist that, without recognising the difference and complementarity of men and women, the search for equality is not authentic.¹⁰⁹ The differences between man and woman should not be juxtaposed, nor blurred in false attempts to emphasise their differences or equality respectively. According to this measure, true equality calls for this antagonism between the sexes to be replaced by mutual respect and recognition of the uniqueness and essential nature of both sexes.¹¹⁰ A man should seek to live out his vocation making full and proper use of the rich gift of manhood to express that aspect of the image and likeness of God that is specifically and uniquely his own.

ii. Complementarity between male and female

The purpose of magisterial documents celebrating the differences between men and women is not restricted to emphasising equality of the sexes. They claim that there is a divine purpose to the distinction and difference between male and female, masculine and feminine. Human beings were created, intended and celebrated as male and female because man and woman are *together* declared to be “the image of God.”¹¹¹ This distinction goes beyond mere biological determinism, or social constructs to every aspect of the person.¹¹² By this logic, sexual distinction is essential to the nature

¹⁰⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 31: “The Church ... gives thanks for all *the fruits of feminine holiness.*”

¹⁰⁹ *Statement of the Holy See delegation to the economic and social council on gender equality and empowerment of women. Statement by H.E. Msgr Celestino Migliore apostolic nuntio; cf. Papal Message to UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China:* “In the Church’s outlook, women and men have been called by the Creator to live in profound communion with one another with reciprocal knowledge and giving of self, acting together for the common good with the complementary characteristics of that which is feminine and masculine.”

¹¹⁰ *Intervention by the Holy See at the 61st session of the General assembly of the United Nations on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women*, March 8, 2007.

¹¹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 5; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 6; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8.

¹¹² Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love – Outlines for Sex Education*, Vatican website, Nov 1, 1983,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html, sec. 4: “Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality”; 5: “Sexuality characterises man and woman not only on the physical level, but also on the psychological and spiritual”; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8. “[Sexual difference] cannot be reduced to a pure and insignificant biological fact, but rather is a fundamental component of personality.”; Pontifical

of humanity.¹¹³ In making this distinction, the magisterial documents do not seek to rob or diminish the value of either sex but, rather, enhances the equality and dignity of both. While this distinction does have some practical implications, the distinction is no mere division of tasks, skills or attributes.¹¹⁴ It claims that, from the very beginning, God intended a “marvellous complementarity” between man and woman.¹¹⁵ Sexuality is, therefore, a foundational component of human beings. It manifests itself in our modes of being, feeling, communicating and loving.¹¹⁶

According to this blueprint of humanity, one aspect of man and woman’s ‘imaging’ God is their communion with each other.¹¹⁷ The complete equality and communion of love that is perfected in the Holy Trinity is reflected in human beings, specifically in our orientation toward the other.¹¹⁸ Masculine and the feminine find their definition and fulfilment in their relationship with the other. This relationship is properly expressed and fulfilled in the basic unit of society, the family.¹¹⁹ Humanity only finds its full realisation in the full, healthy, and equal duality of the “masculine” and the “feminine”.¹²⁰ The duality described in magisterial teaching is no mere partnership. It is a complete gift of self, in which the gifts and the givers are mutually fulfilled and, together, participate in the fulfilment of God’s original plan.¹²¹ This fulfilment in duality does not mean that men or women are somehow not completely human if they are not actively engaged in ‘communing’ with someone of the opposite sex.¹²² It implies that there is a certain orientation of

Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, sec. 224: “Physical, moral and spiritual *difference* and *complementarities* are oriented towards the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life.”

¹¹³ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 2; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education *Education Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 25. (Citing Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 49).

¹¹⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 8: “Womanhood and manhood are complementary *not only from the physical and psychological points of view*, but also from the *ontological*.”

¹¹⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World, *Dilecti Amici*, sec. 10.

¹¹⁶ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 4.

¹¹⁷ John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 3; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 7.

¹¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24, (reflecting on John 17:21-22) “a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity”; John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 3: “Reciprocity and complementarity are the two fundamental characteristics of the human couple.”; John Paul II *Dilecti Amici*, sec. 10; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 11: “The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection.”

¹¹⁹ CCC, 2203: “In creating man and woman, God instituted the human family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution.”

¹²⁰ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 7; The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 6.

¹²¹ John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 3.

¹²² John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 3: “Even though man and woman are made for each other, this does not mean that God created them incomplete”.

human beings to the other, a mutual reciprocity and complementarity which seeks out the other and finds itself fulfilled in the communion of the two.¹²³

This presentation of a “communion of persons” is not limited to the bodily dimension, yet it does not downplay the importance of bodily union.¹²⁴ According to this communion, man is made for woman and woman for man, masculinity is for femininity and femininity for masculinity. Both should be understood primarily in relation to the other. Both are defined and fulfilled in being given wholly over to their complementary other.¹²⁵ The physical union between man and woman, properly between husband and wife, represents and entails the entire union of persons to which humanity is fundamentally ordered.¹²⁶ This gift of self is founded in the revelation of the heavenly ‘Bridegroom’ specifically and ultimately revealed in Christ, who gave himself completely in love for his bride, the Church.¹²⁷ This spousal aspect of humanity both enables and exhorts individuals to express their humanity in love as a profound gift of self to the other.¹²⁸

Shared parenthood, too, is not merely defined by having participated in the biological beginnings of another human individual, it is properly and fully expressed in the union of mother and father, jointly expressing their share in the fatherhood of God through their gift of themselves, together, to the offspring of their union.¹²⁹ Joined in conjugal love, the union of persons is invited to share

¹²³ John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 3; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 25.

¹²⁴ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 5: “Sexual intercourse, ordained towards procreation, is the maximum expression on the physical level of the communion of love of the married.”

¹²⁵ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Education Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 25.

¹²⁶ John Paul II, *General Audience* Vatican website, Jan 9, 1980, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19800109.html, reprinted in *A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books Media, 1997), 14:4: “The body, which expresses femininity 'for' masculinity and, vice-versa, masculinity 'for' femininity, manifests the reciprocity and communion of persons. It expresses it by means of the gift as the fundamental characteristic of personal existence”; Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education *Education Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 24; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter on Christian Education *Divini Illius Magistri*, Vatican website, Dec 31, 1921, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html, sec. 68.

¹²⁷ John Paul II, *Dilecti Amici*, sec. 10.

¹²⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 48: “By virtue of this sacrament, as spouses fulfil their conjugal and family obligation, they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ, which suffuses their whole lives with faith, hope and charity. Thus they increasingly advance the perfection of their own personalities, as well as their mutual sanctification, and hence contribute jointly to the glory of God.”

¹²⁹ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 23: *The family, fatherhood and motherhood all go together.*; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth, *Humanae Vitae*, Vatican website Jul 25, 1968, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html, sec.

in the work of God as creator in the conception and nurture of children. This community of love forms the foundation of all human society.¹³⁰

iii. Man as Father

In magisterial documents, masculinity is intimately related to fatherhood, both in the sense of a man's immediate family and of a wider and more general 'spiritual fatherhood'. In these documents, "fatherhood" is not limited to being a biological father. All men are called to exercise a kind of spiritual fatherhood appropriately according to their situation. According to this account of fatherhood, man is engaged in revealing and living out the love of God the Father within his circumstances, be it in his immediate family or the world at large. The Catechism reads the Scriptures presentation of Abraham as the father of all believers as presenting fatherhood as simultaneously a source of faith, an example of faith and the prototype of all things faith begins and nurtures to maturity.¹³¹ Pope John Paul II goes further, saying that a man who gives himself over to the development of all members of his family is, in cooperation with his wife, revealing and reliving "the very fatherhood of God".¹³² Fatherhood, he says, united with motherhood, is a "particular proof of love", a reflection of divine love so deep that, when approached within a relationship with God in prayer, enable both man and woman to discover the true depths of God's love.¹³³ Through these specific lifelong gifts of self, man unites himself to the Father's love by which he aims to heal of the whole world.¹³⁴ This fatherly aspect of masculinity is distinct from, but intertwined with the love of husband for his wife. The love between husband and wife begins with seeking love for each other, which is purified and completed in becoming self-giving love, and finds its full fruition when that love bears fruit in bringing children into the world. In the gift of self to his wife, which also facilitates giving themselves wholly to the wellbeing and development of children, the man participates in, and imitates the love of God the Father.¹³⁵ It is

10; cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 68; cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 177.

¹³⁰ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 6; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, sec. 224.

¹³¹ CCC 145-147.

¹³² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25; cf. Edith Stein *Collected Works*, 73: "[F]atherhood appears as an original calling of man assigned to him along with his special vocation."

¹³³ John Paul II *Gratissimam sane*, sec. 7.

¹³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 9.

¹³⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25.

in the specificity of these relationships that love takes its concrete form. According to Pope Benedict XVI, in committing himself to one woman, and to their children, a man shares in the ‘elective’ nature of God’s ‘seeking’ love. This love that specifically seeks out its object finds its fulfilment in complete self-gift to the one sought.¹³⁶

It is difficult to speak of being a man apart from the context of an immediate family.¹³⁷ In Catholic understanding, this familial aspect of humanity is deeper than mundane reproduction or social need. The man, together with his wife, is invited to participate in the divine mystery of creation through the conception, nurture and education of children within their family.¹³⁸ The family is described as the basic unit of society, in which individuals are nurtured, educated and formed into persons who are equipped to give themselves, in turn, to their own participation in the selfless love of God.¹³⁹ Within this community of love, parents cooperate with the creator, and individuals find their first experience of love and, from it, both implicitly and explicitly, learn of the love that God has for them.

The magisterial documents urge husband and wife to strive for a unity of mind, heart, and action in order to more fully reflect the unity which governs the Triune God they, according to this theology, in this small way, represent.¹⁴⁰ But this community of love is not formed or maintained without much self-sacrificial love. The family is described as a ‘school of deeper humanity’ in

¹³⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 6: “[In Song of Songs] two different Hebrew words are used to indicate “love”. First there is the word *dodim*, a plural form suggesting a love that is still insecure, indeterminate and searching. This comes to be replaced by the word *ahabà*, ... By contrast with an indeterminate, “searching” love, this word expresses the experience of a love which involves a real discovery of the other, moving beyond the selfish character that prevailed earlier. Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.”

¹³⁷ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 36.

¹³⁸ John Paul II, *Angelus*, Feb 7, 1999, sec. 1; cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 177.

¹³⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52: “The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children.”; The natural family, stable and monogamous—as fashioned by God [c.f. Matt 19:6] and sanctified by Christianity—in which different generations live together, helping each other to acquire greater wisdom and to harmonize personal rights with other social needs, is the basis of society”; John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 23; John XXIII Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, Vatican website, April 11, 1963, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html, sec. 16: “The family, founded upon marriage freely contracted, one and indissoluble, must be regarded as the natural, primary cell of human society.”

¹⁴⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52: “The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children.”

which the Father's active presence is 'highly beneficial.'¹⁴¹ While children need the care of their mother at home, and her role must be safely preserved without underrating her value in all other areas of society, the man remains 'outside' the pregnancy, and must learn his fatherhood from the mother.¹⁴² This difference of perspective, between the man and the woman, to their shared parenthood seems to be one important point of distinction in the magisterial understanding of fatherhood, and thus masculinity. The questions and problems raised by this concept of differing perspectives will be explored in the fifth chapter and possible development of this theory will be discussed in the sixth chapter.

Magisterial documents insist that fatherhood is indispensable to the family. This seems to be a matter of justice for the children, and through them to all society. This justice is expressed in terms of his partnership with his wife, in that no wife should be left to parent alone, and in terms of his children, in that the absence of a father "causes psychological and moral imbalance" in the family, particularly in the development of children.¹⁴³ In the context of a discussion on families taking a more active and positive role in educating children with a healthy development of mature sexuality, particularly in response to a modern culture that represents

an eclipse of the truth about man which, among other things, exerts pressure to reduce sex to something commonplace. In this area, society and the mass media most of the time provide depersonalized, recreational and often pessimistic information.¹⁴⁴

The Pontifical Council for the Family, in *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, calls for fathers to model masculine dignity without "machismo" which becomes an attractive model for his sons to follow and for his daughters to look for in the men they encounter.¹⁴⁵ While it may be

¹⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52: "The active presence of the father is highly beneficial to [the children's] formation."

¹⁴² John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 18; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52.

¹⁴³ John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 6: "No mother should be left alone. *Children need the presence and care of both parents*, who carry out their duty as educators above all through the influence of the way they live. The quality of the relationship between the spouses has profound psychological effects on children and greatly conditions both the way they relate to their surroundings and the other relationships which they will develop throughout life."; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25: "Above all where social and cultural conditions so easily encourage a father to be less concerned with his family ... efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance."

¹⁴⁴ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 1.

¹⁴⁵ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 59: "A father, whose behaviour is inspired by masculine dignity without "machismo", will be an attractive model for his sons, and inspire respect, admiration and security in his daughters."

possible to define “machismo” as a false bravado, perhaps driven more by ego than virtue, this is an apophatic definition. What does “masculine dignity” mean here? The assumption that it can be “modelled” by a father seems to indicate a guide or definition yet unstated, unless the reader is to suppose the fatherhood of God the Father as its only proper model.

Whatever the definition of the man’s dignity or role, the cooperation of husband and wife in creating this community of love is so essential that, when it is undermined by the forced absence of the father, it represents a grave danger of the collapse of families and all they bring to society.¹⁴⁶ Hardly surprising, then, that magisterial documents urge governments and societies to preserve conditions which permit a husband and father to carry out his duty of nurture for his family.¹⁴⁷ Society cannot rob the father of his duty and right, nor can he abdicate it.¹⁴⁸ It is to the good of society that his home is well disciplined, to raise good citizens.¹⁴⁹

The education of children is seen as an essential component of the parents joint sharing in God’s creative act of bringing a child into the world and nurturing the child to maturity, forming them to be virtuous and constructive members of society.¹⁵⁰ A father engages in this essential task in

¹⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25: “Above all where social and cultural conditions so easily encourage a father to be less concerned with his family or at any rate less involved in the work of education, efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance.”

¹⁴⁷ Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labor, *Rerum Novarum*, Vatican website, May 15, 1891, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html, sec. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 14: “Paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State; for it has the same source as human life itself.”

¹⁴⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 23; sec. 175: “the clear and well-defined presence of both figures, female and male, creates the environment best suited to the growth of the child.”

¹⁵⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 48; The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, 23: “Other educators can assist in this task, but they can only take the place of parents for serious reasons of physical or moral incapacity. On this point the Magisterium of the Church has expressed itself clearly, in relation to the whole educative process of children: “The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to find an adequate substitute. ””; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Sapientiae Christianae*, Vatican website, Jan 10, 1890, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_10011890_sapientiae-christianae.html, sec. 42; Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 12, 32; Paul VI *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, Vatican website, Oct 28, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html, sec. 3: “Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.”; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 31, 36; Code of Canon Law, 226 §2: “Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them.”; Leo XIII Encyclical Letter *Sapientiae Christianae*, sec. 42; Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 34; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 14: “If the parents are in some sense the foundations of the home, the children are like the “living stones” of the family

communion of mind and purpose with his wife, but his own participation in the education of his children is indispensable.¹⁵¹ His constant presence, and indeed “gifts of masculinity”, are an essential contribution to the family home.¹⁵² Though what these gifts are, precisely, is not made clear. A father’s discipline in the home and in his work to provide for the family educate the children in the responsibilities of mature love in adult life.¹⁵³ In fact this education is one of the primary fruits of the ‘work’ God sets before him and one for which he is promised great reward.¹⁵⁴ The unity of husband and wife is best expressed in this unity of thought and action, finding mutual help and consolation in their shared task, so that the children raised and educated within this active love may learn the truth about themselves in relation to others.¹⁵⁵ While there is no explicit attempt to describe to particularity in roles of the father or mother respectively, this seems to imply that the couple’s relationship with each other is the basis and the beginning of their children’s self-understanding in relation to their sexual identity.¹⁵⁶ The father’s lived example of masculine self-giving teaches the children the value of their own sexuality. Pope Francis speaks of the need for fathers to be “possessed of a clear and serene masculine identity” and for a husband to demonstrate “affection and concern for his wife.”¹⁵⁷ Again, while “serene” is easy enough to define, the word “clear” seems to refer to defining characteristics which the man must exhibit clearly, rather than an attribute in itself. The precise nature of these characteristics is not made clear. Nevertheless, the magisterium is certainly clear that the intimacy and love of a family is uniquely situated to prepare

(cf. 1 Pet 2:5). Significantly, the word which appears most frequently in the Old Testament after the name of God (YHWH, “the Lord”), is “child” (ben, “son”), which is itself related to the verb “to build” (banah).”

¹⁵¹ Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 31, (citing *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2, Q. CII, a. D); Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin, XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7-28 October 2012 Message *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, Vatican website, Oct 26, 2012, https://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b30_02.html, sec. 7.

¹⁵² Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 177.

¹⁵³ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 175.

¹⁵⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work, *Laborem exercens*, Vatican website, Sep 14, 1981, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.pdf, sec. 10; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubi* On Christian Marriage, Vatican website, Dec 31, 1930, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html, sec. 15; Pius XII *Allocution to midwives*. Sec. II. “If the Lord praises and rewards the faithful servant for having yielded him five talents, what praise, what reward will He reserve for the father, who has guarded and raised for Him a human life entrusted to him, greater than all the gold and silver of the world?”

¹⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 6; Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 44; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 16.

¹⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 6; The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 27: “In the family, children and young people can learn to live human sexuality within the solid context of Christian life.”

¹⁵⁷ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 175.

children for adult life in society and Church.¹⁵⁸ Parents are the first educators, both by virtue of the children's constant exposure to their example of life and love and by virtue of the confidence and trust this bond of family creates.¹⁵⁹ With confidence of the unshakeable forgiveness and love of God expressed through their parents, children are naturally open to the faith which lies at the heart of their parents' life and love.¹⁶⁰ This parental authority is not arbitrary or absolute, but an extension of and within the boundaries of the creative authority of God who entrusted it to them.¹⁶¹

The example of St Joseph

Mary has been presented as not only the prime example of Christian life but especially as the perfect manifestation of Christian womanhood. But St Joseph her spouse, in his human fatherhood, was also "taken up" in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, was involved in the salvific event and stood as "guardian" to the divine family.¹⁶² The angel of the Lord entrusts the incarnate Christ into the care of Joseph's earthly fatherhood, entrusting him with the task of naming the child Jesus.¹⁶³

The Church holds up the example of Joseph, husband of Mary and foster father of Our Lord, as a model of fatherhood and masculinity and who, by his life, teaches us the meaning of our own fatherhood.¹⁶⁴ Joseph, who used his fatherly 'authority' to give himself completely to the care and nurture of his spouse and foster child, turned his human responsibility into a "superhuman oblation of self, directing all his strength and skill into his gift of love to his family."¹⁶⁵ In doing so, Joseph

¹⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 36.

¹⁵⁹ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 7: "having given and welcomed life in an atmosphere of love, parents are rich in an educative potential which no one else possesses. In a unique way they know their own children; they know them in their unrepeatable identity and by experience they possess the secrets and the resources of true love."; see also secs. 23 and 26.

¹⁶⁰ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 28.

¹⁶¹ Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 35.

¹⁶² John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* on the Person and Mission of St Joseph, Vatican website, Aug 15, 1989, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_15081989_redemptoris-custos.html, sec. 21.1.

¹⁶³ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, *Homily at Amadou Ahidjo Stadium of Yaounde*, Vatican website, March 19, 2009, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20090319_instrlabor-africa.html; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 20; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Quamquam Pluries* on Devotion to St Joseph, Vatican website, Aug 15, 1889, http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15081889_quamquam-pluries.html, sec. 4.

¹⁶⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 8; Cf. Paul VI, *Homily on the Feast of St Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church*, Vatican website, March 19, 1969, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/homilies/1969/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19690319.html.

is granted the privilege of cooperation in the great mystery of salvation allowing him a share of the dignity of God's divine fatherhood.¹⁶⁶ Joseph's fatherhood is presented as an image of God's own fatherhood, in that it is "faithful, thoughtful, provident, [and] solicitous" of his family.¹⁶⁷ Just as Joseph is commanded not to be afraid to take Mary as his bride, men are urged to courageously take up their roles as devoted husbands. If they follow the example of Joseph, husbands will not serve their own gratification or interests but give all they have in the service of the bride who has been entrusted to them.¹⁶⁸ Just as Joseph received his foster child from God, fathers everywhere receive their children as a gift from God.¹⁶⁹

Even though there is no claim that Joseph was equipped with any special ability to do good deeds, he is presented as proof that followers of Christ need only have "common, simple, human virtues" which are available to all.¹⁷⁰ The example the Church provides in its description of Joseph's fatherhood is offered as an exemplar of all human fatherhood. This fatherhood expressed itself in terms of a life of service to his wife, the child born to her and to the divine mission of redemption.¹⁷¹ Joseph's exercise of fatherly authority mirrors Christ's own submission to his heavenly Father in that he is "a man under authority". His obedience to the will of God parallels that of his spouse as he takes boldly her as his wife and with her, all the responsibilities of being a husband and father.¹⁷²

Joseph, by virtue of his role as guardian and protector of God's family becomes a co-operator with God's fatherly protection parallel to God's fatherly care to persecuted Israel.¹⁷³ He is Mary's life

¹⁶⁶ John Paul II, *Angelus*, Vatican website, Mar 21, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/angelus/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19990321.html, sec. 2; Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 8; Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, sec. 3; John Paul II, *Angelus*, Mar 21, 1999.

¹⁶⁷ John Paul II, Homily – Feast of St Joseph, Vatican website, March 19, 1987, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/homilies/1987/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19870319_concelebrazione-civitavecchia.html, sec. 4: "Si è dimostrato, fino alla fine, fedele, premuroso, previdente, sollecito, sul modello dello stesso eterno Padre."

¹⁶⁸ Benedict XVI *Homily at Amadou Ahidjo Stadium of Yaounde*. "In the same way, each father sees himself entrusted with the mystery of womanhood through his own wife. Dear fathers, like Saint Joseph, respect and love your spouse; and by your love and your wise presence, lead your children to God where they must be (cf. *Lk* 2:49)."

¹⁶⁹ Benedict XVI *Homily at Amadou Ahidjo Stadium of Yaounde*; cf. John Saward, *Cradle of redeeming love: the theology of the Christmas mystery* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 229-230. Saward sees Joseph's reception of his foster son as a gift from God as a "remedy" to the pagan concept of *paterfamilias*, that is, a father who wielded absolute and arbitrary authority over his children, even over whether they lived or died.

¹⁷⁰ Paul VI, *Homily on the Feast of St Joseph*, Mar 19, 1969.

¹⁷¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 8.

¹⁷² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 4.

¹⁷³ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 5; and sec. 14.

companion, the witness of her maidenhood and protector of her honour.¹⁷⁴ Joseph, through his fatherhood, is truly a “minister of divine salvation.”¹⁷⁵ Just as the angel’s words define Mary’s vocation, the same words define Joseph’s vocation. His vocation, in other words, is the necessary complement to hers.

It is significant that we have no direct citation in Sacred Scripture of Joseph’s words. We are told that he was a just man, and that he was troubled in heart over his betrothed state of pregnancy, yet we have no direct speech attributed to him in Scripture. John Paul II says that “the silence of Joseph has its own special eloquence.”¹⁷⁶ Joseph ‘speaks’ through his actions, his direct obedience to God’s word given thrice through an angel. Presented as a model of manhood, Joseph speaks through deeds rather than words. His fatherly role as a teacher of the Law and of his trade reflects the dignity of the divine Father. He is presented as the harmony of the active and contemplative life. He is spurred into action when Herod seeks to take Christ’s life. His fatherly protection and nurture contribute to his overall fulfilment of the earthly fatherhood of Christ.¹⁷⁷ It is under the protective mantle of the fatherhood of St Joseph that the missions of Mary and Jesus were enabled.¹⁷⁸

In Joseph’s silent lifelong gift of self, any tension between contemplation and work is allayed and the two come together to forge a model of a contemplative worker.¹⁷⁹ Rather than seeing work as a distraction from the spiritual life, Joseph’s work is presented as united with his love and offered up with everything he has in service of his wife and child.¹⁸⁰ His fatherhood is seen as both a prayer to and praise of the eternal Father who he represents in an earthly sense, to the Holy Family.¹⁸¹ Thus, while Joseph is described as displaying “gentle and amiable character” he is, at the same

¹⁷⁴ Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, sec. 3.

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 8. (Citing Pius IX, *Quemadmodum Deus*, Dec 8, 1870).

¹⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 17.

¹⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 8, (citing the Roman Missal, Collect for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Preface for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary); Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, sec. 3; Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, sec. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Leo XIII, *Quamquam Pluries*, sec. 3.

¹⁷⁹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 27; Paul VI, *Homily on the Feast of St Joseph*. “A poor, honest, hardworking, perhaps even timorous man, but one with unfathomable interior life.”

¹⁸⁰ Paul VI, *Homily on the Feast of St Joseph*: “[T]hrough an incomparable virginal love, to renounce that natural conjugal love that is the foundation and the nourishment of the family; in this way he offered the whole of his existence in a total sacrifice to the imponderable demands raised by the astonishing coming of the Messiah.”

¹⁸¹ John XXIII Apostolic Letter on Devotion to St Joseph, *Le voci che da tutti*, Vatican website, Mar 19, 1961, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/apost_letters/1961/documents/hf_j-xxiii_apl_19610319_s-giuseppe.html, sec. 26, asks St Joseph to guide us in his “inner spirit of peace, silence, work, and prayer”.

time lauded as “the kingly husband of Mary.”¹⁸² He is presented as a role model for fathers and workers, a ‘chaste spouse’, pious and modest worker, faithful and prudent father and a “powerful shield” against the dangers of the world.¹⁸³

This gentle guardianship grants some insight into what the magisterium regards as proper to fatherhood. According to this measure, a father is to guard his wife, first from any kind of danger that his own pride, lust or strength may pose to her, and then from all other dangers the world may threaten her with.¹⁸⁴ This guardianship is not based on an assumption of her weakness, but of her worth. It is not an assumption of his comparative superiority in strength or skill, but an expression of his humble gift of whatever strength and skill God has seen fit to give him, in the service and protection of his wife and their family.¹⁸⁵

Not all men find themselves within a marriage, with a wife to love and children of their own to care for and educate. This accident of circumstance does not make the above model of masculinity irrelevant to their lives, nor does it or lessen the individual man’s masculinity. The magisterial documents speak of his wider privilege and responsibility in sharing in the fatherhood of God in a large variety of ways. Pope John Paul II proposed a ‘spiritual motherhood’ in which all women, including those not biologically mothers, participate.¹⁸⁶ By the same logic, all men could be said to participate in a spiritual fatherhood, perhaps even a spiritual bridegroomhood (for want of a better term). Male and female religious do not participate in marriage and yet are seen to express the same spousal love in a myriad of practical ways and, ultimately, are themselves an eschatological expression of the spousal nature of the Church as bride to Christ, the Bridegroom. Indeed, virginity ‘for the kingdom’ does not reject or undermine marriage, it is a testimony to the divine love towards which marriage is a sign.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² John XXIII *Le voci che da tutti*, sec. 2.

¹⁸³ John XXIII *Le voci che da tutti*, sec. 12, (citing Pius XI from homilies in 1928, later in 1935, and in 1937.)

¹⁸⁴ Pius XII *Allocution to midwives*. Sec. II; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 55: “Men play an equally decisive role in family life, particularly with regard to the protection and support of their wives and children.”

¹⁸⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 17.

¹⁸⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 21; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, 13: “Virginity refutes any attempt to enclose women in a mere biological destiny. ... This means that motherhood can find forms of realization also where there is no physical procreation.”

¹⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, sec. 20: “Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with his people”.

The Church also claims that priests share in the fatherhood of God in a particular way. Only in a mature development of his masculinity can a priest be a father to his flock.¹⁸⁸ The relationship between masculinity to the priesthood will be discussed later in this thesis under the heading of ‘the fruits of masculinity’.

iv. Man as Son

As we have discussed above, sonship entails faithfulness to what has been received from his father, ownership of all that is the father’s, name, reputation, heritage and all that has been promised to him. Sons carry their father’s name and with it the privilege and responsibility to honour, preserve and pass on the ‘goods’ of divine heritage. This aspect of the ancient concept of ‘sonship’ as heir to the father is analogous to God the Son, and in turn reveals something of the attributes of sonship that human sons seek to imitate and fulfil insofar as is possible. The present Pontiff notes that, even when Sacred Scripture commands a man to leave his mother and father and be united with his wife, this change challenges him to find new ways of being a son to his parents.¹⁸⁹ While the Scripture cited here refers solely to a “man” leaving his mother and father, Pope Francis interprets this as an unmarked form, applying it equally to husbands and wives, in that they both need to find new ways to be sons and daughters.

v. Man as ‘Lord’

A father’s authority over his family is one of heavy responsibility, but his ‘headship’ in relation to his wife speaks of a different relationship.¹⁹⁰ As we have noted above, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, describes the family as “a domestic Church” explicitly speaking of the role of

¹⁸⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*, Vatican website, Nov 4, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20051104_istruzio_ne_en.html, sec. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 190.

¹⁹⁰ Pius XI *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 72, cites Antoniano, *On the Christian Education of Youth*, “which St. Charles Borromeo ordered to be read in public to parents assembled in their churches” as “deserving of special mention” among special treatises well known for their “solid doctrine.” The fourth chapter states that “Certainly many and not light are the obligations and the offices of a family father in the care and familial regiment since he in his home is almost a small king to whom it appertains to keep the peace and domestic tranquillity, to maintain justice, and to oversee the nutrition and other necessary things regarding the sustenance of his subjects.”

the husband as related to “The Lord” of the Church by analogy.¹⁹¹ Not as if husbands were as perfect as Christ, or possessed the same divine authority, but that the sacrament of marriage is modelled on and a mysterious sign of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the Church.

In Sacred Scripture, St Paul calls on women to submit to their husbands.¹⁹² The Greek here (ὡς ἀνηκεν ἐν κυρίῳ), could be translated as merely “as is fitting in (the) Lord” but in the context of his similar admonition to the Ephesians, (ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ),¹⁹³ it would seem more likely to interpret “as to the Lord.” In his encouragement of wives, St Peter calls on Christian women to fearlessly follow the example of Sarah, specifically her calling her husband her “Lord.”¹⁹⁴

It should be noted that, whatever the ‘submission’ spoken of in these passages entails, it seems to relate directly to the relationship between husband and wife (as an analogy of Christ and His Church) and not as a general requirement of females to submit to males.¹⁹⁵ Just as Jesus’ submission to God the Father does not undermine or destroy the equality of the persons of the Trinity, neither authority nor submission in their proper and perfect manifestations destroy equality. Rather, they reveal and serve true equality. Just as Jesus submission to the Father cannot be said to remove his free will, so any interpretation of submission in marriage cannot remove the free will of anyone.

Recent Magisterial documents interpreting St Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 5:22-33 to married couples have preferred to emphasise mutual submission of the husband and wife, rather than explain the apostle’s specific exhortation in the same passage that women to submit to their husband, the same documents are perfectly comfortable emphasising the apostle’s exhortations

¹⁹¹ CCC, 2204, (citing *FC* sec. 21; cf. *LG* sec. 11; Eph 5:21b; 4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

¹⁹² Col 3:18.

¹⁹³ Ephesians (5:23-24) continues to qualify “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in everything.”

¹⁹⁴ 1 Peter 3:6.

¹⁹⁵ The words ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν used in Ephesians and 1 Peter is usually translated as “their own husbands.” The emphatic ἰδίοις eliminates the possibility of ἀνδράσιν being translated as (submitting to) men in general. The submission spoken of here is concerns the form a specific and equally dignified relationship takes, not as a remedial measure for any deficiency based on either sex. Even when St Paul seems to speak generally of women and ecclesial authority, he still directs them to their own husbands (1 Cor 14:35).

specific to husbands.¹⁹⁶ St Paul’s call on wives to submit themselves to their husbands as to the Lord was included in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* until recently. Under the heading of the Sacrament of Marriage, and the subheading “Marriage in the Lord”, Catechism paragraph 1616, included St Paul’s admonition to wives until at least 2015, but the reference to wives has been omitted from the same paragraph on the Vatican website in 2020, which now only mentions the husband’s duty to love the wife.¹⁹⁷

Beyond the ‘lordship’ by which the husband represents the lordship of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, is the lordship that represents all proper authority.¹⁹⁸ All authority is based on God’s own authority and, just as the highest forms of worldly authority derive from God, the headship of the most basic unit of society also represents, in a limited sense, God’s authority and specific concern for those under his care.¹⁹⁹ This fatherly authority is so fixed in the natural order and moral law that no government can override it without assaulting the authority of God from whom it originates.²⁰⁰ This ‘lordship’ does not imply forcing others against their will. Such abuse of authority often inspires more rebellion than virtue.²⁰¹ Far from being license to impose his whim and will on those entrusted to him, this authority is entrusted to the man specifically to ensure that the nurture and education, particularly in faith and morals, is available to the children under his care.²⁰² In this task he finds his greatest help in the woman. Help is carefully defined to avoid any

¹⁹⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 24: “whereas in the relationship between Christ and the Church the subjection is only on the part of the Church, in the relationship between husband and wife the “subjection” is not one-sided but mutual.”; cf. Eph 5:21; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25: “Authentic conjugal love presupposes and requires that a man have a profound respect for the equal dignity of his wife: “You are not her master,” writes St. Ambrose, “but her husband; she was not given to you to be your slave, but your wife, ...[M]anifest towards [your] wife a charity that is both gentle and strong like that which Christ has for the Church.”

¹⁹⁷ CCC, 1616 (citing Eph 5:25-26). This citation was accessed in Jan 2015. The reference to wives is omitted from para 1616 on the official website on August 2020.

¹⁹⁸ Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 74: “Parents therefore, and all who take their place in the work of education, should be careful to make right use of the authority given them by God, whose vicars in a true sense they are.”

¹⁹⁹ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 36; cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 11: “A family, no less than a State, is, as We have said, a true society, governed by an authority peculiar to itself, that is to say, by the authority of the father”; Cf. The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 7.

²⁰⁰ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 14: “Paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State; for it has the same source as human life itself.”; cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 11.

²⁰¹ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 176.

²⁰² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52: “The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children.”; Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 74: “This authority is not given for their own advantage, but for the proper up-bringing of their children in a holy and filial “fear of God, the beginning of

implication of subservience in the helper. In fact, a document promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, included a footnote on the word “helper”:

The Hebrew word *ezer* which is translated as “helpmate” indicates the assistance which only a person can render to another. It carries no implication of inferiority or exploitation if we remember that God too is at times called *ezer* with regard to human beings (cf. Ex 18:4; Ps10:14).²⁰³

In keeping with the analogous comparisons to the Father and the Son earlier in this chapter, any lordship of the male is properly claimed in his self-sacrificial love for those entrusted to his care. The equality and complementarity between husband and wife both require and provide the resource of her wisdom, counsel and motherly insight to the joint task of nurture and education. Though their parts are different by virtue of their sex, the husband and wife share equally in the dignity of sharing in God’s creation. In a similar way the husband’s ‘lordship’ is only properly exercised in full cooperation and communion with his wife, each bringing their unique gifts, perspectives and responsibilities to the shared responsibility. Neither the husband’s ‘lordship’ nor the wife’s ‘submission’ impinge upon their freedom. Rather, their commitment to this communion of body and will is a means by which they share in the ‘creative wisdom’ of God.²⁰⁴ Any use of this authority ‘over-against’ the other is a departure from genuine authority and a venture into the dangerous territory of power and dominance.

vi. Man as Husband/Lover

In many papal documents human beings are defined, at least in part, by their relationship with God, with other human beings and specifically in the relationship of one man and one woman bound together as husband and wife.²⁰⁵ The Catechism claims that, from beginning to end, Sacred Scripture uses the analogy of a marriage between God and his beloved people to reveal the nature of God’s love for his people, and his purpose in creating and saving them.²⁰⁶ In keeping with this

wisdom," on which foundation alone all respect for authority can rest securely; and without which, order, tranquility and prosperity, whether in the family or in society, will be impossible.”

²⁰³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 6.

Footnote attached to this phrase in the main text. “The term here does not refer to an inferior, but to a vital helper.”

²⁰⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 11.

²⁰⁵ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 8.

²⁰⁶ CCC, 1602: “Sacred Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and concludes with a vision of “the wedding-feast of the Lamb.” (citing Gen 1:26-27, Rev 19:7, 9; 1 Cor 7:39; Eph 5:31-32.)

analogy is the Church's insistence that God created human beings to long for and be fulfilled in a communion of persons, in a way which both reflects and reveals to us the inner communion of the Blessed Trinity. The communion this analogy describes reveals the meaning and depth of what the magisterial documents mean by God's love for His people, and God's will for our relationships with Him and with each other.²⁰⁷ A closer examination of the depth of God's unfailing love, described in the Scriptures, even in the face of infidelity and indifference in Israel, (his Bride in this analogy), sheds light on the Catholic understanding of the indissoluble unity of human marriage and our fulfilment in this complete gift of self to another.²⁰⁸

Put simply, though people are made fully human in themselves, this imaging of God's communal nature suggests that we are not created to live in isolation.²⁰⁹ Human beings, male and female, cannot live without this love, this giving of self and receiving of another 'self' which fulfil the communal nature of our humanity.²¹⁰

This orientation of one for the other, described in the magisterial documents, is not merely directed to any other individual person but specifically to a complementary 'other', a man to a woman, and a woman to a man.²¹¹ From the very beginning they were created as man and woman, for the union

²⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 8: "It is also through the body that man and woman are predisposed to form a "communion of persons" in marriage. When they are united by the conjugal covenant in such a way as to become "one flesh" (*Gen 2:24*), their union ought to take place "in truth and love", and thus express the maturity proper to persons created in the image and likeness of God." John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, sec. 10: "as the One who, faithful to his love for man, gives him his Law (cf. *Ex 19:9-24* and *20:18-21*) in order to restore man's original and peaceful harmony with the Creator and with all creation, and, what is more, to draw him into his divine love." (citing *Lev 26:12*); CCC, 1604: "Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves." CCC, 1617: "The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church".

²⁰⁸ CCC, 1611, (citing *Hos 1-3*; *Isa 54*; *62*; *Jer 2-3*; *31*; *Ezek 16*; *23*; *Mal 2:13-17.*); cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, Introduction. "by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. *Ex 33:18*; *Ps 27:8-9*; *63:2-3*; *Jn 14:8*; *1 Jn 3:2*)."

²⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, sec. 31.

²¹⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, Vatican website, March 4, 1979, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html, sec. 10: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."; cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 18; John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, sec. 17.

²¹¹ CCC, 1605. "The woman, "flesh of his flesh," i.e., his counterpart, his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help."; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 6: [warns against a] "mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other."

of persons in marriage.²¹² Even after the fall, the institution of marriage serves as a foil and guard against those sins which would undo the union and communion of human persons.²¹³

The various difficulties in understanding, without understanding its theological underpinnings, why God would want to save us, why he would become incarnate as a human being, are compounded by the fact that God casts himself as a heavenly bridegroom, eagerly seeking loving intimacy with his somewhat unfaithful and unruly earthly bride.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, the analogous relationship between the conjugal love of a married couple and God's relationship with his people is not merely a general indication of the level of intimacy this relationship is said to entail, it is also an indication of the specific nature of this relationship. At least one aspect of this is the specificity of conjugal love.

While affirming that Christ reveals and includes the humanity of both men and women, the analogous presentation of Christ as heavenly Bridegroom suggests a unique component of the male expression of conjugal love. By this analogy, love of an earthly bridegroom is expressed in sacrificial love, just as Christ sacrifices all for his bride, the Church.²¹⁵ The conjugal relationship, in turn, reveals something of the relationship that God has with his people.²¹⁶

The capacity for this kind of love, for self-giving of the intimate kind, incarnates this 'nuptial meaning' of the entire human person. By this logic, every kind of love bears the hue of a person's sexuality.²¹⁷ Human love, then, necessarily bears a masculine or feminine imprint, or character.²¹⁸ Not only does the intimate communion between a husband and wife reflect the nature of God's inner communion, the union of the same two persons images, signifies and analogously represents

²¹² CCC, 1603.

²¹³ CCC, 1609: "After the fall, marriage helps to overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one's own pleasure, and to open oneself to the other, to mutual aid and to self-giving."

²¹⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 19: "For rationalism it is unthinkable that God should be the Redeemer, much less *that he should be "the Bridegroom"*, the primordial and unique source of the human love between spouses."

²¹⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 13: "Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross."; Cf. sec. 25.

²¹⁶ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, secs. 12 and 13.

²¹⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 19: "Revelation leads us to discover in *human sexuality a treasure proper to the person*, who finds true fulfilment in the family." (Emphasis original.)

²¹⁸ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 10.

the relationship between God and his people.²¹⁹ This relationship is necessarily sexual. Humanity is ‘imprinted’ as male and female in communion with each other. The very capacity to communicate oneself, most particularly, the ability to love is bound up in a person’s sexuality in communion with another.²²⁰ In the same way, the union of father and mother which images and analogously reveals God as divine creator is necessarily an exchange and union between a man and a woman.²²¹ While this implies that there *is* a difference in the love of a man and a woman, it is more difficult to deduce, from the magisterial documents, what is unique to masculine love.

Whatever it is specifically, according to the documents, this intimate love is both physical and spiritual, and saves us from being unfulfilled.²²² The physical and spiritual aspects are both essential for this kind of intimacy. One without the other would lead to their mutual impoverishment.²²³ Man’s limitations, his finite nature, mean that attempting to make himself a gift to all others would be impossible. One person attempting a total gift of self to all people, even if limited to all people he could interact with in his short life, would result in a general and limited kind of intimacy. Man’s sexual complementarity with the woman, however, opens a new possibility. In his yearning for fulfilment in body and soul, man discovers the specific and proper object of his intimate love, his bride.²²⁴ This seeking aspect of love is a proper and good element of true love. It seeks out the beloved, yearns for and strives for intimacy with her. If relationships which are founded in self-giving love are the first steps towards expressing our true humanity, then the intimate communion of self-giving love, which is conjugal love, is the ultimate human expression of the nuptial meaning of our bodies, and the entirety of our humanity.²²⁵

²¹⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 6, citing John Paul II, *General Audience*, July 23, 1980, reprinted in *A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books Media, 1997), 125; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 7: “Being a person means striving towards self-realization (the Council text speaks of self-discovery), which can only be achieved “*through a sincere gift of self*”. The model for this interpretation of the person is God himself as Trinity, as a communion of Persons”; see also sec. 11.

²²⁰ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 10: “The human body, with its sex, and its masculinity and femininity, seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and procreation, as in the whole natural order, but includes right ‘from the beginning’ the ‘nuptial’ attribute, that is, *the capacity of expressing love: that love precisely in which the man-person becomes a gift* and — by means of this gift — fulfils the very meaning of his being and existence.”

²²¹ John Paul II, *Gravissimam sane*, sec. 7.

²²² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *on the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 6: “This is so that *Adam’s* life does not sink into a sterile and, in the end, baneful encounter with himself.”

²²³ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 5.

²²⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 5: “True, *eros* tends to rise “in ecstasy” towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves.”

²²⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 74.

But several Popes have warned that there is a danger that love is perverted into self-seeking love, if it remains purely seeking. The love that is yearning for fulfilment in the union of the two is materially damaged by seeking intimacy purely for self-fulfilment.²²⁶ True love, having found its precise object, seeks to give itself completely for the objective good of its object, the man's bride, precisely because he understands that the object of his love is the very same as his own flesh. True love is described, therefore, as ἔρωϛ (seeking love) purified and fulfilled in ἀγάπη (unconditional self-giving love).²²⁷ Purified by ἀγάπη, ἔρωϛ is proper passion, holy intimacy, genuinely imaging the divine passion for the people of God which lays down everything to save them, to nurture them and to keep them pure and happy.²²⁸ The degree of this imaging is significant. The man is called to lay down his life *as* Christ laid down His life for His bride, the Church.²²⁹ To speak of purification does not mean a rejection of, or even a downplaying of physical love but a completion, a fulfilment of its true purpose.²³⁰ The ideal of selflessness in married love cannot be construed to mean that an individual should seek only to give and never to receive.²³¹ Receptivity to love is, in itself, a form of self-gift. Being honest about our needs and receiving the gift of our spouse joyfully and with gratitude is essential to the mutuality of spousal love.²³²

According to the above account, the gift and responsibility of manhood is to become a true reflection, an 'image' of the divine bridegroom. In doing so the human bridegroom becomes, in turn, an analogous revelation of the heavenly bridegroom. We should note, therefore that false

²²⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 154, (citing Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 13).

²²⁷ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 4: “eros needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns.”; sec. 5: “True, eros tends to rise “in ecstasy” towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing.”

²²⁸ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 6: “Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.”

²²⁹ Eph 5:25; c.f John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, sec. 20: “The word “as” also indicates the *degree* of Jesus' love, and of the love with which his disciples are called to love one another.”; Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, sec. 23: “This precept the Apostle laid down when he said: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church,” that Church which of a truth He embraced with a boundless love not for the sake of His own advantage, but seeking only the good of His Spouse.”; cf. Eph 5:25; Col 3:19.

²³⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 5; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 156.

²³¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 7: “man cannot live by oblation, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift”; cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 157.

²³² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 157: “We need to remember that authentic love also needs to be able to receive the other, to accept one's own vulnerability and needs, and to welcome with sincere and joyful gratitude the physical expressions of love found in a caress, an embrace, a kiss and sexual union.”

notions of male dominance, self-seeking behaviour or attempting to express sexuality via stereotypes is foreign to genuine masculinity. Masculinity, by this measure, is a divine gift, a propensity to true human love and human fulfilment.²³³ Given the aforementioned limitations of human males, in order to properly express even a dim reflection of the love of the divine bridegroom, man must receive his love first from the source of all love, God.²³⁴

The love between husband and wife described here, the love which surrounds, embraces, and provides the context for the welcome, nurture and development of new life is presented as the basis of a good, healthy, and just society.²³⁵ Not only is a healthy society made up of well-developed individuals, but the family itself provides the primordial model for all forms and levels of society. If this is so, then the health of families has a direct impact on the health of society as a whole.²³⁶ Marriage communicates God's love in the practical acts of self-giving love which accompany the roles and duties of family members as they seek the good of each other in everyday life.²³⁷ The man and woman's complete gift of self in marriage is necessary for the good of the children.²³⁸ Through this practical mission of conjugal love, the communion of man and woman in marriage brings God's saving love to society.²³⁹

vii. Love as self-gift

Of the three theological virtues acclaimed by the Church; faith, hope and charity (sometimes translated as 'love'), charity, the love of God and our neighbour, is superior.²⁴⁰ Charity animates and inspires all the virtues, our freedom and moral life, and produces the good fruits planned and promised in advance by God.²⁴¹

²³³ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 59: "A father, whose behaviour is inspired by masculine dignity without "machismo", will be an attractive model for his sons, and inspire respect, admiration and security in his daughters."

²³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 7.

²³⁵ CCC, 1603, citing Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 47.1.

²³⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 47; Pontifical Council for the Family *Family, Marriage and "De Facto" Unions*, sec. 3.

²³⁷ CCC, 2203.

²³⁸ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 20.

²³⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 17.

²⁴⁰ CCC, 1822: "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God."; cf. CCC, 2093, 2095; CCC, 1826.

²⁴¹ CCC, 1827, 1828, 1829.

God is love. Human beings find their fulfilment in union with God, which is to live in God's love.²⁴² To be made in the image of God is to become complete in imitating God's own love, the complete gift of self for others in love.²⁴³ In his discussion of specifically conjugal love, Pope Benedict XVI describes the combination of 'seeking love' with 'self-giving love' as a movement toward "authentic self-discovery and the discovery of God."²⁴⁴ The love of husband and wife begins with seeking love, is purified and completed in becoming self-giving love, but finds its full fruition when that love bears fruit. In the complete gift of self to his wife, which also facilitates their giving themselves wholly to the wellbeing and raising of their children, the man participates in and imitates the love of God the Father. It is in the specificity of these relationships that love takes its concrete form. In committing himself to one woman, and to their children, a man shares in the elective nature of God's seeking love. Fatherhood, united with motherhood, are themselves a "particular proof of love", a reflection of divine love so deep that, when approached within a relationship with God in prayer, enable both man and woman to discover the true depths of God's love.²⁴⁵ Through these specific lifelong gifts of self, the man unites himself to the Father's love by which he aims to heal of the whole world.²⁴⁶

In the same way that Mary is upheld by the Church as the highest expression of this "feminine genius" in her total gift of self to God, man becomes the highest expression of a *masculine genius* when he, according to his own idiom, makes himself a total gift to God through his self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Just as she, by making herself a handmaid, began her rule as Queen of Heaven, so a man exercises his earthly authority in a constant gift of himself for the good of those within his power to serve.²⁴⁷

Though most fully and obviously expressed in the marital act, this expression extends to every form of expression of manhood and womanhood in both ordinary life and extraordinary situations.

²⁴² Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 8, (citing 1 Jn 4:8 and Eph 3:15).

²⁴³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 8.

²⁴⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 6: "Love is indeed "ecstasy", not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God."

²⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 7.

²⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 9.

²⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 10; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 10.

Human beings were created to give themselves as a gift to another. This gift of self is not limited to one person, even if it is most fully expressed in the total gift of self in the *communion of persons* that is marriage. All love is a gift of self to another in some form. The giving of help, protection, honour, respect, dignity, attention, praise, advice, discipline are all gifts of self to another.

If human beings are made complete in relationship to another; first with God and, subsequently, with other people, apart from a sincere gift of himself to another, a man is lost. By entering into the communion of mutual self-giving, a man is saved from a “sterile and, in the end, baneful encounter with himself.”²⁴⁸ He finds himself most fully human in giving himself up as a gift and receiving another’s gift of self in return.²⁴⁹ Not only does he discover his manhood, and his very humanity but, in this gift of self, a man also becomes the image of the divine Godhead, a communion of persons.²⁵⁰

The unreserved nature of this self-giving is poignantly recorded in the description of original innocence of man and woman in their unashamed nakedness before each other.²⁵¹ In the second creation account humankind’s communal nature is expressed in unreserved and unconcerned vulnerability to the other. The very orientation of bodily openness to each other indicates that unity is not merely a parallel existence but a bodily unity of two persons, each one given wholly to the other. The original bodies, marked with the sign of masculinity and femininity signify and practically embody their capacity to express self-giving love, not in a merely biological and temporal sense but in the sense of their whole persons, body and soul, now and even until death.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 48; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 6: “[S]o that Adam’s life does not sink into a sterile and, in the end, baneful encounter with himself. It is necessary that he enter into relationship with another being.”; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 153.

²⁴⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 7.

²⁵⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 8: “This capacity to love – reflection and image of God who is Love – is disclosed in the spousal character of the body, in which the masculinity or femininity of the person is expressed.”

²⁵¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 6, (citing Gen 2:25).

²⁵² John Paul II, *General Audience*. Vatican website, Jan 16, 1980, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19800116.html: “In this way, the human body, marked with the sign of masculinity or femininity, “includes right from the beginning the nuptial attribute, that is, *the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift* and – by means of this gift – fulfils the meaning of his being and his existence””; Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 6 and sec. 8; John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 3; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, sec. 4.

Far from losing themselves in this union, man and woman are both raised to a new level of dignity in the communion of two equal persons who become ‘one flesh’.²⁵³ In giving themselves to each other the husband and wife urge and bring each other towards the perfection of who they were created to be.

viii. The fruits of masculinity as self-gift

The fruit of the love described above is more than the fulfilment of two individuals. Perhaps one of the most prevalent themes in magisterial teaching is the insistence that, through conjugal love, man and woman are called and destined by God to naturally, properly, and miraculously, participate in the work of the Creator.²⁵⁴ Fecundity is not merely a side effect or even an additional blessing of marriage, it is an essential component of conjugal love.²⁵⁵ Conjugal love is fruitful love. It follows, then, that each and every act of intimate love must remain open to its intended purposes. Pope Paul VI insists that each and “every marital act must of necessity (*per se destinatus*) retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.”²⁵⁶ Conjugal love is open to the blessing of fecundity from its very beginning. In the Rite of Marriage, the bride and bridegroom are solemnly asked ‘*Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?*’ The spouses’ joyful affirmative to this privilege of sharing in the work of the Creator is an essential aspect of their love reflecting the image of the fruitful

²⁵³ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 49; Pontifical Council for the Family Presentation on *Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions*, sec. 5.

²⁵⁴ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 8; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 50; Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and De Facto Unions*, sec. 5.12 and sec. 11; John Paul II *Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family* 4 Jun, 1999.

²⁵⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 50; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation, *Donum Vitae*, Vatican website, Feb 22, 1987, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html, sec. II, 8; John Paul II, *Letter to Children*, Vatican website, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_13121994_children.html, Dec 13, 1994; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 37; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 56.

²⁵⁶ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 11, (Latin added).

communion of the divine Trinity.²⁵⁷ The pinnacle of the blessings that flow from conjugal love is the making and raising of children, and grandchildren and great grandchildren.²⁵⁸

Care should be taken to note an important nuance in magisterial account of love. While fecundity is seen as necessary for the propagation of the human race, as proper to both men and women, and as essential to conjugal love, individual human beings cannot and should not be defined solely on the basis of their personal contribution to biological procreation.²⁵⁹ Fecundity is essential to but is not the total expression of womanhood or manhood. When the unity of spouses is fruitful in procreation, it participates in in a small way in the dignity and majesty of God's creative act.²⁶⁰ Children, in turn, reinforce and build up the unity of the couple in conjugal love.²⁶¹ Attempts to present conjugal love that specifically restrict or even exclude children attacks the nature of conjugal love, undermining both the unitive and procreative aspect of this love.²⁶² On the other hand, it is an error to reduce the purpose of conjugal love to the conception of children.²⁶³

While procreation is often presented in magisterial documents as the imminent and tangible blessing of fruitful love, there is also acknowledgement that love bears a wide variety of fruits. Self-disciplined chastity in all friendships expresses a profound respect for the other and genuine

²⁵⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 29: "Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?, the celebrant asks during the Rite of Marriage. The answer given by the spouses reflects the most profound truth of the love which unites them."; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 11: "For this reason, fruitful love becomes a symbol of God's inner life (cf. Gen 1:28; 9:7; 17:2-5, 16; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3-4)."

²⁵⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 8: "Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute in the highest degree to their parents' welfare."; cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 50; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 11: "This is why the Genesis account, ... is interwoven with various genealogical accounts (cf. 4:17-22, 25-26; 5; 10; 11:10-32; 25:1-4, 12-17, 19-26; 36). The ability of human couples to beget life is the path along which the history of salvation progresses."

²⁵⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 13; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 50; Pius XII *Allocution to midwives*, Sec. IV: "if the natural generative tendency does not come to its realization, there is no diminution of the human person, in any way or degree."

²⁶⁰ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 32.

²⁶¹ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 7.

²⁶² The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 32: "The two dimensions of conjugal union, the unitive and the procreative, cannot be artificially separated without damaging the deepest truth of the conjugal act itself."; John Paul II, *Dilecti Amici*, sec. 10: "the whole great content of love is reduced to "pleasure", which, even though it involved both parties, would still be selfish in its essence. Finally the child, who is the fruit and the fresh incarnation of the love between the two, becomes ever more "an annoying addition"."

²⁶³ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 11: "The sexual activity, in which husband and wife are intimately and chastely united with one another, ... does not, moreover, cease to be legitimate even when, for reasons independent of their will, it is foreseen to be infertile. For its natural adaptation to the expression and strengthening of the union of husband and wife is not thereby suppressed."

care for the true ‘good’ of the other which cannot fail to bear fruits, both mundane and spiritual.²⁶⁴ A life committed to perpetual virginity is presented as an example of this spiritual fecundity, which is essential to all instances of true love, and guards against any attempt to reduce even the fecundity of conjugal love to a mere biological function.²⁶⁵ Even so, sexuality is still presented as having a bearing on this spiritual fecundity. Not only must a priest, for example, strive for sexual maturity, but a specifically masculine maturity, in order that his nuptial commitment may come into full fruition.²⁶⁶ The complete gift of self includes all of the person, body and soul even if it is not given in a way that involves conjugal acts. The complete gift of self necessarily involves masculinity and femininity because these are indispensable aspects of the whole person. Even the chaste virginity of the priesthood, for example, requires “a positive and stable sense of one's masculine identity” in order that, among other things, the candidate has the capacity to “integrate his sexuality in accordance with the Christian vision, including in consideration of the obligation of celibacy.”²⁶⁷ Just as, in the case of infertility within married couples, even where circumstances prohibit biological procreation, love still bears much fruit.²⁶⁸ A priest’s gift of self is not sterile but “virile”, “fecund”, bearing fruit proper to its vocation.²⁶⁹ Rather than being seen as a rejection of his spousal nature, the priest’s commitment to his total gift of self into sacred nuptials (in sacred orders) are said to demonstrate the same self-sacrificing love which fully expresses his human sexuality, and

²⁶⁴ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 31: “Actually, the love for chastity, which parents help to form, favours mutual respect between man and woman and provides a capacity for compassion, tolerance, generosity, and above all, a spirit of sacrifice, without which love cannot endure.”

²⁶⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 13: “Just as virginity receives from physical motherhood the insight that there is no Christian vocation except in the concrete gift of oneself to the other, so physical motherhood receives from virginity an insight into its fundamentally spiritual dimension: it is in not being content only to give physical life that the other truly comes into existence.”

²⁶⁶ John Paul II, Post Synodical Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Vatican website, Mar 25, 1992, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html, sec. 50; See also sec. 73.

²⁶⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the Admission of Candidates for the Priesthood*, Vatican website, Jun 29, 2008, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20080628_orientamenti_en.html, sec. 2.

²⁶⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 13; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae*, sec. II, 8.

²⁶⁹ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Celibacy of the Priest, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, Vatican website, Jun 24, 1967, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html, sec. 78: “The priestly life certainly ... requires a truly virile asceticism—both interior and exterior... In this way Christ's minister will be the better able to show to the world the fruits of the Spirit, which are "charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity."”; John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, sec. 29; *Lumen Gentium*, sec. 42.

acts as a signpost to an even greater love than earthly marriages.²⁷⁰ Even so, the various fruits of self-giving love find their reference point and essential meaning in the fecundity of conjugal love, just as families with children are reminded by those without children that their fruits extend far beyond the merely biological into a creative love that extends from the family to all society.²⁷¹

We have seen the magisterial documents present the fruitfulness which flows directly from conjugal love in its various forms, but there is also an emphasis on a fruit proper to conjugal love which exists first within that relationship. The unity between a man and a woman of which conjugal love is comprised, is itself a fruit of the same conjugal love. The unity in mutual fulfilment and happiness is intimately tied to procreation, indeed one is incomplete without the other, but this unity can be considered in its own right as a good fruit.²⁷²

The very love between the spouses we have seen presented as ‘self-gift’ above is, in itself, one of the first and foremost fruits of masculinity. Love, according to this measure, is not merely a means to an end, nor can ‘loving’ be reduced to a description of other means or methods. To be a human person means to be a ‘lover’. Love is the fulfilment of the purpose for which intellect, will and body were created. A man fulfils the purpose of his being in living that love within his particular context. Since we have already discussed love under other headings, it is appropriate to restrict ourselves here to noting that love can also be described as a fruit in its own right.

This love, which expresses itself in unit of the spouses, requires and bears the fruits of respect, mercy and forgiveness.²⁷³ Children learn their respect for their mother, and for all people, from the manner their parents treat each other. Specifically, the gentle respect and honour shown by their father for their mother is an essential lesson for the children.²⁷⁴ No true relationship between human beings can survive long without both mercy and forgiveness. Marriage of this kind is both the teacher and the practical breeding ground of mercy and forgiveness, which extends to their children

²⁷⁰ Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caulibatus*, sec. 30; John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, sec. 29; cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, sec. 50; Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caulibatus*, sec. 56 and sec. 57.

²⁷¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 41.

²⁷² Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, sec. 12; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 73.

²⁷³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 27.

²⁷⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 245.

within the family, beyond to the wider community and expresses itself at all levels of human action.²⁷⁵

Having seen the relationship between humankind's participation in God's creative act and their participation in procreation, the magisterial documents present another aspect of humankind's ongoing cooperation in God's creative act. In his daily work, humankind constantly participates in God's creative act, and in His ongoing ordering of, and care for creation.²⁷⁶ For the Church, the divine origin of the work of humankind trace back to the very beginning where, in the primordial account of the garden of paradise, humanity receives the first blessing and command of the creator, "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it."²⁷⁷ This blessing enjoins upon humankind the privilege and responsibility of sharing in the ordering of creation, a participation in the work of creation itself and are essential to human dignity.²⁷⁸ This participation in God's work and the order toward which it strives are "necessarily and indissolubly linked" to the fact that man and woman, in relation to each other, 'image' God.²⁷⁹ The 'work', or at least aspects of it, is in some way expressed in terms of the sexual or spousal dimension of the human person.²⁸⁰

While men and women cooperate in spousal love to produce the fruits of this love in children, it seems that the masculine contribution to this specific work at least, is limited when compared to the feminine. Indeed, the original consequences which correspond to the original blessings, seem to signify that this 'labour' is proper to the female.²⁸¹ The man still participates in, and thus shares in the responsibility for, procreation. The man's participation in this early stage of parenthood, beyond his initial biological contribution, is only possible through his relationship with the

²⁷⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 74.

²⁷⁶ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 27.

²⁷⁷ Gn 1:28; cf. John Paul II *Laborem exercens*, sec. 4: "even though these words do not refer directly and explicitly to work, beyond any doubt they indirectly indicate it as an activity for man to carry out in the world."

²⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, Introduction: "Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work."; See also sec. 9.

²⁷⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 4: "And this ordering remains necessarily and indissolubly linked with the fact that man was created, as male and female, "in the image of God"."; cf. *ibid.*, introduction, "Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature."

²⁸⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 172.

²⁸¹ Gen 3:16; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 18.

woman.²⁸² This is why John Paul II can say that a man *learns* his fatherhood from the mother of his child. Even if his fatherhood is learned from the mother and practiced in cooperation with the mother throughout the raising of the child, it still represents the first obedience to God's first command, to 'fill the earth'.²⁸³

The second part of this same command, "and subdue it", is taken up by the same documents as another aspect of the fruitfulness of spousal love. It represents an ongoing participation in the ordering of God's creation, the labour of each day. While the documents insist that the 'work' of participation in God's creative act is proper to both male and female, but it has a distinct meaning for each. Christ's own participation in mundane 'work' together with his work of salvation has raised the dignity of human labour to an even higher level.²⁸⁴ Since all work, including that by both men and women, is dignified by Christ's labours, this dignity is not the sole property of masculine labour but belongs to all human persons.²⁸⁵

Distinguishing work that is proper to men alone, in these documents, is much more difficult. Identifying a unique value or significance to specifically masculine 'labour' seems to be possible only in relationship with the feminine. Just as the 'labour' particular to the woman is itself a unique contribution to the family they form, it can only be seen clearly, and find its full significance and fruition, within the context of spousal love. So too the masculine aspect of labour is only identifiable as uniquely belonging to the male when it is part of his unique contribution to the joint task of 'labouring' in God's creation.

Defending equally the rights of both men and women to freely give themselves to marriage, thrive as a married couple and a family, the Church documents insist that it is a 'most sacred law of nature' that fathers should provide for their children and that all laws, societies and working

²⁸² John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 18: "The man - even with all his sharing in parenthood - always remains "outside" the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to learn his own "fatherhood" from the mother."; cf. Pius XII *Allocution to midwives*, sec. II.

²⁸³ Gen 1:28.

²⁸⁴ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 21; Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 28; cf. Eph 4:13; John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, secs. 6, 24, and 26.

²⁸⁵ John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 6: "the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person."; sec. 9: "It is familiar to all workers and, since work is a universal calling, it is familiar to everyone."

conditions uphold and protect this law.²⁸⁶ Society cannot ‘rob’ the father of his duty and right, nor can he abdicate it, and it is to the good of society that his home is well disciplined, to raise good citizens. But this ‘right’ seems to be attributed to the male only as the means by which it is attributed to the entire family he represents in that social context. Similarly, the male’s right to property is emphasised, not because he happens to be male but in virtue of his specific responsibility to provide for his family.²⁸⁷ The right to work, to own and shape property flows from, and remains intimately linked with the right to form and nurture a family. The father’s duty to provide what is necessary for the flourishing of his family, in a sense, assures that each family receives access to these rights through the father. The right to work presented here is not merely for his own sake. It is in service to the man’s contribution to the conjugal community he has formed with his spouse, providing for that family as his time and talent allow him.²⁸⁸ The Church’s teaching on wages and working conditions begin with and reflect this foundational perspective. A man must receive a just wage, not measured against an unrelated economic scale, or of particular value to the revenue or assets of an employer or nation, but carefully weighed on the basis of the needs of his family.²⁸⁹ In the same way, the Church holds that a man must have a reasonable opportunity to secure property and/or capital to ensure the welfare and education of his family.²⁹⁰ It is important to note that the ‘right’ and masculine characteristics of work described here exist almost completely in relation to his selfless service of his conjugal community. He has the right to work, so that his work itself is a gift, along with the fruits of his labour, which he places at the service of his spouse, just as she places her labour at his. In fact, the two share their labour intimately, just as all workers share their labour and its proper fruits, in community.²⁹¹ When the

²⁸⁶ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, *Pacem et Terris*, Vatican website, Apr 11, 1963, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html, sec. 15; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 13; cf. John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris*, sec. 20; cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 23.

²⁸⁷ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Social Progress, *Mater et Magistra*, Vatican website, May 15, 1961, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html, sec. 42; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Human Work, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 8; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, secs. 12 and 13.

²⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 10.

²⁸⁹ John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris*, sec. 20: “The worker is likewise entitled to a wage that is determined in accordance with the precepts of justice. This needs stressing. The amount a worker receives must be sufficient, in proportion to available funds, to allow him and his family a standard of living consistent with human dignity.”; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, secs. 18 and 71.

²⁹⁰ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 45; John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 10.

²⁹¹ John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 15: “When man works, using all the means of production, he also wishes the fruit of this work to be used by himself and others, and he wishes to be able to take part in the very work process as a sharer in responsibility and creativity at the workbench to which he applies himself.”

man sees work as something other than his contribution to his family, or to others in a broader ‘family’ of humanity, and sees it from the selfish perspective of pride, personal gain, or even as the centre of his identity, he not only robs the family of his service, he risks distorting and undermining the value of the work itself.²⁹²

This affirmation of a man’s “right” to work in no way implies that the Church is against women seeking paid employment. The Church recognises the inestimable contribution women have made to society through their often-unheralded work.²⁹³ The most essential aspect of work *for both the man and the woman* is the work of creating and fostering a family and raising children together. Nor does the Church object to women working in paid occupation outside the home.²⁹⁴ In fact, rather than insisting on rigid social categories on all families, Pope Francis summed up a magisterial approach which suggests that a genuinely masculine husband should be comfortable with his wife working and express his fatherhood flexibly around her schedule.²⁹⁵ This flexibility is not a concession, but a demonstration of the reciprocity of spousal love.²⁹⁶ It should be acknowledged that some documents have expressed concern where economic circumstances have forced women to work, as opposed to choosing to work, in circumstances that seriously damage the upbringing and education of their children, and which compromise the dignity, integrity and modesty of the women concerned, subjecting women and children to labour unsuitable to their sex or age.²⁹⁷ The Church encourages men to eagerly take up such tasks to enable the woman to preserve her freedom, modesty and dignity in her work.²⁹⁸ But this is not a denial of a woman’s

²⁹² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 176: “Fathers are often so caught up in themselves and their work, and at times in their own self-fulfilment, that they neglect their families.”

²⁹³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 24; cf. Prov 31:10-31.

²⁹⁴ Pius XI, Encyclical Letter on Reconstruction of the Social Order, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Vatican website, May 15, 1931, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html, sec. 71; John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 25.

²⁹⁵ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 286.

²⁹⁶ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 286.

²⁹⁷ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, secs. 71 and 135; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, secs. 20 and 42; John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris*, sec. 19; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 13; cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 54.

²⁹⁸ While John Paul II, in *Laborem exercens* cites Genesis 3 several times to emphasise that ‘man’ must earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, the Latin text consistently uses *homo* and not the specific word for male *vir*. In fact *vir* is used only once, and then together with *mulieris* as equal participants in the struggle to live family life. The Genesis passage is constantly referred to as placing work as a ‘fundamental dimension’ of human existence, a task laid specifically on the male in the passage. But the Pope links this ‘work’ with the ‘subduing’ of the Earth to which both man and woman are called and empowered. Work cannot be said to be peculiar to or even predominant sphere of men from this document.

right to work, so much as her freedom to choose dignified and meaningful work for the sake of herself and her family.

This magisterial understanding of work extends beyond the man's responsibility to provide for his family. According to this teaching, a man's labour is a participation in the work of the Creator. In picking up his tools, a man joins in the primal task given to Adam, to till the soil, to act as God's agent, bringing order and life within the garden, which is His creation. This task is more than survival. Work, in this sense, is an expression of that which sets him apart from mere animals.²⁹⁹ Creation is not merely exploited for his own survival, but he participates in its ordering so that creation may provide for the sustenance of all.³⁰⁰ Even further, in taking up his tools and shaping any small part of creation, he leaves his unique imprint upon it.³⁰¹ The work, in turn, leaves an impression on the man himself.³⁰² The very gift of work, and the small part of creation he is privileged to work with, provides him with the opportunity to grow in skill, virtue and holiness.³⁰³ Indeed, his relationship with that which he has shaped is described as so intimate that it is considered unjust for another person or state to deprive him of some personal stake in it.³⁰⁴ This personal stake bears good fruit, not only in the sustenance and growth of the man and his family, but fosters solidarity between those who share these tasks and benefits which flow to all of society.³⁰⁵ While his work is primarily an expression of his spousal self-gift, his labour bears its own fruits, both tangible and intangible, in the things his work 'shapes'. Just as the children of his wife's labour begin in his conjugal cooperation with her and belong to him *through* her, his labour

²⁹⁹ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 6.

³⁰⁰ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, secs. 8 and 10; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 19.

³⁰¹ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 27; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 9 and sec. 44: "Hence, a man's labor necessarily bears two notes or characters. First of all, it is **personal**, inasmuch as the force which acts is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of him who acts, and, further, was given to him for his advantage. Secondly, man's labor is **necessary**; for without the result of labor a man cannot live, and self-preservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey. (Emphasis added.)

³⁰² John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 107.

³⁰³ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 22, (citing Gregory the Great *Hom. in Evang.*, 9, n. 7.); John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 256; Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 15.

³⁰⁴ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 10; John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris*, sec. 18; Cf. Pius XII's broadcast message, Pentecost, June 1, 1941, AAS 33 (1941) 201.; John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris*, sec. 20; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 422; John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris*, sec. 21; Cf. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 428.

³⁰⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 27; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, secs. 112 and 114; Cf. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 57: "Experience has shown that where personal initiative is lacking, political tyranny ensues."

also finds its origin and meaning in their conjugal cooperation and its fruits, both the product and the wages, belong to her *through* him.

The question remains, however, whether this work can be said to be particular to the man. It seems that, while the labour of childbearing, motherhood and some physical and social constraints might have made the man a more likely candidate to contribute the labour which provides the food, shelter and other needs for the family, these conditions are hardly universal, and do not provide us with a reasonable argument to consider this labour ‘masculine’. There are several good reasons why a wife may not be limited by the ‘labour’ which is particular to her femininity. What then could be said to limit her from any other part of the ‘labour’ she shares in ordering God’s world?

Is it simply that the man is bound to provide the conditions where the woman can choose freely between and participate in all kinds of work as her skill, time and stewardship of the gift of life manifest? Could it be that man’s work includes taking up such labour as is necessary to create and sustain the conditions in which her freedom, modesty, dignity and creativity are possible, nurtured, valued and receive their just rewards?

This chapter reviewed what has been said about masculinity in magisterial teaching, restricting itself to the magisterial documents which offer the most significant contribution to this subject, with particular attention to the arguments and assumptions underlying the arguments made, in order to provide a clearer understanding of the magisterial assumptions and arguments and to search for possible foundations and inspiration for further exploration of this topic.

We have seen that a large portion of the magisterial treatment of masculinity seems to fall into categories corresponding to the allegorical comparison of masculinity to the persons of the Blessed Trinity. This chapter has examined various theological arguments and imagery used in the attempts to describe and define masculinity by analogous comparison to what God has revealed about himself in masculine imagery. First, God as “Father.” Second, God as “Son.” Third, God as “the Lord.” Fourth, God as a divine husband of His people, in the Hebrew Scriptures and Christ as Bridegroom of the Church in the New Testament. The latter half of this chapter analysed what the magisterium has explicitly said about human masculinity; specifically, the equality of male and female, the complementarity of the sexes, man as father, son, lord, and lover (bridegroom), and,

finally, masculinity in terms of its fulfilment in the total gift of self and in the fruitfulness of man and woman in complementarity.

Some gaps and unclarities that have been identified in this chapter will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, namely the use of the word “gender”, the missing “masculine genius”, some ambiguities in the use of “receptivity”, the historical problem of a father’s rights being equated to the rights of his family, certain gaps in the treatment of spiritual masculinity, and some problems in the biblical exegesis of key passages in Genesis, Ephesians and Song of Songs.

This discussion will provide the context and setting for a more focussed review, in the following chapter, of the most extensive treatment of marriage and sexuality in magisterial documents, namely the catechetical series given by Pope John Paul II, commonly called *Theology of the Body*.

Chapter Four

What the *Theology of the Body* has contributed to the discussion

Pope St John Paul II's biographer stated that "If it is taken with the seriousness it deserves, John Paul's *Theology of the Body* may prove to be the decisive moment in exorcising the Manichaean demon and its depreciation of human sexuality from Catholic moral theology."¹ At the same time, it is a response to the deep suspicion of contemporaries regarding the motives and intention of the human heart.² Against these pessimistic readings of the human body and human heart, John Paul II presents a relentlessly positive view of the human person, founded in the goodness of its creation. William May, when acclaiming the Apostolic Letter *Familiaris Consortio* as "one of the most important magisterial documents ever promulgated on the person, marriage and the family", notes that it fits within a body of work including the Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, and John Paul II's *Letter to Families*, along with "hundreds of addresses devoted to the person, marriage, and the family" during his pontificate.³ According to May, these teaching documents all reflect the content of the catecheses later titled the *Theology of the Body*, either summarising relevant sections, explaining pastoral application or expounding on some of the principles therein. From this we can deduce that, even though the medium of a Wednesday audience would not usually indicate, in itself, a particularly high level of importance or magisterial authority, the content of these catecheses have possibly become more significant than any other, in relation to questions of marriage and sexuality. The sheer volume of the catechesis is staggering, especially when compared with other magisterial documents.⁴ There certainly seems to be a strong case for the present study to consider the *Theology of the Body* and its contribution to Catholic teaching on marriage and sexuality.

¹ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), 342.

² John Paul II identifies the "masters of suspicion" (citing Ricoeur) as Freud, Marx and Nietzsche. ToB 46:1. (References to the translated text of John Paul II's addresses in Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body* will be simplified to the numbering system used in that volume.)

³ William May, *Theology of the Body in context: Genesis and Growth* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2010), Introduction.

⁴ Pope Francis's *Amoris Laetitia* is one of the longest papal documents, but the *Theology of the Body* (taken as a whole) is almost three times as long.

This chapter will examine the new contribution of the *Theology of the Body* to our discussion of masculine sexuality, in terms of the change in the overall context of Catholic theology of sexual distinction and sexuality and examining what Pope St John Paul II offers us specifically in relation to masculinity.

a. Brief notes on the background of the *Theology of the Body*

A full review of the philosophical and theological foundations, the historical context and the contemporary issues that influenced the *Theology of the Body* catechesis is beyond the scope of this thesis. Some notes, however, on historical context, influences and the author's previous writings on related issues, may assist in interpretation of the documents we are about to discuss in detail.

The constituent parts of the *Theology of the Body* were not completely novel. The foundations of the idea of basic equality and complementarity of men and women were laid by, among others, Augustine, Hildegard of Bingen and Thomas Aquinas, were taken up by French, German, and Italian Catholic thinkers. They were largely rejected, or at least ignored, by the renaissance humanists and by later Protestant thinkers, whose various theories either proposed the polarity and inequality of male and female or ignored the differences as irrelevant.⁵

In particular, Rene Descartes and those who followed who developed various 'Cartesian' philosophies, tended to see the human mind as sexless. This led them to argue for equal education and political and social engagement in what seem to be progressive ideas among their contemporaries, but at the expense of distinction and respect for the unique value of the sexes, and the unique contribution each has to offer.⁶ Where thinkers did note and study the differences

⁵ Prudence Allen, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.", 88-89. For a thorough treatment of the development of the idea of man-woman complementarity, see Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 b.c.–1250 a.d.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); and Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation 1250–1500* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

⁶ Mary Wollstonecroft, Theodore Gottlieb von Hippel and John Stuart Mill, for example, asserted the equal ability of a female mind while acknowledging historical circumstances set them at a disadvantage to men. See Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 324, 350-360. Cf. Prudence Allen, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.", 90.

between men and women, they tended to emphasise the distinctions in a way that overwhelmed the complementarity, some even taking a view that set the sexes against each other.⁷

The idea of the complementarity of male and female in John Paul II's Theology of Body was anticipated in thinkers such as Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Jacques Maritain, Louis Bouyer, and Dietrich von Hildebrand, but John Paul II seems to have departed from these in offering a much more egalitarian interpretation of both Genesis and Ephesians.⁸

Some see the writings of Edith Stein as an inspiration for John Paul II's explication of the unique *genius of woman* or *feminine genius*, yet he seems to have departed from Stein's assertion that women, though feminine, can be partially masculine and vice versa.⁹ While male and female share in a common humanity, and have most things in common, each man is wholly and utterly masculine, and each woman is wholly and utterly feminine. What John Paul II describes as "masculine", he seems to take as particular and unique to male human persons.¹⁰

Both Stein and Hildebrand were students of Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology. The young Karol Wojtyla also studied Phenomenology, and it has shaped much of his later work. John Paul II's approach to the theological questions, however, is a peculiar combination of ancient method and modern innovation. In contrast to modern cynicism, he follows the Church Fathers in taking relevant biblical texts as his starting point.¹¹ He interprets the Scriptures, however, through

⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Frederick Hegel, Soren Kierkegaard and Frederick Nietzsche all distinguished differences between male and female minds. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 348–349; John Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Mary Daly for example. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 390–397.

⁸ Agnetta Sutton, "The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II" in *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1010 (July 2006), 418–433; Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 374–375; Keith Lemna, "Louis Bouyer's Sophiology: A Balthasarian Retrieval" in *The Heythrop Journal* LII (2011), 628–642; "Moral Theology, History of (Trends Since Vatican II)" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2009*, Robert L. Fastiggi, Joseph W. Koterski, Trevor Lipscombe, Victor Salas, Brendan Sweetman, eds. Gale (2009), 655–660; See Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: Love and the meaning of intimacy* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1992), 37–38; Cf. Agnetta Sutton, "The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II" in *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1010 (July 2006), 418–433.

⁹ For a discussion of Edith Stein's contribution to *Theology of the Body*, see Tracey A. Rowland, "Feminism from the Perspective of Catholicism," *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 5, no. 1 (2015). (accessed 21/4/2017 at: <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity/vol5/iss1/1>); See also Renée Köhler-Ryan, "'The Hour of Woman' and Edith Stein: Catholic New Feminist Responses to Essentialism" in *Religions* 11, no. 6 (2020): 271. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060271>.

¹⁰ Prudence Allen, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.", 97.

¹¹ cf. Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 18.

a prism composed of a combination of Thomistic realism and philosophical Personalism, particularly that of Max Scheler.¹² Prudence Allan identifies John Paul II's context as "Carmelite spirituality, Aristotelian Thomism, French personalism, and phenomenology."¹³

As Archbishop of Krakow, the then Karol Wojtyla supported, and may have even contributed to Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, on the regulation of birth.¹⁴ When the encyclical letter was promulgated on July 25, 1968, it met with significant and sustained resistance, particularly from those within the Church.¹⁵ It seemed that most of the critics at the time could not comprehend the affirmation of persons, male and female, apart from a kind of personal autonomy over one's body, largely connected with the separation of procreation from the sexual act by means of artificial control over fertility. At least a part of the problem was the general ignorance of Catholic anthropology and the theological underpinnings of the brief theological arguments offered in the document.¹⁶

The series of Wednesday addresses given by John Paul II that were later published under the title "*A Theology of the Body*" are both a response to Pope Paul VI's call for a fuller exploration and

¹² "Moral Theology, History of (Trends Since Vatican II)." *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2009*, Gale, 2009, 655-660; Ronald Modras, "The Moral Philosophy of Pope John Paul II." *Theological Studies* 41, no. 4 (December 1980), 683; Jarosław Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty: The Human Person in the Philosophy of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 6-23; Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyla: The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 54ff. In addition to his general use of Scheler's method, John Paul II echoes Scheler when he refers to "contemporary anthropology" (ToB 11:3). He cites Scheler directly as a "contemporary thinker" (ToB 24:3) and seems to follow Scheler's reading of Plato (ToB 47:1); cf. Kupczak, Jarosław, Agata Rottkamp, Justyna Pawlak, and Orest Pawlak. "Introduction." In *Gift and Communion* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), xvii-xii; Thomas Petri, *Aquinas and the Theology of the Body* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 5.

¹³ Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 443.

¹⁴ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae* (July 25th, 1968), Ted Lipien, *Wojtyla's Women: How they shaped the life of John Paul II and Changed the Catholic Church* (Hants, UK: O Books, 2008), 41.

¹⁵ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 99-105; cf. ToB 133:2; Janet E. Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A generation later* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), ix; Charles B. Keely, "Limits to Papal Power: Vatican Inaction After *Humanae Vitae*." *Population and Development Review* 20 (1994), 226-227; Parkinson, Joseph. "Humanae vitae II: Conscience, contraception and holy communion." *Australasian Catholic Record* 90, no. 3, (Jul 2013): 297-310. ISSN: 0727-3215. [cited 16 Jul 18], 299-300; John J. Williams, "Bishop's conferences in the wake of *Humanae Vitae*: Commentaries that missed the mark." *The Catholic Social Science Review*, no. 22 (2017), 171.

¹⁶ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The encyclical Humanae Vitae: A sign of contradiction* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969), xi-xiv; For a representative sample of reactions see Leo Pyle, *Pope and pill: More documentation on the birth regulation debate* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1968), especially chapter II.1 "Rome has spoken: General reactions", 101-128; See also William H. Shannon, *The Lively debate: Response to Humanae Vitae*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 117-192.

explication of the Church's teaching on fertility.¹⁷ They are also a response to the disembodied anthropologies of the modern world, which have their roots in a mechanistic account of nature (finding their root in Descartes and Bacon) denying the human person's link with the sub-rational cosmos.¹⁸ It might even be argued that the concept of a sub-rational cosmos is itself a Cartesian construct.¹⁹ Though Descartes' ideas regarding mind and body had both faced significant challenges, the separation of mind and body he proposed persisted in modern moral theology (among other places) as a form of dualism similar, in some respects, to the anti-material dualism of the early Gnostic heretics.²⁰ The problem some thinkers and commentators seem to have with the idea that sex has an 'end' other than physical, seems to be based, at least in part, on Cartesian assumptions and their derivatives.²¹

While early Gnostics saw matter, and therefore the human body, as evil, Cartesians saw matter, and thus bodies, as indifferent. In some respects, indifference is far more problematic than distrust or denunciation. Seeing the body as an enemy still leaves open the possibility of the body's moral significance, albeit a negative significance. Genuine indifference to the body evokes a kind of carelessness in relation to moral matters concerning the human body. This opens a "bottomless pit of carelessness to the morality of matter."²²

Margaret Sanger, cited here as representative of the sexual freedom she advocated in promoting contraception and abortion to women, claimed that the separation of procreation from sex enabled

¹⁷ "Theology of the Body." *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy*, Michael L. Coulter, et al. eds, vol. 2 (2007), 1064-1065: "The reflections carried out consist in facing the questions raised about *Humanae Vitae*. The reaction the encyclical stirred up confirms the importance and difficulty of these questions." cf. ToB 133:2; ToB 119.

¹⁸ "Body, Theology of." *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2009*, 96-99.

¹⁹ For example, Eric D. Perl, "Every Life is a Thought: The Analogy of Personhood in Neoplatonism." *Philosophy, Theology* 18, no. 1 (2006): 143-167.

²⁰ "Body, Theology of." *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2009*, 96-99: "Although his physics were overthrown by those of Isaac Newton (1643–1727) and his understanding of the mind challenged by the empiricism of John Locke (1632–1704) and David Hume (1711–1776), the "turn to the subject" of Descartes succeeded in driving a wedge between the body and the soul that would have significant impact on subsequent science, Philosophy, and even Theology. As Benedict XVI has observed, this dualistic."; See also "Moral Theology, History of (Trends Since Vatican II)." *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement 2009*, 655-660.

²¹ Some see the Gnostic error expressed in some areas of the modern ecclesial context as a rejection of "humanity's real situation, a hatred of our inherently enflashed, limited life..." "Introduction" in Adam G. Cooper *Life in the Flesh: An Anti-Gnostic Spiritual Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Oxford Scholarship Online, 2009. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199546626.003.0001, (citing Voegelin, Eric, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, (Wilmington, Delaware: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2004) and Jonas, Hans, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd rev. edn (Boston: Beacon, 1963).

²² Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 95.

greater love and deeper meaning of the sexual act.²³ More recently the trend has been towards sexual self-determination, both in terms of a person's sexual identity and in terms of the significance of a specific sexual act. The meaning of the sexual act, according to this worldview, is aptly described by McCarthy:

Sexual activity need not fill any purpose other than the ends determined by the persons who engage in the activity (e.g., physical pleasure, emotional intimacy, love, mutual conquest, or procreation). Sex is defined by the wilful making of our subjectivity.²⁴

Pope John Paul II is also concerned with owning and controlling one's own body, and with the goal of deeper and more meaningful expressions of love between husband and wife. Not merely a biological or medical control, but self-control in the service of genuine freedom.²⁵ In some sense, Sanger proposed that control of the body by chemical or mechanical means, particularly those parts related to our sex and reproduction, would free the sexual act to become more an expression of the individual persons engaged in it than enslaved to the procreative instincts and the inconveniences of fertility and fecundity. John Paul II also seeks control of the body, particularly those aspects of our mind and body related to sex and procreation, but he advocates a control from within, self-control. This control of self does not seek to separate one aspect of a human being from another to freely indulge in a mere fragment of human love. It seeks to overcome modern fragmentation and unite the whole person in a disciplined, internally consistent, self-giving that expresses the entirety of human love. This human love is, itself, an image of the communion of love shared by the persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The main reason people find it difficult to see the Catholic view of sexual love is that they begin from the restricted mechanistic image of nature which we call 'biology'. But Natural Law does not allow for a separation of freedom and nature.²⁶ The true nature of sex becomes invisible, or at

²³ Margaret Sanger, *Happiness in marriage* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1969), 5-6: "As intelligent women seek to escape the trap of unwilling and enforced maternity to change their position from that of docile, passive child bearers to comrades and partners of their husbands, they realize the need of a more abundant and deeper love life." (See also chapters XIII and XIV in the same volume.)

²⁴ David Matzko McCarthy, "Fecundity: Sex and social reproduction" in Gerard Loughlin, *Queer theology: Rethinking the Western body* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 88. McCarthy is describing a modern mindset, not espousing it. In this chapter he argues for a 'social reproduction' as the end of all sexual acts, which may or may not include conception and childbirth.

²⁵ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 3.

²⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor* (Aug 6, 1993), sec. 50; cf. Waldstein, 99.

least profoundly distorted, through Cartesian glasses.²⁷ This is because this so called ‘biological order’ has humankind for its author and excludes God.²⁸ *Theology of the Body* is a response to a kind of fundamentalism, a heresy against the incarnation which supposes that sexual activity is somehow tainted, or even that it itself taints all engaged in its activity.²⁹

The purpose of this catechesis, the *Theology of the Body*, Waldstein says, is “to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”³⁰ Pope John Paul II says of his own work that he “had no other goal than the appreciation of the dignity of marriage and the family,” in an attempt to grasp and interpret adequately the documents *Gaudium et Spes* and *Humanae Vitae*, which are the “pronouncements of the contemporary Church”.³¹

Even so, Pope John Paul II observes that there is an insufficient appreciation of the goodness of bodily sexuality among Christians, and much need for further inquiry, catechesis and a change of focus in Christian theology of the body, particularly where Christians have become confused by the overwhelming Cartesian cynicism of secular society.³² The *Theology of the Body* is the Church’s most critical effort to understand the incarnation and thus the meaning of life. Only by hearing what the body ‘says’ in this language can we fully understand it. The language of the body comes from its spousal meaning, which finds its ‘end’ in a complete gift of self.³³ A true *Theology of the Body* is re-reading the language of the body in truth focusing on the spousal meaning of the body and its implications for the original man, fallen man and for the future of humankind.³⁴

Theology of the Body is not primarily an admonition to follow a law of the body, as if the body could or should dictate terms in faith or moral life, but a proclamation of the gospel in and through

²⁷ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 97.

²⁸ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 98.

²⁹ ToB 44:5-6: “the Manichean interpretation tends to condemn the body as a true source of evil” cf. ToB 36:3-4, ToB 45:2-3: “A Manichean attitude would have led to ... a negation of the value of human sex, that is, of the masculinity and femininity of the human person.”, ToB 45:5: “the Manichean way of understanding and evaluating man’s body and sexuality is essentially foreign to the Gospel.”

³⁰ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 15.

³¹ ToB 59:5.

³² Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 126: “John Paul II sees ... an insufficient appreciation of the goodness of sexuality among Christians.”; *Ibid.* “Christians suffer from this defect not because they are Christians, but because they are affected by the Cartesian vision of nature... and the consequent banalization of sex”.

³³ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 124: Citing Pascale Ide, “Gift expresses the essential truth of the human body” and St John of the Cross “To love is to give everything and to give oneself.”

³⁴ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 120. “original man” and “fallen man” are used in the unmarked form by John Paul II to refer to humankind. Usage retained where referring to relevant parts of *Theology of the Body*.

the body.³⁵ The body is prophetic. The actions of the body, when properly ordered to its created purpose, prophecies that which it is the image of. It proclaims and glorifies the divine Trinity. While acknowledging that fallen man, by his immoral actions, has all too often distorted and even contradicted this prophetic message, the *Theology of the Body* teaches that Christ does not condemn our weakness, he opens the way for real transformation and glorious fulfillment of our destiny, a destiny tied up with the bodily incarnation of Christ.³⁶ Seen in this light, the commandments are not a minimal ‘bottom line’ of human behaviour, nor merely a list of human failures in living up to that ideal. Christ opens the way to strive for this ideal, and to look far beyond it to our eschatological purpose.

John Paul II’s focus on experience is not a polemic against the objective faith. He portrays the objective faith ‘enriching’ the subjective faith to make it whole in its experience.³⁷ This approach bridges any perceived distance between the Pope’s teaching office and the matters of sexual identity, activity and fulfillment that touch the heart and everyday life of every person. It not only personalizes the teaching of the Church but is delivered personally. Against an accusation that the Church remains aloof, unaware, ignorant, and uncaring for the common experience of the laity, John Paul II demonstrates that the Church has listened to the struggles, to the deepest cries within the human heart, and has offered a compassionate and detailed instruction.

Against the accusation that the Church’s teaching is unrealistic and removed from the reality of everyday life, John Paul II uses a personalist perspective to build from the experience, the struggle and yearning, of every person, to lead them to a higher understanding of themselves and of God. Within a wide range of philosophers under the broad banner of “personalism”, who take the human being as the defining truth upon which all else is measured and defined, John Paul II falls within the sub-group sometimes called “Thomistic personalism.” Taking the philosophical and theological anthropology of Thomas Aquinas as its starting point, Thomistic personalism uses the

³⁵ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 127.

³⁶ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 127.

³⁷ cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, sec. 80: “We cannot stop short at experience alone; even if experience does reveal the human being’s interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate to the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises.”

personalist perspective to make unpack what they believe are implicit elements of Thomas Aquinas' theology.³⁸

It was another scholar of personalism, Roman Ingarden, who first encouraged the young Karol Wojtyla to read Max Scheler, particularly the phenomenological method, which he combined with his Thomistic foundations to form a “creative and original personalistic synthesis,” a new perspective and method, allowing him to unpack and explain the theology and ethics of marriage in new and fruitful ways.³⁹

Since personalism is focused on the experience of the person, individually, collectively and interrelated, this perspective not only includes the consideration of a person's being male or female, it is attentive to sex as an essential element of the identity and experience of every human being.⁴⁰ A body *is* sexual, and personalism not only recognises the necessity to treat this important topic with the attention it deserves, it also allowed John Paul II to approach the subject from a new and helpful perspective with which to analyse sexual difference and complementarity.⁴¹

His examination of the Biblical texts, for example, focuses on the experiences of the human beings involved, taken as typical and representative of all humanity. Taking the human being's subjective self-awareness as his starting point not only opens new and exciting perspectives (as we discuss

³⁸ Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, “Personalism.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016), Edward N. Zalta ed., (accessed 24/4/2017 at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/personalism/>)

³⁹ It is worth noting that John Paul II distinguishes himself from Scheler in that Scheler's norms seem to be based purely in subjective feelings, whereas John Paul II begins with the data of revelation, via Catholic thought and tradition. cf. G J McAleer *Ecstatic morality and sexual politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), xv; Thomas D. Williams, and Jan Olof Bengtsson, “Personalism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; “a creative and original personalistic synthesis, complementing Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology with insights from phenomenology.”; For more on the Personalism of John Paul II, see Robert Baron, “The Christian Humanism of Karol Wojtyla and Thomas Aquinas.” *Nova Et Vetera* 3 (2005), 529-542; Rocco Buttiglione, (Paolo Guietti and Francesca Murphy trans.) *Karol Wojtyla. The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997); John F. Crosby “The Personalism of John Paul II as the basis of his approach to the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*”, in Janet Smith *Why Humanae Vitae was right: A reader*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993); Thomas D. Williams, *Who is my neighbor?* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

⁴⁰ Jimoh Amzat, Giovanni Grandi, “Gender context of Personalism in Bioethics.” in *Developing World Bioethics*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 135-145: “Personalism, therefore, needs to account for the centrality of gender in the consideration of human persons.”

⁴¹ Thomas D. Williams, *Who is My Neighbor?*: “Thomistic personalism, rooted in the metaphysics and anthropology of Thomas Aquinas and enriched by contemporary personalistic thought, furnishes the best raw material for laying the groundwork for human rights.”; See also Jorge V. Arregui, “The nuptial meaning of the body and sexual ethics” in *Issues for a Catholic Bioethic*, Luke Gormally ed. (London: The Linacre Centre, 1999), 120-121.

elsewhere); but it also allows John Paul II to express his catechesis in a language more accessible and appealing to “post Cartesian” minds.⁴²

Despite some dissenting voices who claim this catechesis lacks the authority of papal proclamation, it is clear that Pope John Paul II delivered this material in a General Audience specifically *as a catechesis* and as the Vicar of Christ to the universal Church, and that the Church has taken up what he started and is eager to develop it further.⁴³

While the catechesis under the title *Theology of the Body* does break new ground in its content, the *style* and scope of the catechesis are at least as important in terms of both the development of this area of doctrine and its broader implications for papal/magisterial teaching.⁴⁴ The latter is outside of the focus of this thesis, but we will briefly note the impact this catechesis has had on the teaching of masculinity in both content and style. The things of note are the form, the style, the volume and the language used. As we noted in a previous chapter, most papal teaching fits within the boundaries of the usual official communication from the Pope to various groups, formal and official communications on specific occasions or formal pronouncements initiated from the Papal office.

Catechesis is not new to the Church. The Church has been catechising her people since the very beginning. Nor is catechesis alien to bishops, (e.g., Augustine’s catechesis). Indeed, Bishops are the only “catechists” permitted at Catholic events such as World Youth Day. For the Pope to take an interest in catechesis is entirely appropriate, and there are numerous examples of Popes using

⁴² Jarosław Kupczak, Agata Rottkamp, Justyna Pawlak and Orest Pawlak, *Gift and Communion* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014). [Accessed 25/4/2017 at JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zswgw.8>]. “John Paul II’s interest in the Yahwist account of man’s creation, ... narrows in on the text’s concentration on the subjectivity and consciousness of man, especially as these elements correspond to the sensitivities of modern post-Cartesian anthropology.”; Some examples of John Paul II’s approach resonating with and being developed further in postmodern thinkers include G J McAleer *Ecstatic morality and sexual politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), and Fabrice Hadjadj, *Qu’est-ce qu’une famille ?* (Paris: Salvator, 2014); See also Anthony Fisher, *Catholic Bioethics for a New Millennium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 188, who says that the personalist approach is required to combat subtle forms of dualism, particularly in relation to the instrumentalisation of the body.

⁴³ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 16-17 cites Curran and Dilsaver as examples of this dissenting argument; See also 14: “Like Paul VI and John Paul I, John Paul II used the occasion of the Wednesday general audiences for catechesis. ... [The *Theology of the Body*] is a catechesis by the Bishop of Rome for the Universal Church.”

⁴⁴ Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005), 3. “such teaching marks a considerable advance, both qualitatively and quantitatively.”

private and semi-private meetings with particular groups for the purpose of catechesis.⁴⁵ For a Pope to engage in such a lengthy, detailed and novel catechesis, however, is noteworthy.

To use a regular meeting or audience, such as the Wednesday audience, as a means of delivering a long running catechesis not only permits a deeper and more detailed pastoral catechesis, but it also clearly indicates and manifests the Church's direct and compassionate interest in the daily struggle of every human person and engages her (the Church) in his struggle to move towards his destiny.

John Paul II speaks of the body in terms of knowledge and communication. There is a language of the body, he says, which communicates the truth of the body. Much more than a mere communication of information about self, the language of the body communicates, reveals and gives itself in truth to the other.⁴⁶ The language of the body enables a communication that is, when shared between persons, a communion of persons. The gift of self is communicated via the language of the body. In this way a human person images God, in that he participates in a perpetual self-gift, a love that is pure self-giving to another person, which defines the giver. He is an image of the perpetual self-giving love that defines the Triune God.

Just as it is possible to tell the truth in the language of the body by means of communicating the whole truth about oneself with another via an entire gift of self, it is also possible to lie by communicating a falsehood, or perhaps by communicating some part of the truth while excluding an important part of the truth, which presents a false understanding of the body, and thus poisons the gift and its fruits.

The first, and foundation task of this communication is to know oneself; to comprehend the dignity, value and meaning of masculinity and femininity that permits one to communicate this truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The truth of the body is not limited to one time and place. Individual acts are both performative, in that they enact and communicate the truth of oneself, but they are also prophetic, in that they speak now about a truth that stretches across the life of the lovers (as long as we both shall live), being a living and visible analogy of the mystery of Christ's

⁴⁵ For example, Pius XII *Allocution to midwives*, (October 29, 1951) contains important principles which are later expanded in teaching of subsequent Popes.

⁴⁶ ToB 104:4, 8.

love for his Church, and finally, speaks the eschatological truth about the destiny of the body, of the love it communicates, and of its final resting place in the Triune God.⁴⁷

This communication, this language is not simple. It is as complex as the truth it seeks to communicate. Just as human beings are profoundly complex, just as they stretch across earthly lives, just as they look forward to a heavenly destiny, so the language is rich, deep and complex. It is spoken not merely in one moment of time but stretches over the whole life of a person. For the truth to be spoken in this language it is essential that the full depth of meaning is communicated. For any one act in any one moment to speak the truth, it must be spoken in the context of the entire breadth and depth of the language of a person's life.

The procreative aspect of the language of the body, in addition to being a physical evidence and fruit of the union of love, which in themselves becomes a person invited and involved in this familial communion of love, is one of the prophetic aspects of this language. The fruits which the language of love bears, when spoken in full truth, continue generation after generation, prophecy the eternal character of the human person, and of the love in which we are made and destined to participate.

“The great analogy” is the comparison of human love in marriage with the relationship between God and his people, specifically expressed in Christ and His Bride, the Church.⁴⁸ The analogy works in two directions. We understand something of the intimate love Christ has for His Church by our own knowledge of the union of husband and wife, but we know the truth about the love of husband and wife from the example and revelation of Christ's love for His Church.⁴⁹ Just as Christ's purpose in loving His bride is to sanctify her and wed her spotless and pure, so the husband's true purpose is to serve and enable the full and autonomous dignity and beauty of his bride, so that he can give himself to her fully.⁵⁰ The union of a man and a woman “speaks”, in the language of the body, about the Triune God who created them both to be an image of God. More than merely reflecting God, this imaging proclaims God's being, communion and eternal love.

⁴⁷ ToB 105:1, 3.

⁴⁸ ToB 89.

⁴⁹ ToB 90:4.

⁵⁰ ToB 91:6-7.

This is the most important and central claim of this catechesis. That human beings are created for love, that this capacity and purpose is written into the very essence of individuals and of the whole human race. Specifically, in their being either male or female, human beings are ordered towards self-giving communion with the other, and that every part of this communion is a revelation of and a participation in the Triune God.⁵¹

Our examination of the significance of this insight begins with a brief comment on the use of analogy in this catechesis, particularly in relation to the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity, moving to an extended examination of the significance of the bodily nature of human beings. What does it mean that human beings are always bodily, particularly in the context of the claim that these human beings image God specifically in their bodies?

John Paul II refers to the *sacrum* of the person, and specifically of the body, in respect to the body being sacred, or set aside for a specific purpose by its creator.⁵² This purpose is revealed in what John Paul II calls the “nuptial meaning” of the body. A man cannot fully become who he is created to be without giving himself away in this complete self-gift to another person who is both equal and “other” to him. Being ‘other’ to each other is essential to the communion that is possible. This communion expresses the very fulfillment of the purpose of them both individually and together. John Paul II examines the nature of physical love, specifically sexual love, as an essential element of this self-giving communion of persons, and of their revelation of the divine image. The revelation that begins in physical *erotic* love between spouses points to a reality beyond itself. The examination continues by examining the nature of God’s love, that spousal love both reveals in part, and points beyond itself to a love that transcends it. Our interest in this claim will narrow down to the importance and significance of difference between male and female, the nature and qualities of the ‘otherness’ that is essential to spousal communion.

This chapter concludes with comment on the treatment of certain biblical texts in this catechesis, and their contribution to our discussion of masculinity.

⁵¹ ToB 19:4.

⁵² ToB 100:6; ToB 92:8.

b. The use of analogy to define masculinity in the *Theology of the Body*

In the previous chapter we examined the analogies of Father, Son, Bridegroom, and Lord in relation to male human beings and masculinity. The *Theology of the Body* catechesis features, at least in the early sections, the relational aspect of the Trinity and its analogical application to the human person, particularly the relationship between the male and female human person.

An analogical comparison is made between two subjects that are alike in certain ways and unlike in others. They are, in fact, substantially different things but the two are most often more unlike than like.⁵³ This is especially the case with analogies involving the Trinity. Analogous comparisons are made to utilize an assumed familiarity with an aspect of one of the subjects in order to describe a similar aspect within the subject it is compared to. It may be that the subjects are more unlike than like to each other, but that the aspect of one subject referred to is useful in developing an understanding of a comparable aspect of the other.

John Paul II develops his catechesis with a focus on this aspect of man and woman's 'imaging' God in their communion with each other. The persons of the Trinity are understood according to their relationship with each other. The Father is a father in virtue of His begetting of the Son, the Son is a son in virtue of His being born of the Father, the Spirit is such in virtue of His eternal procession from the Father and the Son. In an analogous relationship, the definition of masculine and feminine can only be properly described in relation to each other. Masculinity can only be properly comprehended and grasped in virtue of its complementary position vis-à-vis femininity, and vice versa. Each is distinct, but only properly comprehended in their identity and purpose within the relationships that define them.

This complete equality and communion of love that is perfected in the Holy Trinity is reflected in human beings, specifically in our orientation toward the other. While others before him had expounded the theme of complementarity of man and women, John Paul II teaches that the masculine and the feminine find their definition and fulfilment in their relationship with the other. This combination of complementarity and mutual fulfilment and completion of the sexes in communion with each other is described by Prudence Allen as *integral gender complementarity*.

⁵³ ToB 33:3: "Analogy – as is well known – indicates at one and the same time similarity and also lack of identity (that is, a substantial dissimilarity)."

She identifies Pope St John Paul II as the founder of this unique contribution to the discussion of sexuality, sexual distinction and the relationship between the sexes.⁵⁴

According to John Paul II, humanity only finds its full realization, its full *imaging* of God, in the duality of the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’. This duality is no mere partnership. It is an essential aspect of the human being’s potential and purpose. His purpose is to present himself as a complete gift, and to receive an equal gift in return, in which the givers are mutually fulfilled and, together, participate in the fulfilment of God’s original plan. This relationship is properly expressed and fulfilled in the basic unit of society, the family.

There is a direct connection between the nature of a human person, and the communion he shares with other human beings, specifically his or her spouse, and the love of God both for him and expressed within the Blessed Trinity. The love shared between the persons of the Blessed Trinity is the model, the origin and source of all genuine love. Love is a gift of self. Spousal love is the paradigm of love and the Trinity is the paradigm of spousal love.⁵⁵ The love of God for His people and the love shared between husband and wife are mutually illuminating.

While the two should never be equated, nor presented as perfect images of each other, the use of this analogy is based on the assumption that earthly marriage both contains and reveals something of the essence of divine love and the divine lover.⁵⁶ The analogous comparison of marriage to the covenantal love Christ shares with his Church is mutually illuminating. The analogy works in two directions.⁵⁷ While the love of the LORD for His earthly bride that defines and reveals spousal love in its fullness, and therefore sheds light on earthly marriage, in earthly marriage we see

⁵⁴ Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 442.

⁵⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 12; Karol Wojtyła “The Family as a Communion of Persons” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays, Volume 4 of Catholic Thought from Lublin*, Theresa Sandok, tr., Andrew Woznicki, ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 318; Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 94; Christopher West, *Theology of the Body explained: A Commentary on John Paul II’s “Gospel of the Body”* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2003), 12-16; Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 459-460.

⁵⁶ ToB 90:3: “one must admit that the very essence of marriage contains a particle of the same mystery. Otherwise the whole analogy would hang in a void.”

⁵⁷ ToB 90:2, 4.

revealed something of the nature of God's perfect love for His Bride, the Church.⁵⁸ As Pope John Paul II says, "this analogy illuminates the mystery, it itself in turn is illuminated by that mystery."⁵⁹

Using the analogy of marriage in relation to God's spousal love for his people, it must be acknowledged that, while a mortal cannot hope to compare himself to God, there is, nonetheless, some part of the "very essence" of the truth within the substance of marriage.⁶⁰ In using the analogy in relation to the obligations on the husband and his wife, Ephesians leads us to the very foundations of the sacramentality of marriage.⁶¹ So the sacramental union between married couples is more significant than the concreteness of their instance of mutual love. It signifies an eternal reality, an aspect of the nature of our Triune God and the way He loves as persons within Himself and as the Godhead to us.⁶²

The nature of analogy must be examined closely to determine the manner in which God's love is revealed in man, both in human beings and in humanity, and vice versa, and the extent of the content of the analogy. How far does the Church, specifically John Paul II in his *Theology of the Body*, push this analogy? What has John Paul II claimed is revealed in the analogy of divine and human love?

i. The Immanent Trinity

In their intercommunion, Man and woman reveal something of the communal nature of the Trinity God. The communion of love shared between man and woman reveals, by means of analogy, something of the intimate, infinite, and perfect communion between the persons of the Blessed Trinity.⁶³ This imaging is the purpose and 'end' of the body. The eschatological reality of the body, the purpose and end towards which it moves, is to become a perfect realization of the "Trinitarian

⁵⁸ Following the example of Benedict XVI, this thesis will use "LORD" to substitute for the divine name. cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Letter to the Bishops Conferences on the Name of God*, (Aug 8, 2008), sec. 3: While the instruction relates primarily to the liturgical context, the arguments therein can be applied to Sacred Theology.

⁵⁹ ToB 90:2.

⁶⁰ ToB 90:3: "one must admit that the very essence of marriage contains a particle of the same mystery. Otherwise the whole analogy would hang in a void."

⁶¹ ToB 90:4.

⁶² ToB 31:5: "Apart from real concrete relationships between man and woman, the purely objective meaning of the body is in some sense "a-historical"."

⁶³ The essential interior life of the Holy Trinity is often referred to as the 'Immanent Trinity.'

order.”⁶⁴ The perfect union of the Trinity does not eliminate or undermine the distinction between the persons therein. The persons of the blessed Trinity are distinct persons, yet perfectly one. In an analogous way, the intimacy between a husband and wife described by ‘one flesh’, does not contradict or undermine the dignity nor autonomy of the individual persons involved. Even the resurrected human person’s experience of intimacy within the blessed Trinity “will not absorb man’s personal subjectivity, but, quite to the contrary, will make it emerge in an incomparably greater and full measure.”⁶⁵ The communion of persons sees the unique and irreplaceable value of the ‘otherness’ of the masculine and feminine, without absorbing personal subjectivity.⁶⁶ In fact, the communion of love shared by the two persons, binding them as ‘one flesh’ serves and enhances the subjectivity of the persons involved to the fullest possible measure.

Though sin/fall has wounded this image and our ability to participate in that which is imaged, the *imago dei* passed on is still analogous, to some extent at least, with the original condition.⁶⁷ The manifestation of the reality of God in a human body is precisely through the gift of sexual difference of the two who become one flesh. Humanity resembles (images) God in the mystery of the Trinity. As the Trinity is the perfect and complete self-giving love of each ‘person’ for the Trinity for the other, a human person realizes himself or herself in the act of self-giving.⁶⁸ The theology of the body, then, becomes a theology of sex (masculinity and femininity).⁶⁹

Reciprocal and mature choice is necessary for true communion.⁷⁰ A genuine communion of persons presupposes self-knowledge, self-awareness and complete freedom of the individual will, which longs for and is fulfilled in communion of persons.⁷¹

Just as the perfect love within the Trinity does not erase the distinction between the persons nor does it create an inequality between the persons, man receives the gift of the feminine and gives himself to an equal.⁷² Love is, then, a mission which is founded in man’s location in the second person of the Blessed Trinity, by virtue of his adoption as a Son of God, and an imitation of and

⁶⁴ ToB 68:4.

⁶⁵ cf. ToB 69:4; ToB 67:3.

⁶⁶ ToB 9:1.

⁶⁷ ToB 21:7.

⁶⁸ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 91.

⁶⁹ ToB 9:5.

⁷⁰ ToB 10:3-4.

⁷¹ ToB 9:2.

⁷² ToB 17:6.

participation in the perfect love of the Son within the Trinity which is ‘imaged’ in an attitude of readiness to act in accordance with this self-gift. The Christian does not respond to mere obligations but to a realization of themselves in the Son, in relation to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷³ This kind of love is not an attempt to produce a copy of divine love on the basis of an analogous comparison. Man finds his mission in terms of spousal love by finding himself within the Trinity and allowing that reality to shape his own actions in day-to-day life.

ii. The Economic Trinity

Having briefly considered the analogous relationship between one aspect of the Immanent Trinity and the communal nature of man, we move on to consider the external work of the Trinity. By this we mean the persons of the Trinity working within history.⁷⁴ In speaking of the economic life of the Trinity, all members of the Trinity are engaged in the work attributed to a particular person.⁷⁵ The persons of the Trinity impart a “Trinitarian form” in their manner of mission.⁷⁶

In Sacred Scripture, the LORD is often represented as Bridegroom to the people of Israel, and the people of Israel are referred to as His ‘bride’. Pope John Paul II revisits the scriptural precedent and notes briefly the long tradition which has used and explored this theme. This analogous comparison is an essential consideration in our project of discovering the Church’s teaching on masculinity. Pope John Paul II insists that the love which joins the LORD to Israel “can and should be equated with the spousal love of a couple.”⁷⁷ Israel’s unfaithfulness to God is portrayed as a betrayal of this love, and thus is described as ‘adultery’.⁷⁸ In this special use, the word ‘adultery’ indicates the failure of Israel, the Bride, to keep its covenant of exclusive love with the LORD, Bridegroom. The covenant here is not merely a legal contract, but a binding and exclusive love, a total commitment of love to the other. This is an essential element of the analogous comparison to earthly spouses and the nature of their intimate communion. The point of likeness in the analogy of God’s spousal love for Israel’s is in “the covenant accompanied by love”.⁷⁹ Man and woman

⁷³ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 93.

⁷⁴ The historical works of the Holy Trinity are often referred to as the ‘Economic Trinity.’

⁷⁵ CCC, 258-260. cf. Michael Sheed, Peter M. Joseph tr. *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine: Fourth edition* (London: Saint Austin Press, 2001), 309, 315.

⁷⁶ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 93.

⁷⁷ ToB 36:5.

⁷⁸ ToB 36:5, 37:1, 3.

⁷⁹ ToB 37:3.

reveal God above all in their intercommunion, through which God brings holiness into the world and is an icon of Christ and His Church. The Church exists as a Bride to the degree she is loved by the Bridegroom, Christ. Christ's redeeming love transforms itself into spousal love by giving Himself for the Church. The unreserved gift of Himself, the fruit of which is our salvation and sanctification, is the definitive instance and example of spousal love.⁸⁰

The example of Christ's headship, linked analogously to earthly husbands, is definitive of the self-sacrificial love to which all men and women are called, but has particular relevance to earthly husbands. The unity of the Trinity does not compromise the distinction of persons within the Godhead. In a similar way, the analogy of the unity of Christ and His Church as a head to body relationship (respectively) shows the way two separate subjects can be described as, and actually become a single subject. A self-serving head cannot live alone, just as a body cannot live without the head. Together they form 'one flesh' in the sense of an earthly body. Each plays its part in their biological unity, yet they are distinct.⁸¹ While acknowledging that Christ does not need the Church in an essential way, the analogy demonstrates that the essential unity of the Bride and her Bridegroom is as intimate as one body part to another. Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies, following the analogy to the example of Christ.⁸² The analogous comparison of marriage to Christ and His Church is mutually illuminating.⁸³ This analogy works in two directions, clarifying both the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church, and, at the same time, revealing certain aspects of the truth about marriage.⁸⁴ In using this analogy, Ephesians leads us to the very foundations of the sacramentality of marriage.⁸⁵ The purpose of the love of Christ for the Church is her sanctification.⁸⁶ Christ washes his bride and presents her without spot of wrinkle. Pope John Paul II suggests that the 'wrinkle' in this text refers to the distortion of beauty caused by age and concludes, therefore, that the love of Christ and Christian husbands is to be "eternally young".⁸⁷

⁸⁰ ToB 90:6.

⁸¹ ToB 91:2-3.

⁸² ToB 91:5-6.

⁸³ ToB 90:2: "this analogy illuminates the mystery, it itself in turn is illuminated by that mystery."

⁸⁴ ToB 90:4; ToB 90:2.

⁸⁵ ToB 90:4.

⁸⁶ ToB 91:6.

⁸⁷ ToB 92:2.

Man cannot find himself except through self-gift.⁸⁸ Man discovers and reveals his freedom in this gift of self. This ‘spousal meaning’ beautifies the person.⁸⁹ To be a person is to be a gift in bodily form.⁹⁰ In the body, man becomes a visible sign of the economy of the Truth and Love of God.⁹¹ The body makes visible the spiritual and divine.⁹² The body is a sign of things far greater than itself. Sexuality which most clearly expresses and enables intercommunion and the image of God rather than sexuality being an obstacle to spiritual clarity and communion.⁹³ Masculinity and femininity reveal their meaning and essential freedom in the act of self-gift, in the full reality and potential as male and female, to the other.⁹⁴ Masculinity and femininity are essential to the image of God, so much so that our future resurrected bodies will retain and perfect their masculinity and femininity, yet not marry.⁹⁵

John Paul II interprets Christ’s attitude toward adultery, expressed in the Gospels, as not so much an accusation against a person or persons, but an appeal to the value and dignity of every human person, which is not, in the case of adultery, being “sufficiently appreciated.”⁹⁶ Adultery is seen by Christ as a devaluation or impoverishment of an authentic value. The communion that images God is broken by selfishness that places oneself over another.⁹⁷ The human person has the potential and purpose of participating in and revealing the selfless love of the Triune God in their communion with God and each other. To treat another person (or God) as an object to be obtained, possessed, used for one’s own purposes, is to contradict and make a mockery of this love.

Even with such magnificent purpose, John Paul II does not shy away from the source of the patterns of self-seeking attitudes and behaviours which routinely corrupt the divine image and purpose. Concupiscence, he admits, while not constituting the meaning of man or his body, is important in understanding man, his actions and their moral significance.⁹⁸ Man senses within himself that the bodily relations of man and woman are a sign and icon of everything that is noble and beautiful, a

⁸⁸ ToB 24:3, citing Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24.

⁸⁹ ToB 15:5.

⁹⁰ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 95.

⁹¹ ToB 19:5.

⁹² ToB 19:4.

⁹³ ToB 29:3.

⁹⁴ ToB 18:5.

⁹⁵ ToB 66:1; cf. Lk 20:34-35; 66:4.

⁹⁶ ToB 45:5.

⁹⁷ ToB 28:1.

⁹⁸ ToB 46:2.

signification of the supreme value, which is love.⁹⁹ But, for Christianity, even in the most perfect earthly marriage the body and sexual union remain a value not sufficiently expressed.¹⁰⁰ Sexuality, which most clearly expresses and enables intercommunion and the imaging of God, gives way to a crass and base sexuality that obscures the image of God in man and presents an obstacle to genuine communion with both God, the earthly spouse and with all people.¹⁰¹

Adultery is not merely a sin of the flesh. Sins “of the body” carry a significance and meaning far greater than mere matter. The implications of such an impairment of the image of God and the goodness it contains can be identified only in reference to the relationship between the persons.¹⁰² Christ seems to shift the meaning of adultery from the body to the heart, speaking of adultery in terms of the desire of a person rather than the mere act itself.¹⁰³ In the same sermon, the sermon on the Mount, Christ does not call us back to an original innocence but points man towards his destiny. The new man, the “perennial and ... indestructible meanings of what it is to be human” through the redemption of the body.¹⁰⁴

c. Human masculinity

Following the pattern established in the previous chapter, we move from John Paul II’s treatment of masculine imagery in the Trinity to his treatment of human masculinity. Pope St John Paul II’s close examination of human sexuality is, perhaps, where his greatest contribution to our topic of study. He approaches this topic from a different angle to most magisterial teaching we have observed so far. He approaches from the perspective of the person, specifically the bodily experience of being a person. His oblique approach, particularly in the *Theology of the Body* catechesis, requires from us a different approach for this chapter.

⁹⁹ ToB 46:5; cf. 46:6.

¹⁰⁰ ToB 45:3.

¹⁰¹ ToB 29:3.

¹⁰² ToB 37:6.

¹⁰³ Mt 5:27-28; cf. ToB 38:1.

¹⁰⁴ ToB 49:4.

i. Man as a body

We have seen that John Paul II's interpretation of the Scriptures treats adultery as not merely a sin of the flesh, but as something that extends to and impacts upon the full meaning and significance of the person. On the other hand, he also says that it is impossible to speak of any person or action as being merely fleshly or material. Rejecting Plato and others who view the body as a 'tomb' of the soul, and the Cartesians who place such importance on the mind that they treat the body with indifference, (see comments on the Cartesian problem above), John Paul II follows Aristotle (via Aquinas) in teaching that body and soul are definitively and perfectly integrated, and that this unity definitively qualifies and assures the integrity of the person.¹⁰⁵ A body is more significant than a fleshly *locus* with a spirit hidden or trapped within. On the other hand, man is more than mere flesh and bones. The body is an expression of the person, but not its totality. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is an essential element of the Catholic theology of the human person. The human person is not limited to the limited duration, geographical location and observable influence in this brief existence. The Theology of the Body "*admits the reality of life that does not end with death.*"¹⁰⁶ Therefore our discussion of sexuality necessarily recognises a dimension of our sexuality which looks forward to the fulfilment of the meaning it points to even now.¹⁰⁷

A man's significance as an entity, therefore, includes but goes far beyond the physical evidence of his existence. The part we can see and touch, represents the whole being.¹⁰⁸ This does not lessen the importance of the body in our considerations. Rather, it raises the body to a far higher level of significance. If the body were merely a tomb or prison for the spiritual reality of the person, it would carry only a negative significance, or perhaps merely a physical marker where the true spiritual person happens to be, if we could even speak of a non-physical spirit' being in any particular place. On the other hand, if the body represents the totality of a person, if the 'matter' of a person is the sum of all that the person is, then the significance of the body, positive or negative, is limited to the matter itself, perhaps also including other material beings this particular 'matter' may interact with, and only insofar as that matter retains its physical integrity. If, however,

¹⁰⁵ "The body is of the tomb of soul." Plato, *Gorgias*, 493a; cf. *Phaedo* 66b; *Cratylus*, 400c.; ToB 66:6; cf. St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*, 1.89.1; .76.1 ad. 6.

¹⁰⁶ ToB 65:3. (Emphasis original).

¹⁰⁷ ToB, 66:1, 4, 6.

¹⁰⁸ ToB 9:4; cf. footnote on the same article in Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 164.

as John Paul II suggests, the body is a part which represents a whole, a body that stands for something greater than that measurable by material instruments or human senses, then the significance of the body extends far beyond that of the previous definitions.

The Scriptures seem to affirm respect and even reverence for the human body. This teaching goes back to the very beginning, where God looked on what he had created, including the bodily man, and saw that it was ‘very good’.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the first biblical account of creation presents man as the apex of creation, and the second introduces man first and then builds creation around him, in relation to him. When God announces his intention to create a unique being, man, distinct from all other creatures, God says “Let us make man in our own image” it seems to indicate that this creature not only bears the mark and shape of his creator in a way not shared by any other being created, but that he reveals, at the same time, something essential of his creature in his very nature and being. The poetic couplet that summarizes the creation declares that “God made man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” Thus, the book of Genesis declares that man is created in the image of God and thus is not only the bearer of a dignity that far surpasses else in creation, but shares in some part of the dignity of his creator.¹¹⁰ The body reveals God not only through its being, beauty and design, but also through its purpose.

The body can also reveal the consequences of sin. Various consequences of individual sins can be observed in particular bodies and in the physical consequences generally observable in disruptions to the created order. In his response to the temptation to despair about the decay and corruption evident in our current existence, John Paul II draws on Christ’s response to the Sadducees who, with their limited view of the human person, attempt to disparage the very idea of a resurrection. The fact that Christ rose from the dead not only proves that the Sadducees (and their modern counterparts) are wrong to despair about the inevitability of corruption and destruction of the body, but also demonstrates that resurrection is God’s plan for all human bodies. God not only has the power to raise us from the dead, but He has promised to do so. Not only is life in the body possible

¹⁰⁹ Gen 1:31, ToB, 55:6.

¹¹⁰ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 192; John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, sec. 10, 14, 20, 24, 35; Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Dec 7, 1965), sec. 1; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 12, 24; Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, sec. 37; John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, sec. 13, 31; John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, sec. 2-3.

after this short earthly existence ends but, by God's grace, it is the destiny of us all.¹¹¹ The body, in John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, cannot be limited to the fate it seems currently bound to, corruption, death and decay.

It is intriguing that, in all three of the synoptic gospels, the account of the discussion with the Sadducees regarding the resurrection is placed between Jesus' admonition to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and His teaching that He, the Messiah, is the Son of God.¹¹² Even while urging His listeners to give due attention and respect to the limitations of our bodily existence, He draws His listeners to realise that the significance of the body looks beyond those limitations, to a divine destiny.

John Paul II teaches that the body is an expression of the person, but not the sum of the person. The body is an aspect of the whole that represents the whole in a manner accessible to our perceptions and reflection.¹¹³ But the body, and only the body, is capable of "making visible what is invisible." The body, though physical, reveals the spiritual and divine reality of the person.¹¹⁴ There is an aspect to man, specifically to the masculine's interrelationship with feminine that John Paul II describes as "a-historical". Not merely the sum of all possible observations of his matter but signifying and mysteriously presenting the eternal reality of that man in time and space.¹¹⁵ This is why, for example, the man's 'shame' after the fall in the garden is not limited to his bodily sexuality but extends to his relationship with the woman, with his God, and this meaning extends through time to his ultimate destiny.¹¹⁶

It follows, then, that it is essential to study the topic of 'person' in relation to the body, sexual difference, and interrelation simultaneously, otherwise we contradict the description of man (man as male and female) described in Genesis.¹¹⁷ What may not be obvious in individual persons, may be revealed in the interrelation between two modes of being human. Masculinity and femininity are two ways (two incarnations) in which individual human beings are 'a body' in the image of God. The point here, it seems, is that man and woman reveal God not only in their individual

¹¹¹ Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40; cf. Acts 23:6-8; ToB 65:3, 6.

¹¹² Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40.

¹¹³ ToB 9:4; cf. footnote on the same article in Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 164.

¹¹⁴ ToB 19:4; cf. Francis *Lumen Fidei: on faith*, (June 29, 2013), sec. 34.

¹¹⁵ ToB 31:5; cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est: on Christian Love*, sec. 5.

¹¹⁶ ToB 31:1.

¹¹⁷ ToB 14:3.

existence, but in their intercommunion. While bodiliness and sexuality are not identical, man and woman are reciprocal and complementary ways of being a body.¹¹⁸ Masculinity and femininity are two complementary ways of being enfleshed as a human being.¹¹⁹ Complementary, it seems, does not mean that male and female are merely different, or that they merely ‘image’ God in ways that are helpful to each other’s imaging. Complementarity here seems to indicate that male and female, in that they are created specifically to be in communion with each other reveal, in themselves and in their relations to each other, something of the nature of God. Masculinity is confirmed and finds its ‘end’ (in an earthly sense) in relation to femininity, just as femininity is confirmed and finds its ‘end’ in relation to masculinity.¹²⁰ According to John Paul II, the “specific substratum” of communication between masculinity and femininity is an image of the intercommunion of the Blessed Trinity.¹²¹ By this understanding, bodily masculinity and femininity complete the image of God in the visible world in such a profound way that the treatment of human bodies as mere objects of desire obscures the image of God in the persons involved.¹²² Obscures, here, may be something of an understatement if the mistreatment of bodies and their communion directly undermines their created purpose. If we follow John Paul II’s reasoning, sinning against the spousal aspect of the body is committing an act of sacrilege against the God of which this aspect is an image.

The communion of persons expressed between man and woman is founded on the unique and irreplaceable value of the ‘otherness’ of the masculine and feminine.¹²³ The manifestation of the reality of God in a human body is not merely two similar beings interrelating but can only occur through the gift of sexual difference of the two who become one flesh. But this joining of persons by means of mutual self-gift does not compromise the integrity of the individual subject. While teaching that the two persons complement each other, John Paul II says that they bring each other into flourishing and, we may even say, bring each other into their respective ‘ends’.¹²⁴ They fulfil their shared and respective meaning and purpose in joining by means of self-gift which finds its

¹¹⁸ ToB 8:1, cf. Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 157.

¹¹⁹ ToB 10:1.

¹²⁰ ToB 10:1.

¹²¹ ToB 29:3.

¹²² ToB 29:3.

¹²³ ToB 9:1.

¹²⁴ ToB 67:3: “[Intimacy in the Trinity] will not absorb man’s personal subjectivity, but, quite to the contrary, will make it emerge in an incomparably greater and full measure.”; cf. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Search for a Communion of Persons 1500–2015*, 442.

fulfilment in spousal communion. According to John Paul II, this purpose or ‘end’ is only properly understood in terms of the fact that God wills our human destiny to be eternal communion with the blessed Trinity by means of being adopted into His Son, the second person of the Trinity.¹²⁵

According to the Catholic understanding of the Triune God, the persons of the Blessed Trinity exist in perpetual and perfect relationship consisting of a constant self-gift of love, but the persons of the Blessed Trinity, while equal in dignity and majesty, remain distinct. John Paul II says that the human body signifies this perfect unity of self-gift by means of its spousal nature. By means of our desire for, and fulfilment in, the gift of self in earthly marriage, human beings signify, in their bodies, their eternal destiny to live within the eternal self-giving of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, the spouses engaging in the self-giving described by John Paul II, which is an imitation and participation in Trinitarian intercommunion (albeit imperfect), do not give up their individual identity or dignity. The body is a symbol, in this age, of the perfect unity of the “Trinitarian order” which, being timeless extends beyond all ages.¹²⁶ The body is a visible sign of the “economy of the Truth and Love of God.”¹²⁷

Though the symbol of Triune perfection has been ‘obscured’ by man’s fall into sin, the incarnation of the second person of the Blessed Trinity provides all creation with the perfect symbol, the perfect revelation of the true meaning of the human body. Untouched by sin, the witness we have, in various forms, of the incarnation, birth, life and death of Jesus Christ is the essential element of God’s revelation of himself. The incarnation, therefore, necessitates the theology of the body.¹²⁸

The series of Wednesday Audiences which were later published as the *Theology of the Body* were aimed specifically at re-reading the central doctrinal propositions of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* within the context of the whole teaching of the Church regarding the human person.¹²⁹ That is to say, *Humanae Vitae* is based on the ‘meaning’ of the bodily acts of marriage.¹³⁰ It addresses the conjugal meaning of the body.

¹²⁵ ToB 69:4.

¹²⁶ ToB 68:4: “The eschatological reality of the body “will become the source of perfect realization of the “Trinitarian order” in the created world of persons.”

¹²⁷ ToB 19:5.

¹²⁸ ToB 23:4.

¹²⁹ ToB 119:5.

¹³⁰ ToB 119:1, 126:2.

Pope John Paul II begins with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, that man cannot find himself except through self-gift, and explores the nature of this gift, its essential characteristics and its purpose and end.¹³¹ Since the supreme calling of man is love, man (men and women) are called to love with their masculinity and femininity. Anything less would make the gift of self incomplete, or insufficient.¹³² To be a person is to be a gift in bodily form.¹³³ This ‘spousal meaning’ of the human body is beautifying.¹³⁴ In participating in the sincere and complete gift of self to a spouse, man (men and women) truly participate in divine love, in accordance with their own beauty and dignity being created in the image of God. This beauty includes but is by no means restricted to physical beauty. In and by the sincere gift of self to another, man reveals his own profound and wonderful nature.

In giving himself completely to another, man discovers and reveals his freedom. In order to be given freely, completely and specifically for communion of persons, the essential requirements of the gift are, first, self-knowledge, second free will, and third the equality of those giving. Self-knowledge, particularly in relation to the spousal character of the person, is the awareness of the primal experience of personal solitude which longs for and is fulfilled in communion with another.¹³⁵ Freedom is required, because the gift must be given freely with knowledge and consent in order to be a genuine gift. Masculinity and femininity reveal the inmost point of their freedom in their capacity to give, in being given wholly and freely.¹³⁶ Genuine communion is impossible where both persons are not free and willing. A reciprocal and mature choice is necessary for true communion.¹³⁷ Finally, equality is necessary because a genuine communion of persons, a mutual exchange of equal subjects, is not possible without each subject being capable of both giving and receiving a gift of equal significance. Man gives himself to an equal and receives the gift of an equal in the woman.¹³⁸

Man cannot give himself in this way to something that is not his equal in dignity, freedom and equally the image of God. Some may argue that, and since man can give himself to woman as an

¹³¹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24.

¹³² ToB 46:6.

¹³³ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 95.

¹³⁴ ToB 15:5.

¹³⁵ ToB 9:2.

¹³⁶ ToB 18:5.

¹³⁷ ToB 10:3-4.

¹³⁸ ToB 17:6.

equal, man must also be able to give himself to another man, since the individual man would be equal to an individual man. John Paul II would answer that the gift of spousal love is only possible, in its completeness, to a subject who both equal and is also 'other'. Within the Trinity, God is not a communion of fathers, nor of equal spirits, but of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is analogously described as the spouse of Israel, and Christ analogously described as the spouse of His Church because they are wholly 'other' to Him. Man finds in woman a subject who is both equal in dignity, freedom and will and, at the same time a subject who is 'other' to his masculinity. The theology of the body, then, becomes a theology of sex. A theology of the "others" and their interrelationship. A theology of masculinity and femininity.¹³⁹

Pope John Paul II opposes the objectification of the body, even in marriage, as undermining the dignity of the person. To treat a person as if the body is insignificant in relation to personal intercommunion is to reject their incarnate personhood, which is to reject their total gift of self, which necessarily includes the body. The gift includes the body not merely as a material part of the whole person, but in that the material body incarnates the person as an icon, signifying all that they are. To reject the body or, worse, to regard it as inconsequential or insignificant in this regard, is to reject the essential nature of the person.

One example where this principle becomes clear is the sin of adultery. The sin of adultery is described as a sin of the body. But this sin of the body can be identified only in reference to the relationship between the persons.¹⁴⁰ Further still, Christ describes this sin as beginning within, and sometimes committed solely in, the desire to commit the sin.¹⁴¹ This lifts the significance of adultery from the body to the heart because it speaks about desire within a person, regardless of whether the desire is acted upon.¹⁴² This does not lessen the significance of the physical act of adultery. In describing the physical act as an expression of the inner desire, Christ raises the significance of the physical to a spiritual plane. St Paul reveals, or perhaps merely further clarifies, a further level of spiritual significance in physical sins when he discusses sins against the body.¹⁴³ The human body is dignified not only in being spiritual in a human sense, in that man is constituted

¹³⁹ ToB 9:5.

¹⁴⁰ ToB 37:6.

¹⁴¹ Mt 5:27-28.

¹⁴² ToB 38:1.

¹⁴³ 1 Cor 6:18-19.

as a personal subject, but much more so “the supernatural reality of the indwelling and continuous presence of the Holy Spirit”¹⁴⁴ which has been won by Christ’s redemption of the body. By His bodily incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection, Christ has purified His bride in Himself and for Himself, which brings “a new measure of holiness of the body for every person.”¹⁴⁵ Thus St Paul can speak of treating the body with “reverence” as a “temple” of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling of God raises the dignity of the bodily person to a participation in the dignity of the Triune God, especially the interpersonal relationships within the Godhead which, in turn, immeasurably raises the dignity and significance of our personal relationships.¹⁴⁶

Purity is the means by which a man or woman reveres the temple of his or her own body. Purity is a victory in which a person acts according to the spiritual significance of the body, rather than surrendering to mere sensuality or, on the other hand, dismissing the spiritual significance of the body in pretence of a disembodied spirituality.¹⁴⁷ Celibacy ‘for the kingdom’, seen in this light, is not a rejection of the spousal aspect of the body but a grasping of its eschatological significance, a signpost to the future towards which our body points us.¹⁴⁸ This is different from abstinence for other reasons, such a mistaken rejection of matter, sexuality, or an accident of circumstance.¹⁴⁹ Celibacy for the kingdom is a free choice to “participate in the mystery of the redemption of the body.”¹⁵⁰ In a similar way, the ‘end’ of the free choice to marry is the spiritual significance of the acts within marriage. It is possible, proper even, for married persons to enjoy the “noble pleasure” of their union. Noble pleasure rises above mere sexual desire which fixes on another subject. Noble pleasure participates in the spiritual purpose and end of marriage. When noble pleasure is joined with sexual desire, it rises above base desire to a spiritual plane.¹⁵¹

Marriage, the union of persons and the fruits of that union, give concrete reality to the meaning of the body in history, which look forward to the future of the bodily person revealed in the resurrection.¹⁵² While purity, acting according to the spiritual reality of the body, bears much good

¹⁴⁴ ToB 56:3; cf. 57:1-3.

¹⁴⁵ ToB 56:4; cf. 56:5.

¹⁴⁶ ToB 57:3.

¹⁴⁷ ToB 72:4.

¹⁴⁸ ToB 73:3.

¹⁴⁹ ToB 76:2.

¹⁵⁰ ToB 76:3.

¹⁵¹ ToB 48:4.

¹⁵² ToB 69:4.

fruit in history, the resurrected body will bring a “perfect participation of all that is bodily in man in all that is spiritual in him.”¹⁵³

Virginal love is fulfilled in the “eschatological virginity” of the risen persons, as foreshadowed in Mary’s virginal motherhood which corresponds to the virginal mystery of Joseph.¹⁵⁴ This marriage contains within it the mystery of the perfect communion of persons, man and woman in the conjugal covenant and at the same time the mystery of the continence for the kingdom.¹⁵⁵

ii. The ‘*sacrum*’ of the person/body

John Paul II refers to the *sacrum* of the person, and specifically of the body, in respect to the body being sacred, or set aside for a specific purpose by its Creator. He traces this sacredness back to the very beginning, to the Biblical accounts of creation.¹⁵⁶ The Church teaches that while the marriage can trace its natural beginning to the opening accounts of Scripture, Christ raised marriage to the level of a Sacrament. While John Paul II’s above claim does not contradict this doctrine, he seems to read much more than a natural marriage in beginning. He seems to see the sacredness and purpose of the sacrament of marriage expressed in those opening verses. John Paul II sees an answer to modern questions of sexuality in Christ’s answer to the Pharisees, when Christ appeals to “the beginning”.¹⁵⁷ The Genesis account has a normative meaning, not merely historical.¹⁵⁸ Normative in that we gain an insight into the very structure of human identity, which provides us with a vantage point for all contemporary inquiry.¹⁵⁹ In fact, though John Paul II does seem to distinguish between a general *sacrum* of the person or body and the sacrament of marriage, he does not always seem to distinguish between the iconic couple in Genesis and the symbolic couple in Ephesians, save to say that the creation account is impacted by sin, and the Ephesians passage offers the remedy for sin.

This raises all kinds of questions about the nature of “natural” marriages, and even of the sacrament

¹⁵³ ToB 67:2.

¹⁵⁴ ToB 75:1, 2.

¹⁵⁵ ToB 75:3.

¹⁵⁶ ToB 100:6, 92:8, 100:7.

¹⁵⁷ ToB 1:5, 23:2.

¹⁵⁸ ToB 1:3-4.

¹⁵⁹ ToB 23:3; ToB 23:4. John Paul II here does not limit “inquiry” to theology or philosophy, but includes science, biology and sociology.

of marriage itself. To what extent is a natural marriage an image of the divine Trinity? To what extent has it the potential to fulfil the purpose of man's creation? Could a natural marriage be said to be evangelical, in that it speaks of the nature of God and his love for us? Clearly John Paul II teaches that the sacrament of marriage is evangelical in this way, but what is it, according to John Paul II's teaching, that prevents a natural marriage from being a mystical sign in this way? Does perfect commitment to God's purpose mean to be set aside for him perfectly? Is it theoretically possible to be set aside in this way in a natural state? Or only in being consciously and intentionally united with Christ's nuptial love?

In John Paul II's thinking, the sacredness of the body is intimately tied to the sexual difference in human beings. Sexual difference both symbolizes, reveals and enables the communion, the mutual self-giving love that fulfills the purpose of man, to image God.¹⁶⁰ The male and female see this sacredness deeply inscribed in each other, and the sacredness of "the other" becomes the task, responsibility and purpose of each.¹⁶¹ So masculinity and femininity are not insignificant, nor merely accidental, but essential to the very purpose the human beings were created to fulfill. Masculinity and femininity have an identity, a purpose, a task, and a duty, specifically in relation to each other.

d. Communion essential for fulfillment

Perhaps one of the most important implications of what John Paul II calls the "nuptial meaning" of the body is that man cannot fully become who he is created to be without giving himself away in this complete self-gift to another person who is both equal and "other" to him. Though he is an autonomous individual, man cannot completely realise himself if he remains turned in on himself.¹⁶² Even in the paradise of the garden, even in the absence of sin, the solitude of the man is deemed "not good". Man requires "a helper suitable for him".¹⁶³

The fulfillment of this gap in his being is not merely repairing a flaw or filling a gap. The gap that the man experiences is no flaw, it is built into the core of his very being. He is created, designed

¹⁶⁰ ToB 100:6.

¹⁶¹ ToB 19:3-5, 117b:2-3.

¹⁶² ToB 14:2: "'alone,' the man does not completely realize his essence." Cf. Gen 2:18.

¹⁶³ Gen 2:18. See chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of this phrase.

to be oriented to communion with an equal other, the other who compliments his being and with whom he finds mutual fulfillment. The fulfillment is not remedial but beautiful and glorious achievement of the purpose of his whole person. The resulting communion involves the “whole truth” of the persons involved; body, mind and soul, and the communion formed is a thing in itself, they become “one flesh”, learning the truth about themselves.¹⁶⁴

Already in the garden of the Genesis account we see the beautiful perfection of this union wounded. Instead of the total gift of self, and the joyful reception of the gift of the other, the original sin heralds a grasping after the other as an object used for personal gain. The other’s good ceases to be the goal of the man, grasping instead for his own good, breaking the good of the communion, and leaving man scraping in the dust for his bread.¹⁶⁵

At this point John Paul II’s unique approach adds new perspective to our understanding of the fallen state of man. While he acknowledges that humanity has the knowledge of their need for communion deep within his being, he interprets Christ’s Sermon on the Mount as calling humanity to rediscover their purpose and eagerly seek this lost communion, this completion of their being.¹⁶⁶ He sees the implications as extending far wider than intimate or spousal relationships to all interpersonal relationships, and possibly even to all creation. Every relationship between men and women, from the spousal to the casual passer-by, are radically transformed by the man having, at his core, a proper understanding of his own identity and purpose, specifically of his spousal nature, his sexual identity.¹⁶⁷ Just as the man is incomplete alone, he cannot learn this aspect of his person alone. John Paul II says that, even this lesson, the lesson of his identity over-against the “other”, is learned from and with that very “other”. The man and woman educate each other regarding their respective solitude and potential fulfilment in spousal communion. This lesson permeates all our society.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ ToB 14:3, cf. 15:5, 14:4: “The whole truth of their bodies and their sexes, which is the simple and pure truth of communion between the persons.”; 9:2: “The communion of persons that follows is not merely a ‘solution’ to this ‘problem’ but the very meaning and end of the solitude itself. “indispensable” for this solitude was everything that was constitutive of the solitude itself. That is, self-knowledge, self-determination, subjectivity and awareness of the meaning of one’s own body.”

¹⁶⁵ ToB 28:1: “The communion which images God is broken by selfishness which places myself over the other.”

¹⁶⁶ ToB 43:7: “man... must rediscover the lost fullness of his humanity and want to regain it.”

¹⁶⁷ ToB 43:7.

¹⁶⁸ ToB 43:7: “human life is by its nature “co-educational” and its dignity and balance depend at every moment of history and in every place of geographical longitude and latitude.”

John Paul II does not restrict this lesson to those actively considering or engaged in a spousal relationship. He uses the case of those who have chosen a celibate life to demonstrate that the spousal meaning of the body is present in all forms of relationship and is especially fulfilled in those who have bound themselves in a nuptial sense, directly to a spiritual spouse, the divine Bridegroom, Christ himself. He distinguishes between mere rejection of sexual intimacy and the total gift of self to a vocation, a spiritual marriage, a marriage which requires the same total gift of self and bears its own fruits accordingly.¹⁶⁹ These spouses require a similar knowledge of their own sexuality and the spousal purpose of it in order to give themselves fully in this communion of persons,¹⁷⁰ and to develop their own fruitful motherhood or fatherhood.¹⁷¹

It is worth noting that John Paul II specifically says his work is not an exhaustive work on the relationship between marriage and virginity, and that it will be necessary for the Church to unpack that further.¹⁷²

i. Difference, or “otherness” is essential to communion

In John Paul II’s thought, the fact that male and female are both equal in humanity, dignity, and purpose, while at the same time being ‘other’ to each other, is essential to the communion that is possible, indeed which expresses the very fulfillment of the purpose of them both individually and together. The ‘otherness’ of the other becomes an essential component in John Paul II’s reflection on human imaging of God, and interrelationship with each other. In the mutual self-gift of spousal love, the sexual difference between the spouses is an essential element of humankind’s imaging of the interrelation within the Blessed Trinity. John Paul II teaches that, while self-giving love can be genuinely expressed in all forms of relationships, it is most fully and properly expressed in spousal union. This union is only possible with an ‘other’ who is both equal and complementary. This definition excludes spousal union with a being who is not equal, or not ‘other’.

The man first realizes his solitude, beginning in self-awareness and self-determination, which alerts him the meaning of his existence. But what is indispensable to his unique existence, self-

¹⁶⁹ ToB 78:5.

¹⁷⁰ ToB 81:2, 77:1.

¹⁷¹ ToB 78:5.

¹⁷² ToB 81:5.

awareness and free will, is also indispensable in a potential “other” in a communion of persons.¹⁷³ He can only commune, in this manner, with a person equal in these things, but also ‘other’ to himself in the sense of complementing his spousal nature.

He sees in woman his equal, but one who is “other” to him in a manner that complements and completes him. His apprehension reveals his own nature as part of a “dual unity” which properly expresses humanity in its imaging God. The dual and unified nature of the sexes defines his identity at the ontological level. The unique nature of both male and female are irreplaceable, meaning they require each other in expressing their full humanity and divine purpose.¹⁷⁴ Their knowledge of each other, their self-giving and reception of the gift of the other is by way of their bodies, their respective masculinity and femininity, and it is in this very exchange that they each learn not only the unique value of the other, but also of themselves.¹⁷⁵

If we follow John Paul II’s argument, that this communion requires a person to give themselves to an equal and ‘other’ person, and receive them in turn, then it is essential to note that which makes another person “other”.

John Paul II seems concerned to demonstrate that ‘one flesh’ does not eliminate individuality of the subjective persons who form the communion.¹⁷⁶ Bi-subjectivity is the emphasis through several chapters of *Theology of the Body*.

ii. Otherness and the *imago Dei*

But the ‘other’ required by communion is not merely a different individual, as if any other sentient body would do, but an individual explicitly created to be his “other”, his complement. Masculinity and femininity are created and constituted intentionally by God, and each individual man and woman is willed for their own sake, for the purpose of being in the image of God.¹⁷⁷ It is precisely the sexual distinction, difference and interrelation that is a manifestation of the image of God in humanity. This sexual difference, masculinity and femininity are bodily expressions of the image

¹⁷³ ToB 9:2.

¹⁷⁴ ToB 9:1.

¹⁷⁵ ToB 21:3: “This particular act of knowledge mediated by personal masculinity and femininity one discovers the pure subjectivity of the gift.”

¹⁷⁶ See ToB, 90-92 for example.

¹⁷⁷ ToB 15:3.

of God in that they signify, point towards, and set the stage for the communion of equal and yet distinct persons. John Paul II goes so far as to say that the sexual distinction and complementarity of human beings is “the original sign of creative donation”, the “substratum of personal communication” that makes the image of God to the visible to the world.¹⁷⁸ The manifestation of the image of God in a human body is precisely through the gift of sexual difference of the two who are unified in the communion of their sexual differences, becoming “one flesh.”¹⁷⁹

But sexuality is not limited to material body of a human being. John Paul II says that these bodily manifestations of sexuality express a deeper meaning. This meaning is related to and finds its ultimate meaning in the imaging of God, but the bodily manifestations of sexuality are both real expressions of his sexuality in themselves, but also a part which stands for the whole of his sexuality. In other words, the bodily expressions of masculinity and femininity reveal the identity and spiritual reality of the persons in which they are expressed.¹⁸⁰

Before a human person can properly and fruitfully express his or her bodily sexuality, he must first understand and master his own heart in relation to his spousal nature and self-giving.¹⁸¹ John Paul II teaches that an “original doubt” led to the breakdown of the original communion of persons, beginning with the awareness of his own vulnerability to the other, his fear of being seen and used as an object rather than being received and celebrated in selfless love.¹⁸² In this fallen state, the grasping selfishness of sexual desire undermines the very communion which it seeks to find by flawed means.¹⁸³

The healing and proper expression of masculinity and femininity, therefore, must begin in the heart of the person. It must begin with a proper understanding of self, a purification of the will to enable a selfless gift, and the gift of hope to allay the doubt of sin which undermines the original gift.

¹⁷⁸ ToB 14:4: “The body expresses masculinity for femininity and femininity for masculinity, manifests the reciprocity and communion of persons.”; ToB 29:3.

¹⁷⁹ Gen 2:24. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 11.

¹⁸⁰ ToB 8:1: “masculinity and femininity are ... two different ‘incarnations’, that is, two ways in which the same human being, created in the image of God, ‘is a body.’”

¹⁸¹ ToB 25:2; cf. Mt 5:27-28.

¹⁸² ToB 26:4.

¹⁸³ ToB 29:3.

iii. Equality is essential to communion

John Paul II teaches that one of the essential elements of genuine communion is equality.¹⁸⁴ The equal dignity of the two persons begins in their shared humanity but extends to all areas of the dignity of humanity.¹⁸⁵ In fact, the persons of a communion are an image of the internal relationships of the Triune God.¹⁸⁶ The persons are distinguished in relation to each other, but are equally human, equally dignified and equal in regard to all measures external to this relationship. The term “sister” used to describe the husband’s future bride in Song of Songs emphasizes the equality, kinship, and selfless concern that a husband should have for his wife.¹⁸⁷

The components that define the individual persons, self-awareness and self-determination, are essential in each participant in a communion of persons.¹⁸⁸ Both parties must be equally free to make the full gift of self.¹⁸⁹ The dignity of each spouse springs from the fact that they have each been “willed for itself” by God, to image His own perfect communion and that they cannot fulfill the purpose of their creation except through a free and complete gift of self. Reciprocal self-giving is not merely doing what God wills, but is a participation in the will of God, an imaging of the divine Trinity, and therefore a participation, in some sense, in God.¹⁹⁰

Appropriation via domination or desire is the enemy of freedom of the gift. Domination of one over the other is a mockery of and undermines of this communion. If the gift is impoverished or undermined by any impediment to freedom, the communion is impoverished, and both remain incomplete. Even the morality of desire itself is judged on whether such desire respects, maintains, cherishes and protects the dignity of its object.¹⁹¹ A human person gives and receives an equal, or the exchange is impoverished, and he remains incomplete.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁴ ToB 33:4: “It indicates the reciprocity of giving, it expresses the equilibrium of the gift ... in which the reciprocal communion personarum is established.”, cf. 16:6.

¹⁸⁵ ToB 21:6: “The somatic homogeneity of man and woman, [is] found first in “this is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones.”, cf. 33:4.

¹⁸⁶ ToB 9:3, 67:3, 95b:4, cf. 19:4, 69:6-7, 103:7.

¹⁸⁷ ToB 108:1ff.

¹⁸⁸ ToB 9:2.

¹⁸⁹ ToB 32:6: “The spousal meaning of the human body is linked exactly to this freedom.”, cf. ToB 69:6.

¹⁹⁰ *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24; ToB 17:3.

¹⁹¹ ToB 42:7: “Christ makes the moral evaluation of “desire” dependent above all *on the personal dignity of the man and the woman.*” (Emphasis original.)

¹⁹² ToB 17:6.

e. Physical, erotic love and the communion of persons

i. Erotic love is necessary for a communion of persons

One of the more interesting and unique elements of John Paul II's contribution to our Theology of sexuality is his approach to sexual love. He begins by noting that the biblical texts indicate that masculinity and femininity in human bodies, signify and embody their capacity to express self-giving love.¹⁹³ He pays particular attention to the interrelation between the two, particularly in their bodily awareness and interaction with each other. Masculinity then, with its yearning for, seeking out, and capacity to give itself to the equal 'otherness' of a feminine subject, is a divine gift, a propensity to truly human love, and therefore to human fulfilment. A man's sexual nature seeks out sexual complementarity in the woman and, in his yearning for his own completion, discovers the specific object of intimate love, his bride. Our capacity for love of the most intimate kind reveals and incarnates the nuptial meaning of the human person. Love, especially spousal love, since we are male and female, will necessarily bear a masculine or feminine 'imprint', or character. But is it possible to say that masculinity and femininity are essential to spousal love? There seems to be two important aspects of the masculine/feminine aspect of human nature which might provide some sort of answer to this question. First, the role of *eros* in the specificity of the subject of an individual's love and, second, the necessity of 'otherness' of the subject of spousal love.

The man's limitations, his finite nature, mean that attempting to give himself completely to all available subjects is impossible. It would result in a general, at best limited, intimacy without specific goals and, at worst, unfulfilling 'good will' to all. The 'seeking' aspect of love is a proper and good aspect of true love in that it seeks out the beloved and yearns for unity. But this love is incomplete if it remains purely seeking love. True love includes seeking love, but the danger of limiting love to seeking is that love becomes selfish, seeking always the good for self, rather than to be a gift. True seeking love, true *eros*, is the desire to act for the good of its object, precisely because it understands object to be one and the same flesh as the man himself. Eros, purified by agape, is proper passion, holy intimacy, genuinely imaging the divine passion for the people of God which lays down everything for them to serve, purify and save them. The degree of this

¹⁹³ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (as prefect of the CDF), *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (May 31, 2004), sec. 6.

imaging is great. The man is called to lay down his life for his bride as Christ did for his bride, the Church. The gift and the responsibility of manhood is not to become a false ‘machismo’ but as true reflection, an image of the divine Bridegroom. In doing so the human bridegroom becomes an analogous revelation of the heavenly bridegroom.

While adamantly proclaiming the equality and dignity of both sexes, the *Theology of the Body* asserts the differences and distinction between them are necessary for the communion of persons. The catechesis outline some of these distinctions in practical terms when dealing with specific issues. It is important to note, however, that no definitive lists of the distinguishing features of masculinity or femininity are offered. The very orientation of bodily openness to each other indicates that unity is not a parallel equality, in the sense of sameness, but exists as a unity of different persons, each one given to the other. The differences, according to John Paul II, seem to be different specifically in that they orient the human person towards the other, man to woman and woman to man.

The communion of persons specifically requires and looks for ‘the other’ to commune with. The communal, spousal aspect of the person seeks out the “unique and irreplaceable otherness” of the opposite sex. It seeks to complete itself in giving and receiving the gifts of self. It is through the act of bodily communion that the human person discovers what the body reveals, particularly in the subjectivity of the gift. The man gives himself and opens himself up to the gift of another person ‘similar’ to himself, but ‘other’ to himself. The body expresses masculinity for femininity and vice versa.

ii. The lie of prudishness

Just as it is tragic and self-destructive to pervert the language of the body, to lie with our bodies, it is just as tragic to silence this language, to inhibit or retard this communication with such extreme restrictions and safeguards that all communication is furtive and fearful. While it is true that an unrestrained fascination and grasping use of another person is a false use of the body, it would be wrong to treat all attraction to another as if it were tainted and limited in this way. If a person knows the truth of themselves, and of other’s femininity and masculinity, there is a legitimate and healthy appreciation that naturally flows from that knowledge. This appreciation, in its purest form, leads only to respect for and celebration of the beauty, dignity and destiny of the person, and

ultimately to praise of God who created such a person. Here John Paul II distinguishes between fascination and attraction. His use of these words, it seems, portray “fascination” as merely surface level appreciation for immediately appreciable goods of the person. He uses “attraction” on the other hand, to mean a genuine appreciation of the whole person and the acknowledgement of the same truth in oneself that desires the same communion, though not always with that particular subject.

This understanding of the significance and legitimacy of sexual attraction allows John Paul II to respond to certain contemporary Manichean views of the body that see all bodily expression as evil, driven by and expressions of lust, thus avoided save for the necessity of procreation. The primary problem with this limited and negative view of the body (of the Manicheans) is that it fails to see the full dignity, beauty, and destiny of the body, and thus forbids the language of the body to explore and express these truths. This particular manifestation of the Manichean error seeks to remedy the evil of misuse of the body by eliminating the legitimate use. This tragedy is deeper than the suppression of one person’s self-gift. It obscures the truth about and meaning of the body, it also obscures our vision and understanding of that which the body prophesies by this gift. If we see human love as evil, we remain blind to the great truth of God’s spousal love for us, and the destiny towards which the body calls us.¹⁹⁴

Proper fascination and respect for another person’s sexuality leads to true communication in the language of the body. A communication that is tempered by a true vision of the beauty, dignity and destiny of the body can neither make use of it for casual pleasure, nor repress and hide its beauty in a false attempt to avoid such casual use. So too, within marriage the language of the body is neither unrestrained nor prudish. Mutual fascination must rise to a maturity that rejoices in the mutual gift of self, encompassing the full beauty, dignity, and destiny of the body. Unrestrained enjoyment of the gift of pleasure without proper respect for the dignity and destiny of the body would undermine, even poison the gift, and limit or even poison its fruits. In the same way, reckless or careless stewardship of the gift of procreation belies the immaculate care with which the creator

¹⁹⁴ ToB 108:1; cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: Love and the meaning of intimacy* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1992), 58-59.

has laid out our beautiful destiny.¹⁹⁵ But to place severe or prudish limits on these aspects of love, for fear of sin or the costs and responsibilities they imply, also undermines the love. The sexual act requires mature and mutual love, a love that joyfully, plans and celebrates the gift of self across the entire shared lives of the givers.¹⁹⁶

Self-control is not a repression of personhood; it is the very finding of oneself as a person. An animal is unrestrained but, “*because he possesses himself*”, a person “*has dominion over himself*.”¹⁹⁷ Self-control is not the same as repressing sexual love. In fact, periodic continence actually increases the intensity and quality of “affective manifestations”.¹⁹⁸

The language of “sister” and “bride” together is an indication of this attraction. A sister indicates the respect, duty and unconditional love of a shared family bond, it desires the happiness of the sister, while also emphasizing the bride’s autonomy. “A garden closed and a fountain sealed” is a pregnant phrase. The garden closed evokes images of well-tended and bountiful garden which is reserved for the one the bride chooses to allow within. It also invokes images of the first garden, the original paradise, where man and woman walked naked without shame. The fountain sealed is also an image of plenteous bounty reserved for the bridegroom. The reservation is not prudish but signifies her powerful dignity, the depth of her goodness and the huge potential of her self-gift. The bridegroom’s exclamations of wonder and joy are appropriate responses to her beauty. His wonder at her is mingled inseparably with his respect for her own autonomy and joy. He refuses to approach her until she wishes it, until the giving is entirely free and mutual.¹⁹⁹

While the gift is equally dignified, and John Paul II takes great pains to emphasize the dignity, equality and complementarity of both masculinity and femininity, there is an acknowledgement that the language of the body is spoken with a slightly different accent. He observes a masculine focus on the revelation of the feminine accessible to his senses, which “dominates” his eyes and

¹⁹⁵ ToB 131:4.

¹⁹⁶ ToB 121:3.

¹⁹⁷ ToB 123:5. (Emphasis original.)

¹⁹⁸ ToB 128:3.

¹⁹⁹ ToB 132:5.

heart.²⁰⁰ This “masculine *eros*” is expressed in Song of Songs as a focus on the physical beauty, and sexual allure of the future bride and dwells on his desire to receive her gifts.²⁰¹ In his exegesis of Song of Songs, this “masculine desire” seems stronger in the immediate sense, and is acknowledged by the woman,²⁰² but which becomes the driving power which leads them both to reciprocal self-giving. The desire of the man, when received and embraced by the woman, becomes the mutual self-gift, which each of them is for the other.²⁰³ Moving from the observation and fascination with the beauty of his spouse, the bridegroom eagerly seeks to know her beauty in all aspects. His fascination is restless, hungry even, as it “binds” him to desire her and take a deeply personal interest in her. He seeks to know her in her fullness, not merely as an object of beauty, but as a beautiful person, who’s nurture involves attention and care to all aspects of that person.²⁰⁴ The attentive love is no mere fascination with the beauty of the spouse, nor a desire to possess it for the self, it is a desire to nurture and enhance that beauty, to receive it, in turn, as a gift. The reception of this love is not passive, but an active choice, another mode of the gift of self, which complements and completes the integrity of the mutual self-gift of the spouses.²⁰⁵

The good that love creates, enables, evokes in the subject of his love is the purpose and proof of that love. The purpose of love is not merely to do good *for* the other, but to create good *in the other*. Thus, true love cannot be imposed on another, saying “I am doing this for your own good”, but can only be planted, carefully nurtured, enabled and encouraged. It might be said that the true test and proof of love is the objective good that this love produces in the object of that same love.²⁰⁶ A man’s love, then, is defined, proved, and measured by the objective good his love evokes,

²⁰⁰ ToB 111:2: “The verses spoken by the man-bridegroom, by contrast have another shade of color. One can say that they concentrate above all on the specific “revelation of femininity,” the visible expression of which more and more dominates the eyes and heart of the bridegroom.”

²⁰¹ ToB. 111:4; cf. Song 7:8-9.

²⁰² Song 7:11: “his desire is for me”; cf. ToB 113:1.

²⁰³ ToB 113:1: “the reciprocal belonging of both, my beloved is mine [for me] and I am his [for him]” seems to be *generated from desire*, above all from masculine desire.” cf. Song 2:16 (emphasis original).

²⁰⁴ ToB 12:1; ToB 92:4: “Love binds the bridegroom to desire her beauty, to understand that beauty and care deeply for it, thus to examine his bride attentively “as if in loving restlessness””.

²⁰⁵ Even a hostile treatment of ToB sees that his soft language implies the “masculine” images God, while the “feminine” images the Church. Although Grimes falsely assumes that receptivity equates to passivity. See Grimes, Katie. “Theology of whose body?: Sexual Complementarity, Intersex Conditions, and La Virgen de Guadalupe.” *Journal of Feminist Studies In Religion* 32, no. 1 (2016): 75-93. ATLA Religion Database EBSCOhost (accessed April 21, 2017). John Paul II treats the woman’s receptivity of the gift of the male as active choice, taken in full freedom and implications of a moral act. (ToB 92:4).

²⁰⁶ ToB 92:4: “The good that the one who loves creates with his love in the beloved is the test of that same love and its measure.”

nurtures, and sustains in the person he loves. This reflects St Paul's emphasis on a husband's love in the spousal analogy in his letter to the Ephesians.²⁰⁷

iii. Love goes beyond the physical

This love may be powerful in the immediate sense, yet the fact that human *eros* is a love never satisfied in itself, a love that searches hungrily for something greater than itself, is a demonstration that love is never satisfied with what the human body can express in one time and place.²⁰⁸ In short, it shows that the love that searches, that is searched for, and yearned for, is greater than mere bodily affections and actions are able to express.²⁰⁹ The restless search of the *eros* clearly prophecies the need for human love to extend beyond the limits of *eros*.²¹⁰

Further to these observations, the Catholic Church teaches that the body carries with it moral, eschatological and eternal significance.²¹¹ Not only is the purpose and eternal significance of a man himself revealed in his own body, but the fact also that God first created human beings in His own image means that God has revealed Himself through the human body. That “the word became flesh” represents the very logic of Christianity. This union with Christ, through His body, also unites us to His resurrection and eternal destiny. This is especially true of the spousal aspect of our imaging of God, it shares in the eternal significance of Christ, the Bridegroom and His redemption and spousal union with His Bride. To describe this, we might borrow a phrase from Angelo Scola and speak of marriage as “ascending to the source”.²¹² All human love is analogous to and finds its source in divine love. Just as marriage is analogous to the divine marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church, so our participation in marriage is also, in some ways, a participation in and an ascent to the source of the very love it reflects.

²⁰⁷ Eph 5:21-33.

²⁰⁸ ToB 112:4.

²⁰⁹ ToB 112:5.

²¹⁰ ToB 113:2.

²¹¹ CCC 1617, 1619. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 48, 52; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 19-20.

²¹² Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, 232.

iv. Faith and the communion of persons

The spousal analogy of Christ, the Bridegroom, and the bride, His Church, is often employed to emphasize the passionate self-giving and self-sacrificial love that Christ has for his Church. The corresponding half of this analogy seems to be employed to exhort Christ's Church to be confident in the Bridegroom's love, to remain faithful to that love or, in the case of unfaithfulness, to return to faithfulness. Beginning from this starting point, Pope John Paul II makes use of the spousal analogy to explore some aspects of Christian faith as a practical experience. By this description, faith is not opposed to experience, as if 'to have faith' means to believe something contrary to that which we are able to observe or 'prove' via our natural faculties. This analogy of faith is based on or, at least, supported by experience. Human life, including all experience, is directed towards unity with God.²¹³ Faith enables us to experience Christ in our life and in the broader history of all human life.²¹⁴

An important aspect of John Paul II's interpretation of the "faith" dimension is that it provides a heartening answer to the seeming hopelessness of the human struggle with sin. It emphasises forgiveness, purification, a new start and divine grace which gives us the power to strive to live in a way which properly reflects the ideal of marriage.²¹⁵ In fact, this spousal kind of faith is unapologetically focused on Christ as its object of devotion and love.²¹⁶

Faith transforms experience by introducing the person to an intimate relationship with God.²¹⁷ Faith enables us to experience Christ at the very centre of life and history.²¹⁸ This faith is, essentially, an analogical comparison to spousal love.²¹⁹ We speak here of a faith that is not mere knowledge or consciousness but an attitude of self-commitment to God. This commitment is personal, free, embraced by the whole being, confessed, celebrated, adoring, and matured through the experience of the communion.

²¹³ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 84.

²¹⁴ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 85.

²¹⁵ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"*, 192-193.

²¹⁶ Ephesians 5:22-32; Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 85.

²¹⁷ Waldstein, 83.

²¹⁸ Hebrews 11:1-3; cf. Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 84.

²¹⁹ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 84.

Faith adds another aspect to love in that it draws our attention to qualities of the person that are not readily observed by our natural senses. “Faith enables reason ... to see its object more clearly.”²²⁰ In the same way, faith enables us to see the true dignity and eternal value of the human person that is the object of our love. Faith also draws our attention to the prophetic nature of spousal love itself, drawing us into the love of Christ and his Church, and even into the very love of the Trinity.

The implications of this spousal analogy will be explored in following chapters.

f. Love defined by God

Human beings are created for and called to love. Not a love limited by emotion, pleasure, desire, or abstract principles, (no matter how noble), but a love which both gives itself entirely also seeks to embrace the entirety of the other person. Love is defined by God, for God is love.²²¹ The inner mystery of God, the unselfish and complete gift of self, shared between the persons of the blessed Trinity is the exemplar and defining example of Christian love.²²²

i. The nature of love

By this definition, love is an uncreated gift, and is itself part of the inner mystery of God.²²³ To put it another way, spousal love is a paradigm of love, and the Trinity is a paradigm of spousal love.²²⁴ Just as the eternal love within the Trinity is between three persons, true love is concerned with another person. Love is not selfish but is a total gift of self for the good of the other person.²²⁵ The love within the Trinity imparts a Trinitarian form on the Christian understanding of love. In a way, this love defines the mission of Christian life.²²⁶

²²⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 28.

²²¹ 1 Jn 4:16.

²²² Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 1: “These words ... [in 1 Jn 4:16] ... express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith.”; cf. CCC 735, 1604.

²²³ Karol Wojtyla, *Sign of Contradiction* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 53.

²²⁴ CCC 1604, Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 94.

²²⁵ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man, Woman, and the meaning of love: God’s plan for love, marriage, intimacy, and the family* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2002), 8, 11.

²²⁶ CCC 735: “He, then, gives us the “pledge” or “first fruits” of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as “God [has] loved us... By this power of the Spirit, God’s children can bear much fruit “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (citing Gal 5:22-23).

This analogous comparison to the Trinity is not superficial. It speaks to the very essence and purpose of humankind. Human beings, in their spousal nature, resemble, or image God in the mystery of the interrelation of the persons of the Blessed Trinity. Self-love is not true love. A man cannot realize himself except in loving another, by making himself an ongoing gift.²²⁷ This sheds light on the Church's teaching on the purpose of humankind, that a person cannot live without love, without communion with the other.²²⁸

John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* 'reads' the body through this hermeneutic of gift.²²⁹ We can easily see that to abuse the gift of someone's love, even part of it, is to reject that love itself. The contribution of John Paul II seems to be a renewed and enhanced focus on the positive aspect of this love. Specifically, the proposal that love is to both give oneself and to joyfully receive the gift of another. To love must be particular, concrete, and rooted in experience, not merely adherence to an abstract good. Because love is rooted in an understanding of, wonder of and service to the good of another person, it is naturally a joyful thing. That Christian love is joyful is hardly a new revelation, but the specific theological focus on the joy of spousal love is less common. On the other hand, John Paul II is careful in his description of joy. He is not afraid to describe the experience of discovery, knowing and receiving another as joyful. But where love is limited to taking "joy" in one's own pleasure, at the expense of another's good, it is in danger of losing sight of the full significance of the human person.

To be concrete, to be truly 'personal', love embraces the whole truth of the human person. Love must recognise and respond appropriately to masculinity and femininity, in the context of the whole person.²³⁰ In teaching on married love, St Paul insists that a husband's body belongs to his wife, and vice versa, not in the sense of a kind of slavery to the other, but as an indication that his concerns should no longer be about his own needs, but her flourishing as a person.²³¹ But this love is not limited to a concern for another. Love is a gift of self. Since a man is made for love, and

²²⁷ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 91.

²²⁸ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, sec. 10.

²²⁹ ToB 13:2, 16:1. cf. Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 97.

²³⁰ ToB 46:6.

²³¹ 1 Cor 7:4.

finds his ‘end’ in love, and since love is a sincere and complete gift of self, to be a person is to be a gift in bodily form.²³²

The reciprocal love of masculine and feminine persons can only be understood in the context of the whole person.²³³ Masculinity and femininity express the ‘spousal’ attribute of incarnate persons which have expressed the love of the Creator from the very beginning.²³⁴ The body expresses the reciprocity and communion of persons, masculinity for femininity and femininity for masculinity. The fact that human beings are incarnate as masculine and feminine is “the original sign of creative donation.”²³⁵ Without the masculine and feminine, a communion of persons could not be expressed (at least, on earth) in the profound manner that is possible in marriage. This spousal aspect of the body signifies a reality deeper than mere physical compatibility and complementarity. It is this precise sexual communion which most clearly expresses and enables man and woman to ‘image’ the intercommunion of God.²³⁶

A Christian consideration of marriage and theological matters related to marriage and sexuality is not merely involved in asserting a set of moral obligations. It is a call to Christians, and all people, to realize their place within the Trinity, their place in the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, in relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Christian love, therefore, is no mere imitation or analogous comparison to God’s love but is a participation in the love of the Blessed Trinity, limited at present by our fallen nature, yet a genuine participation.²³⁷ John Paul II’s teaching urges us to consider each individual vocation taking its place within the spousal love of Christ and His Church. This interpretation of love as an expression of our spousal nature and self-giving, especially when seen through the crucible of his personalist philosophy, renders our participation in God’s love as deeply personal and interpersonal.

This is why a man cannot discover himself, the true meaning of his existence, outside a free and complete gift of himself to another.²³⁸ In this self-gift he discovers and reveals his freedom and, in

²³² Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 95.

²³³ ToB 80:6.

²³⁴ ToB 15:1.

²³⁵ ToB 14:4.

²³⁶ ToB 29:3.

²³⁷ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 93.

²³⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24.

unveiling his 'spousal' meaning, reveals his true beauty.²³⁹ Masculinity and femininity both reveal and enable the freedom of the gift.²⁴⁰ The body, which makes visible the spiritual and divine aspect of a person, becomes a visible sign of the whole person's sharing in "the economy of the Truth and Love of God."²⁴¹ Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit give themselves to each other in perpetual and complete love, the complete gift of self, Pope John Paul II interprets the 'submission' in Christian marriage referred to by St Paul as an expression of love. True love within marriage is to submit completely to Christ and each other.²⁴² Or, rather, to submit to each other as a submission to Christ's own love. Love is to have an attitude of readiness to act in accordance with this self-gift.²⁴³ "To love is to give everything, to give oneself."²⁴⁴ Self-gift expresses the essential truth of the human body.²⁴⁵ The ultimate measure of all acts of a human person lies in realizing the spousal meaning of the body.²⁴⁶ The noble, self-sacrificing love that we see in various people of all faiths and cultures demonstrates the capacity of the human heart to take on difficult and costly demands for an ideal, for love of others and specifically for the love of a particular person.²⁴⁷

As wonderful as these momentary displays of idealistic love may be, the overwhelming experience of humankind is that earthly spousal love is no guarantee of happiness. Truly self-sacrificing love is difficult.²⁴⁸ The selfishness of sin, too often robs people of their true fulfillment in self-giving love. Perhaps one of the most tragic effects of our self-centred concupiscence reveals itself in the communion between man and woman, husband and wife. A man's proper concern for his spouse can give way to self-concern or can even obscure his concern for his relationship with God.²⁴⁹ The beautifying and fulfilling communion of persons through unreserved mutual self-gift, gives way to self-interest, grasping for what is good in a flawed and selfish manner. Worthy reception of the gift of another gives way to selfish grasping after the other as an object, a mere means to self-fulfilment. In this wounded state, a man's sexuality becomes an obstacle to his participation in the

²³⁹ ToB 15:5.

²⁴⁰ ToB 18:5.

²⁴¹ ToB 19:4, 5.

²⁴² ToB 89:3.

²⁴³ *Deus Caritas Est*, 18.

²⁴⁴ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 124 cites St Therese of Lisieux, *Pourquoi je t'aime, o Marie*, stanza 22, and claims this accurately reflects her teacher, St John of the Cross.

²⁴⁵ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 124, citing Pascale Ide, "Don et theologie du corps", 161.

²⁴⁶ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 122.

²⁴⁷ ToB 79:9.

²⁴⁸ ToB 83:3.

²⁴⁹ ToB 83:7; cf. 1 Co 7:32.

image of God.²⁵⁰The communion which images God is broken by selfishness which places oneself over another.²⁵¹ Thus, even when they hold great hopes for happiness in the sacrament, people are often left disappointed in their experience of love within marriage.²⁵²

John Paul II calls attention to one common manifestation of selfishness in men. The selfish seeking of sexual pleasure in a manner that separates pleasure from its proper context undermines its true meaning and purpose. This objectification of the other results in using them as an object of self-pleasure rather than a recipient of the gift of self. The possibility of selfless gift is exchanged for “egotistical enjoyment.”²⁵³ The concupiscence which stains the human heart has left the human body almost incapable of truly loving another, and what we think of as love is more often various forms of self-seeking desire mingled with a small part of our original purpose.²⁵⁴ A person no longer looks to make a total gift of himself or herself but seeks to appropriate the other as an object for his or her own ends.²⁵⁵In making the other person an object (of his or her desire) a person also makes himself an object, with the same moral consequences for himself or herself as for the objectification of the other person.²⁵⁶This perverted form of human sexuality becomes an obstacle to the participation in the image of God.²⁵⁷

The high hopes men and women have when entering the vocation within which the love of God is so clearly signified, is the one where John Paul II even suggests that the effects of sin are felt 'above all'.²⁵⁸ In the relationship between husband and wife, each have within their power, by the grace of this sacrament, the ability to participate in the spousal love of Christ in such a manner, any sin which retards or prevents this participation becomes proportionally tragic.

This does not mean that humanity has completely lost the ability to love. On the contrary, there is good reason to hope that love, specifically spousal love, via masculinity and femininity will continue to “shape the human heart.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁰ ToB 80:3.

²⁵¹ ToB 28:1.

²⁵² ToB 83:3.

²⁵³ ToB 33:4.

²⁵⁴ ToB 32:1, 32:3.

²⁵⁵ ToB 32:4, 6.

²⁵⁶ ToB 32:3.

²⁵⁷ ToB 29:3.

²⁵⁸ ToB 32:1.

²⁵⁹ ToB 32:3.

The human body, in its original innocence, expressed the holy purpose of humanity, to give oneself over as a complete gift of love to God.²⁶⁰ This purpose is expressed primarily (in this life at least) in terms of our spousal orientation towards and self-gift to another. Even in our fallen state, however, even while this orientation to spousal gift is perverted and partially thwarted by concupiscence, the human body still speaks clearly of the pure meaning and purpose of the human person. This is not to say that impure and corrupted lust should be heralded as good in themselves, but that it is worth striving to purify that goodness related to our spousal nature so that it is able to lead us to our divine purpose. Purity is the key to true love.²⁶¹ It is not the shunning or removal of corrupted desire that will serve this purpose, but the redemption of the body, brought about through cooperating with God's grace, and a discipline which trains the desires to serve their proper purpose.²⁶² In doing so a human person brings to fulfillment in his body, and his entire person, the beautiful purpose of his creation. For John Paul II, spousal love is not merely a fulfillment of a moral obligation, it is a participation in the glorious purpose towards which all creation is ordered. It is the revelation of the glory of the creator, of God Himself.

ii. Love and sin

It is because masculinity and femininity are created to reflect and glorify the Triune God that sins against marriage are so important. The unity of man and woman is a reflection of God's love, and so sin distorts that reflection. Love defined by God's own love within the Trinity and His love expressed selflessly to humankind.²⁶³ Sins of the flesh impact not only on the flesh involved, but to all areas that flesh reaches. Since the flesh signifies much more than itself, the sins of the flesh have a reach that goes far beyond mere flesh. John Paul II proposes that the purpose of fleshly, bodily communion is to image, reflect and proclaim the internal union of God, and the communion He desires with us, and offers to us. Hence purity in fleshly things is essential to a proper reflection of, and reverence for the image of God within every human person. Respect for one's own dignity demands a respect for one's own body and, in turn, an equal respect for the bodies of others. John Paul II's perspective on married love suggests that reverence, nurture and care for the body of a spouse is essential to the proper manifestation of masculinity and femininity, precisely because it

²⁶⁰ Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 121; cf. ToB 19:3-5.

²⁶¹ ToB 49:7.

²⁶² ToB 49:4; ToB 49:6.

²⁶³ ToB 2:7.

is a proper manifestation of our reverence and love for God.²⁶⁴ This reverence requires, and leads to a proper purity in relation to the body, keeping it “with holiness”, setting it aside exclusively for the purpose that God willed it for.²⁶⁵ In purity, that is fidelity to the divine purpose, a human person is able to discover the wisdom necessary to live according to this divine plan.²⁶⁶

Against this idyllic vision of spousal love, John Paul II deals with the present experience of sins against communion. In our fallen state, desire often passes disguised as “love”. Self-giving becomes self-seeking. Nurture becomes taking, grasping, even destructive abuse, and the communion becomes a distorted reflection of itself.²⁶⁷ John Paul II interprets the couple’s awareness of, and covering of their nakedness as a Biblical reference to the effects of sin on the communion of their persons. When the “other” becomes a potential threat, a danger to the self, man’s instinct is to shrink away from the danger, to protect himself from it. Instead of rejoicing in the “flesh of my flesh” and rejoicing in the beauty and potential of this self-gift, man recoils from the being who is his equal in potential, now a destructive potential.²⁶⁸ Instead of male *and* female, they become male or female. They are set against each other precisely because of their sexual distinction.²⁶⁹ A unity which proclaimed God’s unity now becomes a mockery of that unity and fails to achieve its own glorious purpose. Under these conditions, marriage falls short of its lofty potential and leaves the spouses frustrated and disappointed.²⁷⁰

John Paul II does not see the consequences of original sin described in Genesis as merely describing some of the symptoms of the fall in relation to man and woman, he sees the breakdown of the relationship as the central and most tragic effect of the fall. The effects of the fall are felt most powerfully and tragically in the breakdown of the union between the man and his wife in Genesis, and through human history.²⁷¹ Humankind has felt this loss ever since. He feels the constant yearning in himself for the perfect communion that will fulfil his created purpose. He retains some power to express such love through his masculinity or femininity, in fact this yearning

²⁶⁴ ToB 57:3.

²⁶⁵ ToB 54:4.

²⁶⁶ ToB 57:4.

²⁶⁷ ToB 32:3.

²⁶⁸ ToB 30:5.

²⁶⁹ ToB 30:5: “man and woman ... find themselves ... rather more divided or even set against each other because of their masculinity and femininity.”

²⁷⁰ ToB 83:3.

²⁷¹ ToB 32:1: “*The human “heart” experiences the degree of this limitation or deformation above all in the sphere of reciprocal relations between man and woman.*” (Emphasis original.)

and the attempt to fulfil it occupy him constantly.²⁷² Even while acknowledging that a person's capacity for such love is severely obscured and has retarded his ability to offer himself as a pure and selfless gift, John Paul II retains a determined optimism in his approach.²⁷³ While acknowledging that the impact of the fall on human love and the communion to which it is ordered should not be underestimated, he reminds his audience to keep in mind the *imago dei* that is passed on to each person, not merely the flaw that undermines it.²⁷⁴ Rather than despondence and distrust of the heart in its fallen state, John Paul II prefers to emphasise the positive potential in vigilant control of the human heart, and remain hopeful that, with the grace God gives in the sacrament, that marriage can reach its lofty potential.²⁷⁵

**g. Specific differences between male and female, masculine and feminine in
*Theology of the Body***

Though John Paul II clearly proports to be writing a theology of masculinity and femininity, in over 130 catechetical addresses, it is difficult to find references to unique aspects of masculinity or femininity. It is fascinating to note that, in such an expansive and thorough treatment on the topic of the difference and relationship between male and female, the author avoids the common ploy of creating lists of traits, behaviours or attitudes which might be interpreted as expectations or rigid models of masculinity or femininity.²⁷⁶ It is very hard to pin down what the sainted Pope teaches as specific to male and/or female, or specific to masculinity and/or femininity.

Building on his own teaching that human beings “always and only exist as a woman or a man”, and that masculinity and femininity are two ways in which the image of God becomes incarnate in a human body, John Paul II focuses on the relationship between the two as an essential element of their imaging of God.²⁷⁷ Male and female are equal in humanity, but the full picture humanity

²⁷² ToB 32:3: “*the power to express the love by which man, through his femininity and masculinity becomes a gift for another- has in some measure continued to permeate and shape the love born in the human heart.*” (Emphasis original); “The spousal meaning of the body ... *has not been totally suffocated in it by concupiscence, but only habitually threatened.*”

²⁷³ ToB 32:3.

²⁷⁴ ToB 21:7.

²⁷⁵ ToB 32:3: “Does this mean we should distrust the human heart? No! It is only to say that we must remain in control of it.”

²⁷⁶ Eve Tushnet, “Experience and Tradition.” *Commonweal* 134, no. 12 (2007), 18-21: “The theology of the body, almost alone among theories of la différence, avoids the listmaking trap.”

²⁷⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem: on the Dignity of Women*, 1: “It is a question of understanding the reason for and the consequences of the Creator's decision that the human being should always and

is only complete when they are taken together. Only by reciprocal self-gift between them, and the God it is created and called to ‘image’, is the picture complete.²⁷⁸

In the duality of husband and wife in the Genesis account, John Paul II sees the foundation, perhaps even the summarized version of the intimate love expressed more fully in the Song of Songs. According to this understanding, masculinity and femininity are made for each other. They are each oriented towards the other and ‘fit’ together to form the union which is their purpose.²⁷⁹ Each of them sees in the other something alike to them, equal in dignity and purpose, but distinct from them, “unique and unrepeatable”, and are attracted simultaneously to the equality and the difference.²⁸⁰ In the differences of the ‘other’ who is very much alike, the man and woman find the truth about themselves. This revelation goes deeper than the physical differences and physical relationships to the theological meaning of the body revealed by them,²⁸¹ but what the body reveals is essential to the entire truth of the person and is itself essential to that truth. Hence, as John Paul openly states, any ‘theology of the body’ is, necessarily, a theology of masculinity and femininity.²⁸²

Among the few specific distinctions John Paul II seems to make are woman and man, in Genesis, are gift and receiver of the gift respectively. Man is the one who desired, and woman was the one who was desired. The “great analogy”, comparing husband and wife to Christ and his Church respectively yields some distinctions for John Paul II, but not as many as we may have expected. His exegesis of Song of Songs yields some distinctions within his discussion of the redemptive aspect of the divine bridegroom. We will discuss each of these in turn.

only exist as a woman or a man.”; ToB 8:1: “Masculinity and femininity, which are, as it were, two different “incarnations,” that is, two ways in which the same human being, created “in the image of God”, “is a body.”

²⁷⁸ ToB 10:1.

²⁷⁹ ToB 9:1: “‘woman’ is for the man and, vice versa, the ‘man’ for the woman.”, 9:2 “...opens himself towards a being similar to himself”.

²⁸⁰ ToB 9:1.

²⁸¹ ToB 9:4, 5.

²⁸² ToB 9:5: “The theology of the body, which is linked from the beginning with the creation of man in the image of God, becomes in some way also a theology of sex, or rather a theology of masculinity and femininity.”

i. Difference and communion in Genesis

The Genesis account of “the man” in relation to “the woman”, describes the woman as “brought to” man and man “receives” the woman as a gift.²⁸³ The man “knows” the woman, and the woman “is known.”²⁸⁴ John Paul II finds confirmation that this designation of woman and man as gift and receiver of the gift respectively is a designation willed from the very beginning.²⁸⁵ In a certain sense, he is the first receiver of the gift, and his joyful exclamation at receiving her is a first step toward the fulfillment of his duty towards her. In receiving her in a manner that respects her full person, the truth of her dignity, freedom, and femininity, he enriches her, and she enriches him in return.²⁸⁶

This presents us with a problem of definitions. Through his entire work John Paul II maintains that both man and woman find fulfillment in self-giving love. They are equally both givers and receivers, and that their dignity and identity are intimately related to this giving and receiving. Yet, in his unpacking the Genesis account, John Paul II portrays the woman as a gift, and the man as the receiver of the gift, and God, by implication is the one giving. True, if we are to take God as the “giver” by implication, then we could also imply that the man has already received the gift of himself from God, and even that man was a gift to the woman, given before she even enters the story, providing her with a receiver of her gift of self. But this still leaves us with a tension between the idea that man and woman engage in mutual self-giving, and the observation that woman is the gift and man the receiver of the gift. It would seem that one of these is an observation based on the substantial equality of the man and woman as both gift and receiver of gift, whereas the other refers to the modes of masculine and feminine giving in the body.

But what does this distinction imply in terms of masculinity and femininity? It is not, according to John Paul II, a matter of chronology or initiation. The man is not the one who acts first or gives himself first. The woman is given to the man. Her gift is at once a gift of God and a gift of herself to the man. Woman participates in God’s giving of herself to the man, while man’s role is almost passive in his delighted reception of her. Woman is far from passive in this exchange. While the

²⁸³ ToB 17:6, 20:5.

²⁸⁴ Cf. ToB 21:3.

²⁸⁵ ToB 17:6: “the second creation account has assigned to the man “from the beginning” the function of the one who above all receives the gift (see Gen 2:23).”

²⁸⁶ ToB 17:6.

man is identified as the desirer, and she the one desired, she is the one known and he the one seeking to know her, the man who loves and the wife who is loved.²⁸⁷ John Paul II observes that the woman's part in this drama cannot be described as purely passive. She can pre-empt the desire of the man, he says, even taking the initiative to awaken this desire in the man. It is perfectly obvious that woman can take steps to evoke the interest and desire of the man, to give that desire "impetus."²⁸⁸ Even while clearly acknowledging either can be the active party, and by implication both include some passive elements, he emphasises the equal agency of both. Nevertheless, John Paul II maintains the distinction that man is the desirer and woman who is desired.

Even designating the distinction as modal does not necessarily restrict the distinction to practical mechanisms. John Paul II carefully avoids the tendency of modern works on sexuality that fall into lists of habits, patterns or duties, remaining firmly focused on the identity, dignity and integrity of both masculine and feminine individuals.

John Paul II seems to imply that the man and the woman are both givers and receivers of the gift of each other, and the difference between them is not the nature of the giving and receiving but simply the difference in the gift itself. Reading the Genesis passage, he is happy to speak of man as a gift, given to the woman, attributing the entire element of gift and giver to the man and the woman equally.²⁸⁹ He seems to explain the apparent disparity between the text and his interpretation by appealing to an "apparent lack of terminological precision" which allows interpretations that the more precise "contemporary language" seem to rule out.²⁹⁰ Appealing to lack of precision in the text seems a problematic argument when proposing a positive interpretation. It may be that his interpretation falls within the range of possible interpretations of this text, but it fails to rule out many alternative, even contradictory interpretations. In fairness, John Paul II's interpretation is set within the context of his interpretation of several key passages, and we must take the others into account in evaluating his hermeneutic here.

²⁸⁷ ToB 21:2, 92:6.

²⁸⁸ ToB 31:3: "the desires that the woman directs toward him, according to the expression of Genesis 3:16, can assume – and do assume – an analogous character. And perhaps, at times, they precede the man's "desire" or even attempt to arouse it or give it impetus."

²⁸⁹ ToB 20:4: "Thus, in a singular way, the woman "is given" in the mode of knowledge to the man, and he to her."; 20:5: "precisely through being man and woman, each of them is "given" to the other"; cf. 17:6: "The man, therefore, not only accepts the gift, but at the same time is welcomed as a gift by the woman".

²⁹⁰ ToB 20:5: "the term "knew"; despite the apparent lack of terminological precision, it allows us to dwell on the depth and the dimensions of a concept of which our contemporary language, precise though it is, deprives us."

The man, according to his interpretation, remains responsible for his reception of the gift. Reception cannot be purely passive here because it implies moral responsibility for the manner of reception. Neither does the man take responsibility for the woman's actions. The woman possesses equal self-awareness, self-determination, and responsibility for her giving. He is responsible for his pure and proper reception of her gift of self. According to John Paul II, "the woman is entrusted to the man's eyes, his consciousness, his sensuality, and his heart."²⁹¹ Given that her entire dignity, purity and happiness are entrusted to the man, man is, in a sense, the first, most immanent and most dangerous threat to her dignity. A disordered, 'grasping' reception of her beauty would undermine the dignity of her gift. His first task, then, in 'protecting' the woman, is to master himself so that he poses no threat to her dignity. This requires a correct ordering of his awareness or 'knowledge' of her, his sensuality, the way he sees her, the orientation of his heart towards her, so that he is able to love her as he is called to do. Only then can he be a worthy recipient of her gift of self. His proper reception of the gift enhances the gift herself, just as it honours the divine giver. If the man grasps greedily and selfishly at the gift, he degrades and undermines both the dignity of the one being given, and the one receiving the gift, himself. He not only forfeits the enhancement and fulfillment that could be his in properly ordered reception of the gift, but he also becomes, in a way, less than he was in himself before the gift was given.

John Paul II does seem to attribute to the man, and by extension to all men, a certain 'desire' for the woman. This 'desire' can not necessarily be reduced to mere lust, though it does include the sexual element of love, but it is founded in a fascination with every aspect of the woman's person, including her equal dignity, humanity, but specifically her complementary 'otherness' in relation to himself. John Paul carefully distinguishes between a Platonic '*eros*' and the 'desire' spoken of here. Desire, he says, can be distinguished from the selfish grasping that characterizes the post fall, sinful desires of man.²⁹²

Even so, this desire is corrupted by original sin. Where the man once received her with delight and wonder, the post fall relationship quickly degenerates to his "ruling" over her, and her "desire" being for him. John Paul II takes great care to point out that this description of the man's domination is clearly not the original plan of God for the human couple. It is not to be celebrated

²⁹¹ ToB 17:6.

²⁹² Cf. ToB 22:4.

or even tolerated in the present. Man is called to genuine and proper fascination with the goodness of the woman, giving himself completely over to reverence for her person, striving to nurture, protect and love the woman, and to receive her gift of self in turn.

While John Paul speaks of masculine “desire” and even of the woman actively provoking that desire, it is intriguing to note that the “desire” in Genesis is attributed to the woman, in her post-fall relationship with the man. He interprets the woman’s “desire” as a grasping, self-seeking corruption of love, parallel to the man’s dominating, self-serving corruption of love, both of which are not the ideal but tragic symptoms of the original sin.

The man has, therefore, a specific responsibility in maintaining the proper relationship, the pure self-giving and receiving that constitutes a communion of persons. This responsibility is a part of the original condition before sin. The man is described as, or rather John Paul II describes what the man ought to have been, “*the guardian of the reciprocity of the gift and its true balance.*”²⁹³ This responsibility has not been dispensed with following the fall. Though it has changed, particularly in relation to the consequences of the fall, the man is still held responsible for his reception of the woman. Though man and woman are both responsible for the balance of the giving and receiving, the man is singled out as having “a special responsibility” in keeping the balance. This responsibility seems to be related to the man’s self-possession, or the proper ordering of his desire and action towards the woman.²⁹⁴ His special responsibility is directly linked to the observation that his attitudes and actions are more likely to keep or upset the balance of the gifts. His special responsibility is, therefore, to ensure that his own giving and receiving is properly ordered to communion.

The consequences of the fall are most visible in the communion between man and woman, possibly because sin’s central and most devastating effect is the damage it does to humankind’s communion with God. Sin damages the relationship that spousal communion is an image, sign and participation in. Sin perverts the proper wonder for the ‘other’ and discovery of self in the exchange of gifts, with a desire to possess and dominate the other, and a sense of shame and vulnerability in one’s

²⁹³ ToB 33:2. (Emphasis original.)

²⁹⁴ ToB 33:2: “Although maintaining the balance is something entrusted to them both, the man has a special responsibility, as if it depended more on him whether then balance is kept or violated or even – if it has already been violated – re-established.”

own nakedness. The communion of persons, marked by complete and free giving and joyful receiving, is replaced with a struggle for self-gain. Mutual confirmation, enhancement and fulfillment is replaced by shame and struggle for selfish gain at the expense of the other.²⁹⁵ This lustful, grasping, disordered desire in a man depersonalizes him and any he treats in this way, and undermines his own masculinity and her femininity.²⁹⁶ Since the selfless gift of his person is the purpose and end of masculinity and femininity, to use it instead to appropriate for oneself is not only a misuse of the gift, it is using the gift for the exact opposite of its divine purpose.

The effects of sin on the relationships between man and woman are distinguished according to their relationship. In the words “Your desire shall be for your husband and he will dominate you”, John Paul II sees the corruption of both male and female, in terms of this misuse of themselves in relationship.²⁹⁷ The man’s genuine wonder and joy at the woman’s unique free and dignified otherness is replaced by the tendency to possess and use her by means of physical, political or social domination. The woman being a gift to the man and being received with joy is replaced by a perverse desire of her own, using her own power to evoke or, perhaps, provoke the man to serve her, thus possessing and using him by her own means. Though subtle in his language, John Paul II seems to paint a picture of the couple using such means as are in their command to manipulate, dominate and generally disregard both the freedom and dignity of their opposite, in grasping attempts to serve their own needs and desires. He does, however, distinguish here between the way in which concupiscence impacts on the man and woman, even though their equally dignified goodness has been equally twisted and perverted, it manifests in accordance with their respective place within the original communion.²⁹⁸ The disordered sexual urge to possess and use the woman which comes as a result of the fall is directly related to the man’s masculinity and its place within the relationship with her.²⁹⁹

In seeking to take up his particular responsibility in a post fall state, the man must guard his own heart, his own eyes and his own desires to respect the dignity, freedom and beauty of the woman,

²⁹⁵ ToB 31:3; 32:6: “Concupiscence ... is not able to promote union as a communion of persons. By itself, it does not unite, but appropriates to itself.”

²⁹⁶ ToB 32:4: “Concupiscence ... deprives man ... of the dignity of the gift, *which is expressed by his body through femininity and masculinity and in some sense “depersonalises” man, making him and object for the other.*” (Emphasis original.)

²⁹⁷ Gen 3:16; ToB 31:3.

²⁹⁸ ToB 31:3, 31:4.

²⁹⁹ ToB 41:4.

simultaneously guarding her against his own disordered self-seeking desire, and against her own disordered use of her power against him. According to John Paul II, the root of the man's entire disposition toward the woman lies within his own heart.³⁰⁰ Presumably relying on his exegesis of Matthew's Gospel, John Paul II claims that the man's heart is where such sins begin. In fact, the man can sin *in his heart* without that sin manifesting in other ways. If a man looks lustfully, looks with the desire to obtain, or use a woman for his own satisfaction, he has sinned against his own body, and against hers. Not only does he say this sin is possible against any woman, but following *Humanae Vitae*, he warns men that it is possible to sin against a man's own spouse. Any encounter, even an encounter within his own heart, if it is not entered into with respect for the spouse's dignity and freedom, is an attempt to use her for self-gratification.³⁰¹

Though he acknowledges that, within a marriage there should be a properly ordered desire between the spouses, and that neither this desire, nor acting on it, would constitute adultery of the man and his wife, it is important to note here that John Paul II distinguishes between the "desire" which is proper to the spousal communion, the desire that sees the genuine dignity and beauty in the spouse and cherishes and nurtures it; and the disordered desire which seeks to obtain and use the other for its own gratification.³⁰²

For the man to harbor a disordered desire for his own wife would contradict the spousal meaning of his own body, which should manifest itself in proper reception of all aspects of her person. In some sense this seems a more serious sin than other forms of adultery because it directly undermines the true sign and participation of communion in marriage. In order to guard against such sin, he must find his true self, and master his desires, so that this mastery of self enables him to shape his reception of the gift.³⁰³

Shame, and the concupiscence that accompanies it directly reverses the economy of self-giving into self-grasping, turning blessed communion into a struggle of dominance and desire.³⁰⁴ This

³⁰⁰ ToB 25:3.

³⁰¹ ToB 25:5. (John Paul II applies this admonition to the woman as well.) ToB 43:3: "A man can commit such adultery 'in the heart' even with his own wife, if he treats her only as an object for the satisfaction of drives."; cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae* (July 25th, 1968), sec. 13.

³⁰² See translators notes in 24:1, 25:4 and 43:3 in Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 225, 233 and 299 respectively.

³⁰³ ToB 25:2; cf. Mt 5:27-28.

³⁰⁴ ToB 31:3.

disordered desire depersonalizes the man,³⁰⁵ not as a mere side effect of sin, but in that concupiscence warps and thwarts the proper desire which would have led to the communion of persons, enhancing, and fulfilling his personhood. The distortion does its horrid work on both sides of communion. His disordered desire not only depersonalizes him by transforming his act of self-giving into a grasping lust, but it also results in him being seen as an object in return.³⁰⁶ The symptoms of shame, covering up the body, seem to be a pitiful act of self defence against the sudden awareness of a new threat. The threat so close to each person that it comes from the very “other” they so recently looked to for communion.³⁰⁷

Even the results of the fall in Genesis point to the legitimate distinction between male and female, and to their position vis-a-vis the other. By observing humanity’s failures in certain areas, we are able to form a limited understanding of where he should have succeeded. The data of the Genesis text is limited, and John Paul II admits that the few insights gained from it in relation to man and woman are profound, even “surprisingly eloquent and acute”, they are still “mere hints.”³⁰⁸ It is in the effect of the original sin on the primordial couple John Paul II also finds evidence both of what was intended by God, and the corresponding effects of sin on their communion.³⁰⁹

The shame which twists the person to the very core, reveals itself in a different way in man and woman.³¹⁰ He seeks to dominate her, and she seeks to possess him in her own way.³¹¹ The effect of the fall on human desire is that instead of seeking to give and receive freely and joyfully, we each strive to possess the other, man by dominance or power over woman, and woman by desire or possession of the man.³¹² When John Paul II teaches that the disordered sexual urge of the male “lies within his masculinity”, it seems that he is referring to this corruption of the man’s part in the communion of persons.³¹³ He acknowledges that there is a proper desire for communion with the

³⁰⁵ ToB 32:4.

³⁰⁶ ToB 32:6.

³⁰⁷ ToB 12:1.

³⁰⁸ ToB 31:4.

³⁰⁹ ToB 11:5: [The change in the meaning of nakedness in the garden] “outlines in a concise and dramatic way – perhaps in the most direct way possible – the relation between man and woman, between femininity and masculinity”; cf. 27:2.

³¹⁰ ToB 31:4: “the lot of both is shame, whose deep resonance touches the innermost [being] of both the male and the female personality, though in a different way.”

³¹¹ ToB 31:3. John Paul II reads these words as addressed to the man and the woman, though addressed to the woman in the text. Cf. 30:4.

³¹² ToB 31:3.

³¹³ ToB 41:4.

woman, which also properly includes a bodily sexual urge for union. But when properly ordered, this desire embraces the entire meaning of its object, the person, the body and all the dignity, freedom and purpose these entail.³¹⁴ A disordered desire, then, is not merely a misuse of her person, and his own person, it employs his masculinity to directly contradict the very purpose of his masculinity.

John Paul II notes that, even when the Scriptures warn against the seduction of a woman's charm which pulls a man towards sin, the warning is addressed to the man. The man is urged to open his eyes to the full meaning of the woman's person, sex, and body to properly order his desire. In this way he can avoid the superficial attraction of the gaudy appeal of a woman offering only the shallow and immediate pleasures of false communion, and seek the ideal spouse, whose beauty is expressed in virtuous life, and who brings the husband true happiness.³¹⁵

If we concede that the man's attempt to "dominate" his wife is a perversion of the original meaning of masculinity, it still provides a hint of sorts to the true nature and purpose of that masculinity. True love is a total gift of self for the good of the other, and what too often passes as love is the use of self to obtain, possess and use the gift of the other for his own perceived good, (though it results in the perversion of even that small good he obtains.) The distinction between self-giving love and self-serving love is most visible when the man uses whatever means he has at his disposal to achieve his good, or perversely self-seeking goal. If his concupiscence is expressed in the attempted domination of the woman, then we can speculate that the proper use of his masculinity is not the renunciation of his power but is properly expressed in using that precise power entirely for her good, instead of his own, perhaps even at the expense of his own.

Another key difference is the connection of motherhood to woman, and to all women, and fatherhood to the man, and to all men. Here John Paul II is echoing his earlier teaching which links femininity to motherhood, be it biological or spiritual.³¹⁶ There is some hesitancy, and thus some ambiguities, in the way he connects masculinity and fatherhood which we will discuss below.

³¹⁴ ToB 41:4: "the fundamental meaning proper to the reciprocal attraction of masculinity and femininity contained in the very reality of man's constitution as a person, body, and sex at the same time."

³¹⁵ ToB 38:5. Cf. discussion of "adultery of the heart" (Mt 5:27-28) in 42:1-7; ToB 38:4.

³¹⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8; John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 9.

While the man properly seeks to “know” the woman in order to participate more fully in communion with her, her “otherness” remains somewhat hidden to him. Her differences have, he suggests, only a limited visibility in the body.³¹⁷ But the secret depths of the meaning of femininity are revealed most clearly in the woman’s motherhood.³¹⁸ The limited differences detectable in the body, however, do not contradict the full truth of her person. Even the shallowest attraction to the most superficial aspects of her beauty is based in the deep and perennial attraction to her motherhood, even if the man is unaware of this depth.³¹⁹ In a similar way, the secret depths of the meaning of masculinity are revealed most clearly in the man’s fatherhood. The reciprocal gift of self which constitutes genuine communion of their persons is intimately related to their respective fatherhood and motherhood.³²⁰ John Paul II includes man in Eve’s claim to have brought forth a child with the help of the LORD, and that “the mystery of man’s masculinity” is revealed in his paternity, in his capacity to generate, with her, another human being.³²¹

It must be said, however, that the man accesses this revelation of his identity through the woman, as a direct fruit of his communion with her. John Paul II had previously taught that the man remains outside the pregnancy and must learn his fatherhood from his wife.³²² He seems to avoid saying this explicitly in these catechetical addresses, but the implication that man discovers his masculinity via his wife’s discovery and manifestation of her femininity seems clear enough. It is unclear, however, precisely what the man learns from his wife, and how this fatherhood is related to or expressed in his masculinity.

John Paul II makes another intriguing distinction in his discussion of the woman in relation to motherhood. In his discussion of the revelation of femininity in motherhood (in Genesis), he seems to juxtapose the fact that masculinity was the first to feel the shame of nakedness, while the woman finds her femininity in motherhood.³²³ The man, then, discovers his own masculinity in fatherhood,

³¹⁷ ToB 21:3: “The difference is shown only in a limited measure on the outside, in the build and form of her body.”

³¹⁸ ToB 21:2: “the specific determination of the woman, through her own body and sex, hides what constitutes the very depth of her femininity ... *the mystery of femininity manifests and reveals itself in its full depths through motherhood.*” (Emphasis original.)

³¹⁹ ToB 21:5: “The whole exterior constitution of a woman’s body, its particular look, the qualities that stand, with the power of perennial attraction, ... *are in strict union with motherhood.*”

³²⁰ ToB 21:4: “the meaning of the human body bound to fatherhood and motherhood.”

³²¹ ToB 21:7, cf. Gen 4:1; ToB 21:2.

³²² Cf. John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 18: “The man - even with all his sharing in parenthood - always remains “outside” the process of pregnancy and the baby’s birth; in many ways he has to learn his own “fatherhood” from the mother.”

³²³ ToB 21:2. The generative capacity of human beings and the “shame” of the fall are connected in 21:2, 22:6.

by way of the woman's own self-discovery in motherhood. Does this imply that woman discovers her shame by way of the man's initial shame?

In any case, it seems unclear why shame in the man/shame in the woman and motherhood/fatherhood would be compared in some way. "Shame" seems to be the result of a "*radical change in the meaning of the original nakedness.*"³²⁴ It could be argued that the original nakedness is tied to the procreative meaning of the body, via their respective masculinity and femininity in spousal communion. But this shame is related to a breakdown in the relationships between human persons and God, between humanity and created order and even within the spirit and body of the human person himself.³²⁵

Since John Paul II insists that man and woman are a complementary "other" to each other, and also that man and woman experience nakedness and shame corresponding to their sexual difference, and spousal nature,³²⁶ it follows that man and woman would experience shame differently, or at least from different perspectives. When John Paul II returns to the topic of original nakedness and shame, and the differences they reveal in the man and the woman, he insists that the nature of this difference can be discovered in a closer examination of Genesis 3.³²⁷ We will examine his exegesis of Genesis 3 in chapter 5 to discuss the implications for distinctions and differences between them, and explore the arguments further in Chapter 6.

ii. Difference and communion in the Ephesians analogy

We find more distinctions between man and woman in John Paul II's analysis of St Paul's analogous comparison of husband and wife with Christ, the Bridegroom, and His Church, the bride.³²⁸ In his treatment of what he calls "the great analogy", John Paul II analyses the distinctions between husband and wife implied by the analogy and addresses some contemporary questions and false readings of the text.³²⁹

³²⁴ ToB 11:5. (Emphasis original.) Cf. 27:3.

³²⁵ ToB 28:2-3.

³²⁶ ToB 12:1 "shame has a fundamental significance for the formation of an ethos in the relations between human beings who live together, particularly in relation to the man and the woman."; C.f. 12:5; 13:1, 14:6; 15:1, 3

³²⁷ ToB 27:1-31:4

³²⁸ Eph 5:21-33.

³²⁹ ToB 89:8.

It should be noted that John Paul II reads St Paul's use of the spousal analogy in harmony with his Genesis reading and with the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures,³³⁰ claiming that the analogy appeals to both the "original man", (humanity before the fall), and to fallen man.³³¹ Though the roots of the analogy are hidden in the declaration that humanity, as male and female in communion, is created in the image of God created, the spousal love of God permeates the entire Old Testament. God chooses Israel as His spouse, pours His faithful love out to her, urges her to remain faithful to His love, admonishes her for her unfaithfulness to Him, and pays the price that will renew her purity, so that He can wed her again as a new and spotless bride. He distinguishes this spousal love from the analogy of fatherly love, also finding its foundation in the language of the Old Testament, but more fully revealed in the New Testament.³³²

John Paul II extends the analogical language of the Old Testament to explain one of the key phrases in the Ephesians analogy. St Paul's closing admonition that wives should "fear" (φοβῆται) their husbands has been read with some trepidation in the modern context. The 'fear of Christ' is analogous, he says, to the 'fear of God' spoken of at length in the Old Testament. It is not a fear which implies a frightened anticipation of some evil which may come from the husband, but the respect, even reverence due to him by virtue of who he is, and his relationships to her.³³³ This analogy does not make the man the equivalent of God in the relationship. It simply points the wife to the man's inherent dignity which, like her own dignity, demands respect and reverence in that they are both created in the image of God. It points to the fact that the man's role in the relationship is one of self-sacrifice modelled on Christ's own self-sacrificing love. Hence the woman is called to respect both the man and the profound love to which he has committed his whole self in giving himself to her in marriage. Neither is this reverence for the spouse the sole province of the woman. John Paul II interprets Ephesians in such a way that this profound awe is a two-way street. Each of the spouses are both called to regard and treat each other with an attitude founded in the "*pietas*

³³⁰ ToB 94:6: "Eph 5:22-33 does not appear in the abstract and in isolation, but stands in continuity with, and in some sense as a consequence of, the statements of the Old Testament that present the love of God-Yahweh for the people Israel, chosen by him according to the same analogy."; To illustrate his point, John Paul II examines Isaiah 54:4-10, to which we could add the spousal analogy in Hosea, and others.

³³¹ ToB 87:2.

³³² ToB 95:5 (citing Hos 11:1-4; Isa 63:8-9; 64:7; Mal 1:6); cf. Mt 6:9. (The word "Father is used over 70 times in Matthew and over 100 times in John.)

³³³ ToB 89:1.

which springs from, profound consciousness of the mystery of Christ,” though their responses are differentiated by their respective perspectives.³³⁴

John Paul II reads St Paul’s references to the woman “submitting” to her husband in terms of the mutual submission which immediately precedes and introduces the admonitions to spouses.³³⁵ This is not to say he ignores the distinctions in St Paul’s admonitions to man and woman, respectively. The analogy comparing the husband as the “head” of the wife to Christ as the head of His Church is unique to the man. This analogy works both ways. From the intimacy of marriage, we can deduce the relationship of Christ with His Church. It reveals something of the nature of God’s spousal love for His people, His Church as His bride. From what is revealed of Christ’s love for His Church, we can draw conclusions about earthly husbands. It is an analogy from which we can deduce what God expects, and commands, of husbands.³³⁶

John Paul II supports his egalitarian reading by reference to the supplementary analogy contained within the text, the analogy that compares the relationship between husband and wife to the relationship between head and body.³³⁷ Though they have distinct roles within the overall working of the body, the head and body are mutually dependent for each of their life, and even their continued existence. The head is almost meaningless without a body to ‘head’, and the body is helpless without the head. The head cannot exist without the body, nor the body without the head. The “organic union” of the head and body indicate the intimate dependence of husband and wife on each other in the communion of persons. They are equally necessary, equally dignified, and equally engaged in the mission of the body, and by analogy the communion of persons. John Paul II points out that the ‘head to body’ analogy is contained within the spousal analogy of Christ (the Bridegroom) to the Church (bride).³³⁸ This means, he says, that it must be read within the context of reciprocal self-gift, of selfless love in service of the other, of mutual submission to each other in reverence to Christ, who is the head of all.

³³⁴ ToB 89:1. (Emphasis original.)

³³⁵ ToB 89:3, citing Eph 5:21: “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” John Paul II says, “the mystery of Christ must lead them to ‘be subject to one another.’”

³³⁶ ToB 90:4.

³³⁷ ToB 90:5-6, 91:1-2.

³³⁸ ToB 91:2-3.

This context of the analogy of head to body within the spousal analogy rules out any interpretation of “headship” that would make the woman less than man, or a wife less than her husband. It is not, according to John Paul II a question of earthly conception of rule or dominion, but of a love modelled on Christ’s headship and husbandhood (for want of a better word). The husband does not own her or control her. Though he is called to love her *as his own body*.³³⁹ The idea that headship is not the same as dominion is well supported in Scripture. It is still not clear that granting this supports an interpretation of mutual submission. It could be that headship could be seen as starting points or perspectives, from which each of the spouses offer their total gift of self, without any prejudice to their inherent dignity or freedom.

Christ clearly claims the authority of the Father, but there is no text in which Christ uses His authority to obtain advantage or anything at all for His own gratification. His authority is always exercised in teaching, healing, forgiveness, and restoration.³⁴⁰ In fact, He entrusts this authority to his Church in order for His bride to be empowered to continue to grow in His redemptive love. This context “excludes every kind of submission by which the wife would become a kind of servant or slave of the husband, the object of one-sided submission.”³⁴¹

The great analogy points to Christ as the model of incarnate love. Spousal love only lives up to its calling when it imitates the love of Christ for His bride, the Church, and where the bride seeks to receive Christ’s love, and give back His love in return.³⁴² The analogy of the Church’s submission to Christ reveals something of the nature of spousal submission. There is no implication that the Church is asked to submit to any kind of injustice, or domination of their will. The submission of the Church to Christ is simply to receive the love He gives.³⁴³ The Church’s identity is tied up in her reception of Christ’s self-giving love. She is herself “in the degree to which” she receives Christ’s salvific love, and this love transforms the Church into what it is called to be.³⁴⁴ From the

³³⁹ ToB 92:5.

³⁴⁰ ToB 117:4.

³⁴¹ ToB 89:4.

³⁴² ToB 90:2: “marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians only when it mirrors the love that Christ, the Bridegroom gives to the Church, his Bride, and which the Church (in likeness to the wife who is “subject,” and thus completely given) seeks to give back to Christ in return.”

³⁴³ ToB 92:6: “The submission of the Church to Christ ... certainly consists in experiencing his love.”

³⁴⁴ ToB 90:6.

wife's perspective, the only submission required is to that self-sacrificing love for her objective flourishing and good that mirrors the love of Christ for His bride, the Church.

We have already noted that John Paul II teaches that the husband's love, if it is a genuine expression of his true sexuality, does not seek his own gratification but the ultimate good of his wife, yet he takes this analogical comparison a step further. The analogy reveals the goal of this love is redemption, salvation, and sanctification.³⁴⁵ We have already noted that the measure of a spouse's love is the good that their love creates, nurtures and sustains in their 'other', but the ultimate good, the good for which we were created, is eternal and blessed communion with God. The love of the husband, then, incorporates (analogously at least) something of the redemptive character of Christ's love for His Church.³⁴⁶ This aspect of the spousal analogy seems to offer us a distinctive feature of the masculine part in spousal love. Christ "washes" his bride, both restoring and guarding her purity, preparing her to be presented "spotless" to the Father.³⁴⁷ The analogy reveals the selflessness of spousal love, even in its redemptive aspect. Christ does not guard and cherish the beauty of the bride for His own gratification, but to empower her to stand, in her own right, pure and spotless before the Father. The analogy includes the merely physical 'spots', that age or accident may impose on the wife's body, but it is primarily concerned with the stains on her person, that of sin, concupiscence and their detriment to her objective good.³⁴⁸ John Paul II distinguishes this redemptive aspect of spousal love from the merciful love of the Father, to make clear that this redemptive aspect does not imply a kind of "fatherly" authority, but remains strictly spousal in terms of Christ's spousal love for His bride, the Church.³⁴⁹ This love does not demand purity, but ensures it primarily by the man taking responsibility for not infringing on it, for cherishing, guarding and celebrating it in her, and by fostering within their communion the enhancement and flourishing of her holiness.³⁵⁰

Though this spousal love extends to the moral and spiritual realms, this does not imply that the husband has the character or the authority of Christ to redeem. It does, however, differentiate his

³⁴⁵ ToB 91:6-7.

³⁴⁶ ToB 90:6, 91:8, 92:8, 95:4, 6, 97:2-5; 98:8, 99:4-6, 100:1-4, 102:4-8, cf. 101:8-11.

³⁴⁷ ToB 91:7 (Comparing the "washing of water" to the washing customary before weddings in the Hellenistic world); 92:2.

³⁴⁸ ToB 92:2.

³⁴⁹ ToB 95b:3.

³⁵⁰ Cf. 94:3.

love from that of his spouse, evoking the image of the husband restlessly seeking to know her ‘beauty’, that is; objective goodness, to care for it and guard it, drawing on the same resources that have and will affect his own redemption. Namely, the sacramental grace of Christ.³⁵¹

If we take John Paul’s assertion that “[t]he good that the one who loves creates with his love in the beloved is like a test of that same love and its measure,” then surely the ultimate measure of this love is the central and final good toward which her entire created being is ordered.³⁵²

iii. Difference and communion in the Song of Songs

The themes of selfless love are hardly new to the Church. The Genesis and Ephesians texts on marriage have been taught and interpreted by the Church over the centuries. But it is when John Paul II turns to the Song of Songs that his unique approach to theology in and through the body, particularly through sexuality of the person, becomes even more evident.

The Song of Songs is not just a historical love poem, it expresses the universal human experience of joy in the spousal union, beginning and primarily focused on anticipation of the joy of physical communion in marriage. If this capacity for self-gift in communion with another is bound up with the specificity of masculinity and femininity, then the meaning of masculinity and femininity is, in some way, revealed in every instance of conjugal union.³⁵³

But is there a difference between men and women in the human experience of physical communion and does this difference have any significance in our study? John Paul II observes a masculine focus on the physical beauty and sexual allure of the future bride. He dwells on the man’s desire to receive her gifts which seems to be differentiated from the woman’s desires, nor merely in the way they are expressed, but in their essence.³⁵⁴ This “masculine desire” seems stronger in the immediate sense, and is acknowledged by the woman, and becomes the impetus which leads them both to reciprocal self-giving.³⁵⁵ The desire of the man, when received and embraced by the

³⁵¹ ToB 92:4.

³⁵² ToB 92:4.

³⁵³ ToB 10:4: “In every conjugal union of man and woman, there is a new discovery of the same original consciousness of the unitive meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity.”

³⁵⁴ ToB 111:2: “The verses spoken by the man-bridegroom, by contrast have another shade of color. One can say that they concentrate above all on the specific “revelation of femininity,” the visible expression of which more and more dominates the eyes and heart of the bridegroom.”; 111:4; cf. Song 7:8-9.

³⁵⁵ Song 7:11: “his desire is for me”; cf. ToB 113:1.

woman, becomes the mutual self-gift, in which each of them is for the other.³⁵⁶ The bridegroom is intoxicated by the beauty of his spouse, but this fascination is not limited to her superficial charms. Her beauty “binds” him to desire her and take a deeply personal interest in her. The key word here is “personal.” His attention is not limited to aesthetic attraction easily appreciated by the casual observer. He eagerly seeks to know the beauty in *all aspects of her person*. His is a searching fascination. He is constantly eager to know her beauty anew, and to discover new treasures within it. He seeks to know her in her fullness, not merely as an object of beauty, but as a beautiful person, whose nurture involves attention and care to all aspects of that person.³⁵⁷ When properly ordered, this attentive love is a desire to nurture and enhance that beauty, to receive it, in turn, as a gift. The reception of this love by the woman is not passive, but an active choice, another mode of the gift of self, which complements and completes the integrity of the mutual self-gift of the spouses.³⁵⁸ In John Paul II’s thought there is a distinction, between masculinity and femininity, both in the nature of the person being given, and in the respective modes of self-gift.

The purpose of love is not merely to do good *for* the other, but to create good *in the other*. Thus, true love cannot be imposed on another, and nor can it be an attempt to make the other more suitable for self-gratifying use. True love must first know the good of the other, the dignity and purpose of their masculinity or femininity, to serve that purpose, to honour and enhance their dignity, and to ensure that all is done for the good of the other. The true test and proof of love is the objective good that this love produces in the object of that same love.³⁵⁹ A man’s love, then, is defined, proved and measured by the objective good his love evokes, nurtures and sustains in the person he loves. In our focus on masculinity, this means that a man must know the dignity, meaning and purpose of woman’s femininity, so that he can serve that dignity, meaning and

³⁵⁶ ToB 113:1: “the reciprocal belonging of both, my beloved is mine [for me] and I am his [for him]” seems to be *generated from desire*, above all from masculine desire.” cf. Song 2:16. (Emphasis original).

³⁵⁷ ToB 12:1; 92:4: “Love binds the bridegroom to desire her beauty, to understand that beauty and care deeply for it, thus to examine his bride attentively ‘as if in loving restlessness’”.

³⁵⁸ Even a hostile treatment of ToB sees that John Paul II’s softer language here still includes the implication that the “masculine” images God, while the “feminine” images the Church. Although Grimes falsely assumes that receptivity equates to passivity. (see Katie Grimes, "Theology of whose body?: Sexual Complementarity, Intersex Conditions, and La Virgen de Guadalupe." *Journal of Feminist Studies In Religion* 32, no. 1 (2016): 75-93. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost. Accessed April 21, 2017), John Paul II treats the woman’s receptivity of the gift of the male as active choice, taken in full freedom and implications of a moral act. (cf. ToB 92:4).

³⁵⁹ ToB 92:4: “The good that the one who loves creates with his love in the beloved is the test of that same love and its measure.”

purpose, and urge and assist her to her fulfillment.³⁶⁰ His passion for her must remain focused completely on her good, not on his own, if he is to create an environment suitable for her flourishing and open the way to genuine interpersonal communion with her.³⁶¹ If his focus remains on what she has to offer his own needs or whims, any of his attempts to love will be flawed and even damaging.³⁶²

John Paul II distinguishes between “arousal” and “emotion”. By “arousal” he seems to refer to the bodily response, or the response to the other’s body alone. By “emotion” he seems to mean the personal response to the entirety of the other person.³⁶³ Both are evoked by the interaction and reactions between masculinity and femininity, and the respective arousal and emotions are conditioned by the masculinity or femininity of the persons.³⁶⁴ ‘Arousal’, here, seems to be a disordered emphasis, particularly on the short term enjoyment of another’s charms, whereas ‘emotion’ seems to refer to a genuine passion for the good of the other, which will never stop seeking to know, nurture and enhance the other.³⁶⁵ It not completely clear how this “emotion” relates to masculine or feminine desire specifically. It seems that the desire is different, but perhaps this distinction between ‘arousal’ and ‘emotion’ is simply a distinction between desire which seeks to use the other or desire that seeks the good of the other for the sake of the other. While there does seem to be a distinction between the desire of the man and the woman, it is not clear if this difference is one of degree, nature, or perspective. We will discuss this question in our next chapter.

This knowing of the nuptial meaning of the spouse cannot exclude the generative potential which is written large on masculinity and femininity. The fact that human bodies are ordered to share in procreation is a central component in their dignity and purpose. This cannot be ignored or relegated in importance without doing material damage to the communion they share. This requires a man to “possess himself”, to have full freedom to choose his moral actions, rather than be ruled by base urges and self-gratification.³⁶⁶ This emphasis in John Paul II seems to be a response to certain

³⁶⁰ ToB 132:4.

³⁶¹ ToB 101:3; ToB 132:5.

³⁶² ToB 101:3.

³⁶³ ToB 129:4.

³⁶⁴ ToB 129:4, 130:2.

³⁶⁵ ToB 112:4-5, 113:2.

³⁶⁶ ToB 123:5.

interpretations of the English translation of *Humanae Vitae*, particularly the call for sexual acts to retain their proper connection to procreative meaning of sexuality. John Paul II rules out both the deliberate thwarting of procreation and the reckless abandonment of responsible care of procreation.³⁶⁷ The sexual act requires mature love. It is not enough to recklessly abandon restraint using the excuse of being open to life. Nor is it “loving” to deliberately thwart one essential aspect of sexual love in order to enjoy the limited pleasure of another. Self-control in both spouses allows the couple to join in mutual care of their reproductive capacity, which expresses itself freely in deliberate and mature “affective manifestations” which enhance the joy of the communion of their masculinity and femininity respectively.³⁶⁸

John Paul II’s joyful explication of the joy of anticipated physical union in the poetic couple of Song of Songs puts to rest any accusation that he speaks against human joy in sexual union. The body, through reciprocal fascination and pleasure, enters a deep experience of the sacredness of the human person.³⁶⁹ The “body”, here, seems to mean something more than the purely chemical or auto-erotic responses of our sexual bodily reproductive mechanics. Reciprocal fascination includes that part of our mind which is capable of apprehending the beauty of another in relation to oneself and taking pleasure in the appreciation of it. This would seem to engage our minds and at least some emotional capacity that cannot be described purely by biological arousal. The use of “arousal” to denote a damaging, self-grasping lust is not a condemnation of joyful physical love between spouses. It is a warning that any love which stops short at arousal and is not urged onwards by this fascination to a genuine knowledge of his wife’s beauty, and to a proper response to that beauty, runs the risk of undermining the very good which evokes his passion in the first place. On the other hand, a suppression or neglect of sexual pleasure is a part of proper reverence for the work of God in each person. This reverence, in turn, prevents their sexual love from becoming merely routine or biological, drawing them on to understand and celebrate the full spousal meaning of both.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ ToB 121:3.

³⁶⁸ ToB 128:3; cf. 123:5.

³⁶⁹ ToB 117b:3-4.

³⁷⁰ ToB 132:3.

What, then, does our analysis of the *Theology of the Body* bring to our discussion of masculinity? In insisting that the body is sacred, John Paul II means that the body is created and set aside for a particular purpose. That purpose is to be an image of the self-giving love of God within the Trinity and of that love shared between Christ and His Bride, the Church. John Paul II interprets the body, and thus human sexuality, through the hermeneutic of gift. He has enshrined in magisterial teaching that sexual love is a participation in our sacred purpose. He insists that, for this gift to be properly ordered to its purpose, requires equal, reciprocal, and complementary ‘others’ exchanging their gift of self in free and willing exchange of themselves. He describes such a gift as speaking the truth via the language of a body. While this short summary is an inadequate summary of the Theology of the Body as a whole, these themes will frame the following discussion. In addition to identifying and discussing several gaps and unclarity raised in prior chapters, Chapter Five will examine John Paul II’s ‘feminine genius’ and whether a corresponding “masculine genius” has been, or could be proposed. A large part of Chapter Five will focus on questions arising from John Paul II’s exegetical comments on Genesis, Ephesians, and the Song of Songs. Chapter Six will be a concluding exploration of how such gaps might be addressed, including an exegetical examination of key texts, used in the *Theology of the Body*.

Chapter Five

Gaps or unclarities in the magisterial account of masculinity

This chapter builds on the targeted summary of magisterial teaching in previous chapters by identifying the gaps and possible points of confusion in magisterial teaching on masculinity. Taking the magisterial teaching on masculinity as a starting point, what questions are raised but not yet answered within the body of teaching, and what questions have been raised by scholars, particularly theologians and in light of the challenges of modern society, that seem to require an answer or clarification, but have not yet been clarified?

This chapter will also examine some things that have been implied by the explicit teachings of the Church, but which have not (yet) been clearly stated. An overview of implications for masculinity in magisterial teachings will provide the framework for an outline of a theology of masculinity or, at least, provide boundaries for any future contributions such a theology. I intend to sketch these boundaries (as outlined by magisterial teaching) and propose a framework, shape or ‘silhouette’ of a Catholic theology of masculinity.

a. To use, or not the use, the word “gender”

One of the key problems in discussing sexual difference is the definition of terms. In fact, it seems that different schools of thought on sexuality and gender deliberately employ different definitions of the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, a difference compounded by the fact that the differences extend to the relationships between the two. We have observed that various magisterial documents express concerns about a range of definitions relating to human sexuality, often hidden under the term ‘gender’.¹ Use of the word ‘gender’ seems, at times, to be based on an ideology that downplays or

¹ Cf. John Paul II *Message to the Pontifical Council for the Family on the 20th anniversary of the post synodal apostolic exhortation Familiaris Consortio* (Nov 22, 2001): “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 a cause of concern.”; *Statement of the Holy See delegation at the 63rd Session of the general assembly of the United Nations on the declaration of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity* (18 Dec 2008); *Intervention by the Holy See at the 60th World Health assembly* (Geneva, 14-23 May 2007).

ignores biological and/or essential differences between the sexes as definitive in any way, preferring to describe an individual's sexual identity without reference to biological, historical, or cultural norms. This idea is founded on describing 'gender' as comprised of cultural and/or social constructs, perhaps with the good intention of avoiding unhelpful or damaging stereotypes, or even as a means of combatting direct discrimination against women.² The concern expressed in magisterial documents seems to be that the term 'gender', and the ideology underpinning its use, has tended to result in the lessening or even denial of the biological and spiritual distinctions male and female, and the communion between them which forms the basis of all human society, the family.³ The attempt to free women (or men) from biological determinism often opens the way to, perhaps even requires, some form of direct self-determination, without any reference to biological data, or any data, save the preferences or judgement of the individual, based on their experience or wishes in relation to their own sexuality. Rejecting the created order, men and women seek to define themselves or, at the very least, their 'gender', according to their own perceptions, desires or needs.⁴

² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, (31 May, 2004), sec. 2: "In this perspective, physical difference, termed *sex*, is minimized, while the purely cultural element, termed *gender*, is emphasized to the maximum and held to be primary."; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016), sec. 56: "It needs to be emphasized that "biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated"; Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, (22 Feb, 1997), sec. 12: "All too often, advertising contributes to the invidious stereotyping of particular groups that places them at a disadvantage in relation to others."; *Intervention by the Holy See delegation to the 23rd special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations – "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century."* Refers to protecting women against violence, sexual exploitation, (sex trade, prostitution and forced marriages), and from being forced from the home to work as offences against 'gender equality' and that "[f]acing these challenges and reaching these goals are the responsibility of the entire human community".

³ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, (Nov 22, 1981), sec. 11: "Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such"; *Statement of the Holy See delegation to the economic and social council on gender equality and empowerment of women*. (July 1, 2010) "equality and diversity are based on biological data."; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, (31 May, 2004), sec. 2: "This theory of the human person, intended to promote prospects for equality of women through liberation from biological determinism, has in reality inspired ideologies which, for example, call into question the family."; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016), sec. 56: "Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family."

⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, (31 May, 2004), sec. 3: "According to this perspective, human nature in itself does not possess characteristics in an absolute manner: all persons can and ought to constitute themselves as they like, since they are free from every predetermination linked to their essential constitution."; Benedict XVI, *Address to the members of the Roman Curia for the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings*, (22 December 2008), sec. 1: "If the Church speaks of the nature of the human being as man and woman, ... [t]o disregard this would be the self-destruction of man himself, and hence the

Some may argue that the conceptual separation of biological sex from the concept of masculinity and femininity are employed in John Paul II's catechesis when he insists that a human person's consciousness of the meaning of his own body constitutes something that is "deeper than the somatic structure as male and female."⁵ To suggest that masculinity is "deeper than" its somatic structure does not necessarily exclude that somatic structure in determining its significance. The Synod on the Family, and Pope Francis, have indicated that it is legitimate to distinguish between the social and cultural role of sex and the pure biology of sexual distinction, but that these categories cannot be treated as if they are independent of each other.⁶ The Synod and Pope Francis express concern that the term 'gender' is too often a symptom of the modern tendency to separate sexual identity from the biological data of the person in an attempt to free the person from the imposition of social norms in regard to their sexuality. The attempt to free the individual from unwelcome limitations of social norms, however, often presumes that this includes separation from their biological data, and the essential nature of their sex. To treat sex and gender as if they were separate, especially when combined with the belief that 'gender' is self-determined, separates human sexuality from the divine plan for authentic love or, at least assumes that self-identification is able to ignore biological data, and the essential nature of sexual difference that underpins Catholic anthropology.

While recent magisterial documents seem to allow that there are some ways in which the term 'gender' can be used legitimately, these documents fail to clarify what these ways might be, and fail to offer any boundaries, or examples from which we might hazard a guess. Almost the only clue offered is the sentence: "According to the Christian principle, soul, and body, as well as biological sex (sex) and socio-cultural role of sex (gender), can be distinguished but not separated."⁷

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."

⁵ ToB 9:5 (p165); cf. Prudence Allen, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.", 98.

⁶ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 56: "It needs to be emphasized that "biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated". (citing Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio Finalis* (October 24, 2015), sec. 58.)

⁷ Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio Finalis*, sec. 58.

The above comparison seems to be a kind of analogy comparing the relationship between body and soul to the relationship between sex and gender. Despite the strangely chiasmic structure, it seems that the analogy assigns the physical and the non-physical comparisons to their respective counterparts, pairing ‘biological sex’ with body and ‘socio-cultural’ gender with soul in the analogous comparison. That is: As soul is to body, gender is to sex. Perhaps the comparison is metaphorical, or perhaps merely rhetorical, limited to comparing the inseparability of two related aspects of one person. Regardless of the strength of the comparison, identifying the implications of the comparison might be useful. Perhaps the analogy might be pushed further, comparing the relationship between a physical body and an incorporeal soul to the relationship between the physical elements of biological sexual identity and the incorporeal concept of ‘gender’? If this analogy is more than a poorly chosen throw-away line, the questions this raises are too many to list here. Not the least of which is the long history of significant philosophical and theological disagreement on the nature of the relationships between body and soul.

Given that this comparison was offered within the written output of a synod of Catholic bishops, meeting to discuss marriage and family, it should be read in the context of what the Church’s magisterium teaches on body and soul respectively and in relationship. The Church teaches that a “soul” is described as the "form" of the body and the “spiritual principle” of the human person, expressing that aspect of his person that *images* God.⁸ The soul is the life of the body, and the body is for the sake of the soul.⁹ We understand the nature and power of the soul through its operation, and souls must be united with a body to carry out these operations.¹⁰ According to Aquinas, however, some operations of the soul are independent of the body.¹¹

⁸ CCC, 365: “The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the "form" of the body”; CCC, 364. The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God": it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul”; Cf. Council of Vienne (1312): DS 902.

⁹ *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Electronic Edition. *On Evil*, Q 5 A 1 Body; *Quodlibetal Questions I Q2*, *The Literal Exposition of Job: A Scriptural Commentary concerning Providence*, 2.1; *Summa Theologiae I*, Q 70 A 3 Body Para 2/3: “we shall do well to bear in mind that the union of soul and body exists for the sake of the soul and not of the body; for the form does not exist for the matter, but the matter for the form.”; cf. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Electronic Edition. Bollingen Series LXXI, 2 *Politics* Volume II, Book 7, 15.

¹⁰ *Summa Theologiae I*, Q 70 A 3 Body Para 2/3.

¹¹ *Summa Theologiae I*, Q 70 A 3 Body Para 2/3: “But the operations of the intellect, which does not act through the body, do not need a body as their instrument, except to supply phantasms through the senses.”

To compare the *gender-sex* relationship to the *soul-body* relationship seems to reduce ‘sex’ to biological essentialism and elevate the concept of ‘gender’ above a merely academic label for certain social stereotypes in behaviour ascribed to persons of one or the other sex collectively. The Church does not limit sex to mere biology. Sexual distinction transcends the physical distinctions into the spiritual realm. The analogy seems to treat ‘gender’ as an organizational principle, or perhaps even an animating principle in regard to sexual identity, which then takes shape in bodily ‘sex’ of an individual, and collectively in men and woman respectively. This seems to go beyond what the Church has previously taught about gender.

We have previously discussed various warnings in magisterial documents against indiscriminate use of the word ‘gender’, especially where it seems to be used as if it were independent of, or even directly contradictory of a person’s ‘sex.’ Where it reluctantly uses the term, the Church acknowledges its use to distinguish the socio-political constructs of sexual behaviour and social expectations. This is a long way from treating gender as having a soul-like relationship with the body. Even if this comparison was not the intent of the authors of the statement, it is reasonable to assume that someone will use this as a launching point for some more speculative reasoning on this topic.

It might be that this analogy is an attempt to mediate between the essentialist and social construct models of masculinity and femininity and the teaching of the Church. On the one hand the biological, medical, psychological and even sociological data that supports an essentialist (or evolutionary) distinction between the sexes, and on the other we have the insistence that such distinctions are socially constructed, or the observable symptoms of social constructions.¹²

At least one positive aspect of such a comparison might be that it might shed some light on the nature of the inseparable relationship between sex and gender, according to these definitions. By this we mean the relationship between the spousal nature of the person and the shape this takes in their material body, in patterns of behaviour and thought, and in all that is measurable and observable in the physical world. The Church says that a person’s body sums up, and brings to their highest perfection, the elements of the material world, and in doing so enables him to praise

¹² See chapter 1 for more discussion of this distinction.

his Creator.¹³ According to this comparison, an individual's bodily expression of sexuality could be said to sum up and perfect his or her 'gender' and give praise to God. This analogy seems to find, in the material manifestations of sex, evidence of a metaphysical principle of sexuality, masculinity or femininity, underpinning and shaping the physical, albeit imperfectly. In any case, this comparison rules out any account of sexuality that downplays, discounts, or ignores the significance of the body, or sets it at odds with the 'real' gender of the person.

It might be that the concept of 'gender', according to this analogy, denotes that part of our sexual nature that cannot be described as purely animal, which yearns for communion with another, ultimately with God. John Paul II calls this the 'spousal' aspect of the person, expressed in the person bodily, but much greater and far reaching than mere bodily needs or appetites. Is there, then, a male soul and a female soul, or simply a spousal soul, which is incarnated in one or another 'accidental' masculinity or femininity? If the Church teaches that masculinity and femininity are essential to humanity, two ways in which persons incarnate their humanity, then masculinity and femininity cannot be limited to mere accidents of incarnation. They must exist within the organizational principle of the human being, that might be called the 'soul'. But if that which constitutes masculinity and femininity is written on human souls, is there a danger that we are implying that man and woman are so essentially different as to be a different kind of humanity, or even that humanity itself is a term that includes two species, male and female? Clearly the latter is neither taught nor implied by the Church. She teaches that masculinity and femininity are two ways in which the human soul incarnates. But what is her defence against such an interpretation of this analogy?

If the soul is immortal, and masculinity and femininity are part of or intimately connected with the soul, will there be male and female in heaven? It would seem that bodily sexuality is not merely a temporary accident of our spousal nature. But will male human persons be male human persons and female human persons be female human persons in heavenly glory? If so, in what way will

¹³ CCC, 364: "Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day." Citing Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 14:1.

masculinity or femininity have any significance in the heavenly body? We will be bodily beings, without the stain of sin or concupiscence to devastate the communion the man enjoyed with his wife in the garden. But Christ explicitly states that in heaven people will not marry, presumably because the union of marriage has been surpassed by that which it prophetically signified, eternal, and perfect love in union within the Triune God. Does this mean that the communion of persons, being perfected now, has moved beyond the physical to a higher plane? Or perhaps that, cleansed of sin, physical communion no longer needs the safeguards of marriage to limit interpersonal communion? Both options seem to present problems. It may be that the Church is wise not to speculate about such things where even revelation provides so little guidance.

The analogy would seem to fit Catholic teaching better if the relationship between sex and gender were reversed in their comparison to body and soul. That is; as sex is to gender, soul is to body. In this analogy, 'sex' is no longer restricted to the purely physical manifestations of sexual distinction. Sex could be treated as that aspect of the organizational principle of the human person which distinguishes them from the other possible incarnation of sex. It would seem to fit with John Paul II's claim that the distinction between male and female is ontological, not merely accidental. The placement of 'gender' as the matter that is shaped by 'sex' would seem to make sense of the association of gender with social, political, and psychological constructions and expectations of sexual distinctions. In other words, 'sex' concerns the ontological principle of sexual distinction in human beings, while 'gender' describes the incarnation of these principles in matter, time, space, families, communities, and societies. While the above reflection is preliminary at best, it is clear that there is still much work to be done to clarify the relationship between body, soul, sex and gender.

Given that this sentence seems to be the most explicit attempt in Magisterial documents to explain the relationship between sex and gender, the brief evaluation above seemed necessary. This brief analysis, however, has shown that this analogy is not particularly helpful in moving closer to an understanding of sex, gender and their relationship.

b. The missing ‘masculine genius’

Magisterial teaching consistently claims that masculinity and femininity are equally dignified, equally important, are complementary, are mutually upbuilding and are ontologically oriented to each other. While considerable attention has been given to the concept of a ‘feminine genius’ or ‘genius of woman’, relatively little has been said about specifically masculine contributions to society, relationships, and the Church.¹⁴ In fact, even with what is written about the ‘feminine genius’ being so prominent in public discussion, magisterial documents do not even mention a ‘masculine genius’ or its equivalent. Since the phrase ‘genius of man’ has its own history and meaning, referring to mankind in general and not to the discussion of sexual difference, this thesis shall use the phrases ‘masculine genius’ or ‘genius of masculinity’ in referring to the unique contribution of male human beings. This ‘masculine genius’ whatever it is, should be equal to, complementary with and understood in relation to the ‘feminine genius’.

We have noted that Edith Stein’s writings on the concept of a ‘feminine genius’ seem to have inspired John Paul II’s own writings, but John Paul II finds the idea, at least in seminal form, in several addresses of Pope Pius XII, including his connection between the unique spirituality of a woman, and her natural motherhood and “innate inclinations,” and in Pope John XXIII, including support for women’s struggle to be recognized and active in the domestic and public spheres.¹⁵ These themes were taken up by the fathers at Vatican II, and reiterated by Pope Paul VI.¹⁶ Pope John Paul II offered some glimpses of what he saw as particular to femininity in his encyclical letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary. While the Blessed Virgin stands as an exemplar of all human

¹⁴ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, sec. 99; John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, secs. 10, 30, 31.

¹⁵ Tracey A. Rowland, “Feminism from the Perspective of Catholicism.” *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 5, no. 1 (2015), 8; Leonie Westenberg, “Incarnating the feminine genius in the contemporary Catholic Church.” *New Theology Review: an American Catholic journal for ministry* 29, no. 1 (2016), 31; eg. Pius XII, Allocution *Questa grande vostra adunata: Women's Duties in Social and Political Life* (Oct 21, 1945), sec. I; Pius XII, *Address to the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations* (29th September 1957), sec. I: “by reason of her innate inclinations and the functions to which she is called by nature, woman is more in harmony with spiritual realities... She perceives spiritual realities more easily, is more conscious of them, interprets them and makes them felt by others, particularly by those entrusted to her care in her capacity as mother and wife.”; See also Pius XII, *Address to Italian Women* (October 21, 1945); *Address to the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations* (April 24, 1952). Cited in John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem: On the dignity and vocation of women*, sec. 1; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), sec. 41.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 60; Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam actuositatem*, (Nov 18, 1965), sec. 9.

virtue, some aspects of the Virgin Mary are uniquely feminine and are an excellent expression of characteristics that can be attributed to all women.¹⁷ He specifically identifies:

the self-offering totality of love, the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement.¹⁸

In his letter on the dignity of women he begins to develop the concept of the unique nature of the ‘feminine genius’ in more detail. While it seems likely that John Paul II took up Edith Stein’s ‘genius of woman’, he does not adopt it completely. Edith Stein described the feminine genius as that which “naturally seek[s] to embrace that which is living, personal, and whole.”¹⁹ She claimed that this “embrace” of each person manifests itself in nourishing and cherishing each person in a way that colours every work in which she engages herself. John Paul II seems to distinguish more clearly between masculine and feminine. Edith Stein described masculinity and femininity as characteristics which may occur in both men and women to some degree but seem to be found predominantly in men and women, respectively. She saw some masculine characteristics in women, some more than others, and vice versa in the case of men. John Paul II describes masculinity as that which stems from the very being of the man, and femininity from the very being of the woman. The many characteristics and virtues they share are described as belonging to their shared humanity, while only those things that can be distinguished are described as specifically masculine or feminine.²⁰ Though some authors draw on Stein to fill out John Paul II’s concept of a ‘feminine genius’, his particular take on the ‘feminine genius’ is distinct in significant enough ways to warrant a certain care in presenting Stein’s ‘feminine genius’ as if it were equivalent to, or explicative of, John Paul II’s magisterial teaching.²¹

¹⁷ St John Paul II, *Redemptoris mater* On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church, (Mar 25, 1987), sec. 46: “femininity has a unique relationship with the Mother of the Redeemer... women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity”.

¹⁸ St John Paul II, *Redemptoris mater*, sec. 46.

¹⁹ Edith Stein, *The Collected Words of Edith Stein, Volume Two: Essays on Woman* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1987), 43.

²⁰ Prudence Allen, “Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration.”, 97-98: It should be noted that John Paul II seems to depart from Edith Stein’s idea that man can embody some femininity and woman can embody some masculinity, insisting that masculinity and femininity are “two ways in which the same human, created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) “is a body”.” (ToB 8:1, Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 157).

²¹ See, for example Rowland, Tracey A. “Feminism from the Perspective of Catholicism”; Isabell Naumann, “Priestly Ministry” in *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 4, no. 1 (2014), 5;

Could it be that the difference is limited to word usage? Edith Stein and John Paul II both seem to insist that the differences between male and female are rooted in the ontological nature of humanity, in which each individual is incarnate as either a man or a woman. The difference between their approach might be simply their use of the words ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. Edith Stein seems to include within ‘feminine’ many traits, characteristics which are also found in men, but which she believes are more prevalent in women. John Paul II seems to restrict the use of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ to those aspects of a human individual which uniquely and irreplaceably belong to either men or women. If the distinction between John Paul II and Edith Stein is merely one of semantics, we could legitimately appeal to Edith Stein’s definitions as a basis for understanding and expanding on John Paul II’s ‘feminine genius’. But if, as it seems, the word usage indicates a deeper distinction between their approaches, or even if the differences in word use themselves indicate such a deep distinction, we cannot take her as a starting point in defining a magisterial version of the ‘feminine genius’ and must take great care in applying it even for clarification. In attempting to arrive at accurate descriptions of the magisterial use of the term ‘feminine genius’ it seems prudent to restrict ourselves to the documents themselves.

What can be gleaned from John Paul II’s teaching on the ‘feminine genius, or the ‘genius of woman’ which may provide us with a point of comparison for masculinity? The abbreviated title of one of the most important texts dealing specifically with the uniqueness of women clearly indicates our first consideration: *Mulieris dignitatem*, which is subtitled “On the dignity and vocation of women”. John Paul II observes that Christ was not bound by the traditions and social expectations of his time in his regard for and interaction with woman.²² In his profound respect for the dignity of women, however, Christ did not introduce a concept new to God’s people. He referred His listeners to the very beginning of the Scriptures, interpreted them as asserting the equal dignity and humanity of each woman, and that He, with his Father, rejected any tradition that undermined or contradicted this equality.²³

Leonie Westenberg, “Incarnating the feminine genius in the contemporary Catholic Church.” *New Theology Review: an American Catholic journal for ministry* 29, no.1 (2016).

²² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 26.

²³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 12: “It is universally admitted - even by people with a critical attitude towards the Christian message - that in the eyes of his contemporaries Christ became a promotor of women's true dignity and of the vocation corresponding to this dignity.”

A woman's femininity seems to be intimately related to her motherhood, physical and spiritual, but not identical to it. The gift of Eve includes her "feminine distinctiveness", listed in addition to her dignity, her vocation and her "potential motherhood."²⁴ In fact, the words "dignity and vocation" represent more than interesting points of distinction from the man. A woman's vocation is her participation in the mighty works of God, her prophetic voice declaring God's love, which makes her a unique and irreplaceable witness.²⁵

In discussion of a woman's dignity, there is a distinction made between male and female in that the woman's dignity is her own, dependent on herself, not directly dependent on the man, and yet the man is given the task of protecting, cherishing, and nurturing her dignity.²⁶ The responsibility of the man is, therefore, intimately tied to the woman's dignity. Any abuse of this dignity, any objectification of the woman either internally or externally, is his responsibility, not the woman's.²⁷ In fact, the man's role is perfected in Christ, who does not merely prevent His own heart, mind and actions from offending against women's dignity, but becomes an active agent in liberating them from all conditions, whether sinful or merely social, that would impede or undermine their dignity.²⁸ A corresponding treatment of the dignity of the man seems to lack this relational aspect. In this document at least, the man's dignity is not entrusted to the woman in the same way, nor is a distinct but equal exchange suggested in anything but the most general terms. This could be a function of the purpose of the document, namely, to address the dignity of women, but the lack of a corresponding document or teaching as specific regarding manhood and masculinity is conspicuous.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 14: "when man was created male and female, and the woman was entrusted to the man with her feminine distinctiveness, and with her potential for motherhood?"; and later "woman: her dignity, her motherhood, her vocation".

²⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 16.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 14: "Christ did everything possible to ensure that - in the context of the customs and social relationships of that time - women would find in his teaching and actions their own subjectivity and dignity. On the basis of the eternal "unity of the two", this dignity directly depends on woman herself, as a subject responsible for herself, and at the same time it is "given as a task" to man."

²⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 14: "Consequently each man must look within himself to see whether she who was entrusted to him as a sister in humanity, as a spouse, has not become in his heart an object of adultery; to see whether she who, in different ways, is the cosubject of his existence in the world, has not become for him an "object": an object of pleasure, of exploitation."

²⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 15.

Even so, the aspect of motherhood is intimately linked to the woman's union with the man and cannot be separated from it. Her openness to receive new life within her is a part of the gift of herself to the man. John Paul II points out that the woman plays a far greater and more intimate part in the gestation and nurture of the child, and the man owes a special debt to the woman for her contribution to this shared generation.²⁹ The woman's unique relationship with the new person inside her evokes in her an attitude and disposition to all human beings that makes her "more capable of paying attention *to another person*".³⁰ The man's share in gestation is external, looking inwards from the outside of this unique relationship, and, though to a lesser extent, this is also true of early nurture of the child. So much so that he must learn his role from his spouse.³¹ He is indebted to her for her greater contribution to their shared parenthood, especially in this period, and even more indebted to her for the fact that, what he learns of his own fatherhood, he learns through the mother of his child.³² Even so, the child's upbringing involves contributions from both parents, but the child's personality is built upon the foundation of that original intimacy with the mother.

What is missing here is the exact nature of what the man learns from his wife, the mother of their child. If she alone can teach him, then the nature of her lesson is related to the unique relationship she has with the child, and with her husband. No matter what he learns, he cannot replicate her relationship with the child, so the lesson must include the knowledge of that relationship and a proper understanding of his proper response to and interrelationship with the mother and child. Just as he can never truly know or replicate the perspective of the child's mother, neither can anyone else replicate his own unique perspective and relationship with the child and the mother. Catholic teaching, therefore, rightly emphasizes the invaluable and irreplaceable role of the father in the life of the family, both in his continuing love for his spouse and for their children.³³

It might be tempting to see, in John Paul II's description of the man's distance from the intimacy with creation, a deprivation of some aspect of the image of divine parenting. Just as the magisterial

²⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 18.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 18. (Emphasis original.)

³¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 18: "in many ways he has to *learn* his own "fatherhood" from the mother."

³² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 18.

³³ See discussion of the role of father in family in Chapter 3.

documents link spiritual motherhood with the feminine genius, they also link fatherhood, including spiritual fatherhood, with the fatherhood of God. The Church finds the divine model and example of human fatherhood in the first person of the Blessed Trinity.³⁴

But since we understand that man and woman are equally imaging God, and in complementary fashion, this aspect of the man's fatherhood being outside of the process of gestation might itself be said to image an important aspect of divine fatherhood. How could this 'being outside' be an aspect of imaging the fatherhood of God? God is wholly 'other' than His creation.³⁵ He created everything that is, and yet He remains outside of creation. His being outside does not preclude His interest in creation, it in no way lessens His 'knowledge' of every aspect of creation, nor the intimate and self-giving spousal love implied by the word *knowledge* in Scripture. It is precisely by virtue of being outside of creation, of being 'other' that God invites created man into intimate union with the ultimate "other." Perhaps a man could be said to image this aspect of God in his human fatherhood. If we can propose this kind of *imaging*, it would not suppose emotional or physical distance from the child or the mother. It would instead engage a father in the same level of intimate knowledge of the pain and various experiences of his family, his ear keenly attuned to their cry in need, and his determination and effort in fulfilling the covenant he made with his bride at the wedding altar.³⁶ This external perspective might even be regarded as essential to his contribution to imaging God in his parenting. Scola proposes that a father, as the external "origin" of the child, presents the child with both a reality and an authority from outside his own self which "cancels out any claim of self-sufficiency on the part of the child."³⁷ It also represents the eternal Father's gift of freedom to the child. Just as God creates, nurtures, and respects the free will of His children, a father must "accept the risk of his children's freedom".³⁸ This freedom only finds itself, however, in the acknowledgement and reception of the objective reality that stands outside itself, represented here by the father, himself an icon, albeit an imperfect image, of God's Fatherhood.

³⁴ Eph 3:14-5; cf. John Paul II *Address to the members of the Pontifical Council for the Family*, (4 June 1999), sec. 1; John Paul II, *Message to those taking part in the recitation of the Rosary on the eve of Pro-Life Day in Italy*, (6 Feb 1999), sec. 3; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25; John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane*, sec. 6: "In the light of the New Testament it is possible to discern how *the primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life.*"

³⁵ Fourth Lateran Council, (1215) *Confession of Faith*, sec. 1: "We firmly believe and simply confess that there is only one true God, eternal and immeasurable, almighty, unchangeable, incomprehensible and ineffable."

³⁶ Cf. Ex 2:23-25.

³⁷ Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005), 251.

³⁸ Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, 252.

Just as motherhood presents every man with his own responsibility, the chastity of every woman, expressed most clearly in virginity *for the kingdom*, presents a challenge to every man.³⁹ This virginity has a spousal character, and represents a particular kind of spiritual motherhood. Evoking in a man a parallel response, his own chaste participation in spiritual fatherhood. Spiritual motherhood mirrors Mary's *fiat* to God, representing a profound "yes" to God's Word, and bearing the fruits within herself. Just as motherhood receives children as from God, spiritual motherhood manifests an openness to all people who are included in love of her spouse, the divine Bridegroom, Christ.⁴⁰ This virginity for the kingdom is most clearly represented in religious orders, or consecrated women in various new ecclesial movements, but it also includes, in a way, individual and personal virginity of single women.⁴¹

John Paul II teaches that virginity and motherhood are two aspects of the same femininity, or even that they are two ways of living the same truth about the dignity and vocation of women.⁴² Physical motherhood is not restricted to the biological function of her generative capacity, nor is the impact and fruit of her motherhood limited to the persons she brings into the world and nurtures with her own body, in her own home. As we have already noted, she exercises a kind of spiritual motherhood in relation to her family, and to all within the sphere of her influence. All women, whether biological mothers or not, participate in this spiritual motherhood. But the woman who sets herself aside as a virgin "for the kingdom", is not merely rejecting a spouse in some kind of penitential act. She engages, rather, in a spousal relationship with a divine spouse. If marriage is a foretaste and prophecy of ultimate union with God, then virginity for the kingdom is entering into spousal relationship with the same 'other' that marriage prophecies.

In her motherhood she participates in the work of God the creator, in her spousal nature she participates in the redemptive love of God the Saviour, and in the wisdom and love that these impart in her, she participates in God the Comforter and *Paraclete*.

³⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 19.

⁴⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 21.

⁴¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 21: "However, it is not only a matter of communal forms but also of non-communal forms [of vocation to virginity]."

⁴² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 16-17.

While there is some attention given to men in the fatherly role imaging God the Father to their children, treatment of spiritual fatherhood seems limited to the discussion of holy orders. Without in any way diminishing the importance of the priesthood, and its relationship with divine fatherhood, what can we say of the spiritual fatherhood of every other man? This seems to be a topic yet unexplored by magisterial teaching.

c. Receptivity, openness to the other

John Paul II proposes that maternity, both bodily and spiritual motherhood, manifest in all women a certain “sensitivity, ... intuitiveness, ... generosity and fidelity.”⁴³ Motherhood requires and exhibits an openness to the new human person who is conceived, nurtured within, born and nurtured without. In giving herself so thoroughly to the human being she has brought into the world; the woman truly discovers herself.⁴⁴

While describing this receptivity as one of the unique qualities of femininity, John Paul II insists that the bringing of a child into the world occurs within the mutual self-giving in the man and the woman in marriage but is mediated uniquely through the person of the woman. A mother is loved, and loves in return, but the love she mediates is first directed to the person within herself, giving her a unique understanding of the dignity and intrinsic worth of each human person.⁴⁵

Her receptivity is also expressed in her spousal nature, opening herself to the love of the bridegroom, by giving her *fiat*, her “yes” to God, she is the foretaste and forerunner of all Christianity, all those who receive and live in the love of the saviour. It is precisely “the woman”, says John Paul II, who precedes us all on the path to holiness.⁴⁶ Just as all the faithful who share in “the priesthood of all believers” participate in the spousal ministry of love of Christ for his bride, so the faithful in the Church share in the role of the bride, who gives herself wholly over to the redemptive love of her divine spouse.

⁴³ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 2.

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 18: “Motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman's "part". In this openness, in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman "discovers herself through a sincere gift of self".”

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 30.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 27.

The woman's openness to this love is reflected in, and is typical of, her femininity. It is this very love, this awareness and openness to the dignity of other persons, that typifies her irreplaceable contribution. The bride's openness to being loved, allows her to love freely and fully in return, not a purely emotive feeling (although this is a legitimate part of her love) but a love defined by justice and charity for others.⁴⁷ Women offer a contribution to society that "unites reason and feeling" in a manner which leaves a woman more "open to the sense of "mystery", which makes the human relationships and communication more "honest and authentic."⁴⁸ Her focus shapes everything she does, every venture to which she turns her mind and hands, and brings like influence to all with whom she interacts.⁴⁹ In this way the Church is as much 'Marian' as it is 'Petrine'. There is as much an element of feminine genius in Mary, the bridehood of the Church and in the nature of individual receptivity to God's redemptive love, as there is masculinity in the divine Bridegroom and those who stand *in persona Christi* in mediating this love sacramentally.⁵⁰

If the feminine genius can be summed up in her receptivity, expressed in a spousal way in her receptivity of others, most importantly the love of her bridegroom, and expressed in her motherhood, both in a specific and broad sense, then where can we find a corresponding summation of the characteristics of masculinity? We will discuss some possibilities for this masculine genius in our next chapter.

The writings of John Paul II on women seem to be answering questions raised in contemporary society, and thus not only focus on extolling and defining a feminine genius, but sometimes emphasise the feminine at the expense of the masculine. In his effort to address some of the false readings of scripture and tradition in relation to the role of women by some Catholics, and to answer false accusations against the Church from feminists responding to the former, John Paul II seems to have neglected to fully explicate one side of the complementarity he so strongly espouses. At the very least, he seems to invest more effort in addressing the dignity and role of women than that of men.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 29.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, sec. 2.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 29: "It means something more universal, based on the very fact of her being a woman within all the interpersonal relationships which, in the most varied ways, shape society and structure the interaction between all persons - men and women."

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 27.

d. Father standing for family

Before we continue with this discussion, it is necessary to acknowledge that the language used by the Church has most often used the word “man” in reference to human persons of either sex, in discussion of everything from anthropology to human rights. It might be argued that the more recent focus on women is merely a belated corrective. The word “man”, however, was most often used as an unmarked form, denoting either the entire human species or an individual of the human species of unspecified sex.⁵¹ Even where “man” is used in specific reference to husbands and fathers, the literary and social context make this reference too ambiguous to be attributed solely to an attribute specific to male human beings. The right of a “man” to work, for example, and to be paid a just wage is presented on the grounds that the rights of sustenance and shelter belong to the entire family, and the man is assumed to be the means by which the entire family access those rights. Given that the hard work of both men and women has been recognized from the beginning, and that this “work” refers to an occupation of some sort that provides some kind of subsistence for the family, it might be argued that the right to work is particular to masculinity in that he has been generally expected to provide the bulk of the family’s sustenance. It is difficult, however, to separate the matters of social norms and expectations from theological statements about masculinity and femininity. In a society where women are recognized as bringing the most sustenance into a family home, would the same text, the emphasis might well be different.

A similar focus on the father’s shared responsibility to educate his children gives us a similar problem in texts relating to education. Once again, there are plenty of references to the necessity of the father in the family home, for education specifically and for a more general and undefined “need” of the children for their father.⁵² This undefined need for a father is another subject lacking detail in the magisterial teaching. While the documents insist that a father is essential and necessary, there is little that is specific that might help us to define what, precisely, is missing when the father is absent, that cannot be replaced by the mother or others.⁵³

⁵¹ For a discussion of marked and unmarked forms of “man” see Paul Mankowski, “The Necessary Failure of Inclusive Language Translations: A Linguistic Elucidation,” *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 445-68.

⁵² See discussion in Chapter 3.

⁵³ See discussion in Chapter 3.

Though the man remains ‘outside’ the pregnancy, and must learn his fatherhood from the mother, mothers need the complementary presence and efforts of their husband in their mutual parenting of their children.⁵⁴ In her magisterial teaching, the Church warns against the danger that the absence and abdication of fathers in family life represents for all society.⁵⁵ The Church has constantly called on governments and societies to preserve conditions which permit a husband and father to carry out his duty of nurture for his family.⁵⁶ A father’s active presence is “highly beneficial,” and for the good of society.⁵⁷ When the father models masculinity to his sons and his daughters, and the absence of a father “causes psychological and moral imbalance” in the development of children.⁵⁸ It is clear that the Catholic Church teaches that fathers are irreplaceable, but it is difficult to find hints of what it is, precisely, that makes the contribution of fathers unique.

Among the most important tasks of a father, for example, is that of education of the children born into his family.⁵⁹ We have noted above that parents are the first educators, both by virtue of the

⁵⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 18; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52; John Paul II, *Women: Teachers of Peace*, sec. 6: “No mother should be left alone. *Children need the presence and care of both parents*, who carry out their duty as educators above all through the influence of the way they live. The quality of the relationship between the spouses has profound psychological effects on children and greatly conditions both the way they relate to their surroundings and the other relationships which they will develop throughout life.”

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25: “Above all where social and cultural conditions so easily encourage a father to be less concerned with his family or at any rate less involved in the work of education, efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance.”

⁵⁶ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 13: “It is a most sacred law of nature that a father should provide food and all necessities for those whom he has begotten; and, similarly, it is natural that he should wish that his children ... should be by him provided with all that is needful to enable them to keep themselves decently from want and misery amid the uncertainties of this mortal life.”; Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 14: “The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error. ... the rulers of the commonwealth must go no further; here, nature bids them stop.

Paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State; for it has the same source as human life itself.”

⁵⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52: “The active presence of the father is highly beneficial to [the childrens’] formation.”; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 23; also sec. 175: “the clear and well-defined presence of both figures, female and male, creates the environment best suited to the growth of the child.”

⁵⁸ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 59: “A father, whose behaviour is inspired by masculine dignity without “machismo”, will be an attractive model for his sons, and inspire respect, admiration and security in his daughters.”; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 25: “Above all where social and cultural conditions so easily encourage a father to be less concerned with his family ... efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance.”

⁵⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 48: “Graced with the dignity and office of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will energetically acquit themselves of a duty which devolves primarily on them, namely education and especially religious education.”; The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 23: “Other educators can assist in this task, but they can only take the place of parents for serious reasons of physical or moral incapacity. On this point the Magisterium of the Church has expressed itself clearly, in relation to the whole educative process of children: “The role of parents in education is of such

children's constant exposure to their example of life and love and by virtue of the confidence and trust this bond of family creates.⁶⁰ This parental authority is an extension of the authority of God who entrusted it to them.⁶¹ But the task is entrusted to the husband and wife equally. They must form a "communion of minds" which enables a "painstaking cooperation" in the education of their children.⁶² The education of children is an essential component of the parents joint sharing in God's creative act of bringing a child into the world and nurturing the child to adulthood.⁶³ The intimacy

importance that it is almost impossible to find an adequate substitute."; John Paul II, *Laborem exercens*, sec. 10: "Work and industriousness also influence the whole *process of education* in the family, for the very reason that everyone "becomes a human being" through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education."; Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, sec. 15: "Both husband and wife, however, receiving these children with joy and gratitude from the hand of God, will regard them as a talent committed to their charge by God, not only to be employed for their own advantage or for that of an earthly commonwealth, but to be restored to God with interest on the day of reckoning."

⁶⁰ The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 7: "having given and welcomed life in an atmosphere of love, parents are rich in an educative potential which no one else possesses. In a unique way they know their own children; they know them in their unrepeatable identity and by experience they possess the secrets and the resources of true love."; sec. 23: "Parents are the *first and most important educators* of their children, and they also possess a *fundamental competency* in this area: they are *educators because they are parents*". (Emphasis original.); sec. 26: "It is precisely with this end in view that the educational task of the family takes on greater importance from the earliest years: "Remote preparation begins in early childhood in that wise family training which leads children to discover themselves."; The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 28: "Committed to the task of educating their children for love, Christian parents first of all can take awareness of their married love as a reference point."; cf. sec. 27: "In the family, children and young people can learn to live human sexuality within the solid context of Christian life."

⁶¹ Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 35: "It does not however follow from this that the parents' right to educate their children is absolute and despotic; for it is necessarily subordinated to the last end and to natural and divine law"; Pius XII Allocution to midwives, October 29, 1951: "If the Lord praises and rewards the faithful servant for having yielded him five talents, what praise, what reward will He reserve for the father, who has guarded and raised for Him a human life entrusted to him, greater than all the gold and silver of the world?"

⁶² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 52: "The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children."

⁶³ Leo XIII *Sapientiae Christianae*, sec. 42: "These hold from nature their right of training the children to whom they have given birth, with the obligation super-added of shaping and directing the education of their little ones to the end for which God vouchsafed the privilege of transmitting the gift of life." Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 12: "In the first place comes the family, instituted directly by God for its peculiar purpose, the generation and formation of offspring; for this reason it has priority of nature and therefore of rights over civil society."; sec. 32: "The family therefore holds directly from the Creator the mission and hence the right to educate the offspring."; Paul VI *Gravissimum Educationis*, sec. 3: "Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators." John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 31: "The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life."; sec. 36: "The task of giving education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God's creative activity: by begetting in love and for love a new person who has within himself or herself the vocation to growth and development, parents by that very fact take on the task of helping that person effectively to live a fully human life."; Code of Canon Law, 226 §2: "Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them. It is therefore primarily the responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian education of their children."; Leo XIII *Sapientiae Christianae*, sec. 42: "The family may be regarded as the cradle of civil society, and it is in great measure within the circle of family life that the destiny of the States is fostered ... If in their early years they find within the walls of their homes the rule of an upright life and the discipline of Christian virtues, the future welfare of society

and love of a family is uniquely situated to prepare children for adult life in society and Church.⁶⁴ so that the children raised and educated within this active love may learn the truth about themselves in relation to others.⁶⁵ While the magisterial documents frequently assert that a father's unique participation in the education of his children is indispensable, and speaks of the father's lived example of the "gifts of masculinity" which reveals to the children the value of their own sexual identity, it is difficult to discover what, precisely, comprises these gifts and how they complement the gifts of the wife and mother.⁶⁶

e. Spiritual masculinity

Even in his letter directly addressing women, John Paul II does not hesitate to make a direct connection between masculinity and the apostolic priesthood.⁶⁷ The masculinity of the priesthood is directly connected with the masculinity of Christ, and His love for His bride, the Church.⁶⁸ The

will in great measure be guaranteed.”; Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 34: “Parents are under a grave obligation to see to the religious and moral education of their children, as well as to their physical and civic training, as far as they can, and moreover to provide for their temporal well-being.”; Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 14: “If the parents are in some sense the foundations of the home, the children are like the “living stones” of the family (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). Significantly, the word which appears most frequently in the Old Testament after the name of God (YHWH, “the Lord”), is “child” (ben, “son”), which is itself related to the verb “to build” (banah).”

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 36: “For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs.”

⁶⁵ John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane*, sec. 6: “To this common good both man and woman make their specific contribution. Hence one can discover, at the very origins of human society, the qualities of communion and of complementarity.”; cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 44: “Thus the fostering of authentic and mature communion between persons within the family is the first and irreplaceable school of social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love.”; cf. Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 16.

⁶⁶ Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, sec. 31: “The father according to the flesh has in a particular way a share in that principle which in a manner universal is found in God.... The father is the principle of generation, of education and discipline and of everything that bears upon the perfecting of human life.” (citing *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2, Q. CII, a. I) ; *Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin, XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7-28 October 2012 – The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*. “Ever since the first evangelization, the transmission of the faith from one generation to the next found a natural home in the family where women play a very special role without diminishing the figure and responsibility of the father.”; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 177: “God sets the father in the family so that by the gifts of his masculinity he can be “close to his wife and share everything, joy and sorrow, hope and hardship. And to be close to his children as they grow ... To be a father who is always present.”; John Paul II, *Gratissimam sane*, sec. 6: “From [the family] derive the “masculinity” and the “femininity” of individuals, just as from it every community draws its own unique richness in the mutual fulfilment of persons.”; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 175: “A father possessed of a clear and serene masculine identity who demonstrates affection and concern for his wife is just as necessary as a caring mother”.

⁶⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 26.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 3 for more discussion of this theme in the magisterial documents.

priest, particularly in his eucharistic sacrifice, stands *in persona Christi* and mediates the redemptive love of the Bridegroom for his bride, the Church. Masculinity and femininity are not accidental nor merely symbolic in this exchange. The priest's masculinity is a participation in the bridegroom's spousal and redemptive love for his bride.⁶⁹

The spousal nature of priesthood is connected with its spiritual fatherhood, and both are intimately connected to the masculinity of the priest. In order to exercise his spiritual fatherhood, in the capacity of his sacramental ministry and even in the ordinary day-to-day relations of the priestly ministry, a candidate for the ordained priesthood must reach "affective maturity", allowing healthy relationships with men and women.⁷⁰ A life committed to perpetual virginity is an example to all persons, married or single, of the spiritual aspect of their spousal nature, which is essential to love, and guards against reducing their sexuality to the limits of the bodily relationships, or reducing the fecundity of conjugal love to a mere biological function.⁷¹

It seems that spiritual fatherhood is both a gift granted by virtue of masculinity, and a responsibility entrusted to each man, requiring careful preparation, personal effort, and stewardship. What is missing here is an exploration of spiritual fatherhood, corresponding to the exploration of spiritual motherhood in magisterial documents. We can find spiritual fatherhood explored in relation to magisterial teaching on priestly ordination, but not for all men in terms of their fatherhood extending beyond the immediate family unit. Apart from the specific discussion on the priesthood, the nature of spiritual fatherhood does not seem to be explored further in John Paul II's exploration of sexual distinctions, leaving us with the general connection of fathers to the fatherhood of God, already discussed above, and the analogical comparison of husbands to the divine Bridegroom,

⁶⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores: On the question of admission of women to the ministerial priesthood*, (15 Oct 1976), sec. 5: "unless one is to disregard the importance of this symbolism for the economy of Revelation, it must be admitted that, in actions which demand the character of ordination and in which Christ himself, the author of the Covenant, the Bridegroom, the Head of the Church, is represented, exercising his ministry of salvation - which is in the highest degree the case of the Eucharist - his role (this is the original sense of the word *persona*) must be taken by a man."

⁷⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*. (4 November 2005), sec. 1.

⁷¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 13: "Just as virginity receives from physical motherhood the insight that there is no Christian vocation except in the concrete gift of oneself to the other, so physical motherhood receives from virginity an insight into its fundamentally spiritual dimension: it is in not being content only to give physical life that the other truly comes into existence."

Christ. If spiritual motherhood includes an openness to the other, to seeing and receiving persons, what would spiritual fatherhood consist of or include?

Spiritual maternity seems to be shared, at least analogously, by St Paul when he claims to be “in travail”, sharing spiritually in the labour of childbirth, in his work with the Thessalonians.⁷² This analogy is directly related to his own apostolic vocation.⁷³ But, while the priesthood is explicitly linked to Christ, the bridegroom, and celibate women religious are linked to the heavenly marriage as brides in the eschatological sense, the exploration of spiritual motherhood seems to have been unpacked in John Paul II, but a “spiritual fatherhood” or a “spiritual priesthood of the family” does not seem to have been unpacked to the same degree save in connection to the priesthood. We will discuss the connection between Christ as redeemer-spouse in our comments on Ephesians below.

Explicating the mystery of woman in terms of virgin, bride and mother begs the question in relation to masculinity. Is there such a threefold definition for male persons? Could we speculate a corresponding definition consisting of the chaste man, bridegroom, and father? These seem to be exemplified in Christ, and in the example of St Joseph, as discussed above, and they have been unpacked individually in the Church’s teaching, but it is less clear that Catholic magisterial teaching specifically using them to paint a picture of manhood and masculinity.

Visible and invisible masculinity and femininity

John Paul II teaches that masculinity and femininity make visible the sacrament through the aspect of masculinity and femininity that is visible.⁷⁴ But what are the “visible” elements of masculinity or femininity? Are they limited to the biological data of the body? Do they extend to observable patterns of thought or behaviour? What are the “invisible” elements of masculinity or femininity? Are they invisible in that they are real and measurable by not immediately accessible to the casual observer? Or are they, perhaps, invisible in the sense that they are transcendent? In short, it does not seem clear what Pope St John Paul II regards is visible masculinity, and what part of masculinity is invisible. How can we identify what that is?

⁷² 1 Thess 2:9, 2 Thess 3:8. (The word is used of the labour of childbirth in Jn 16:21, Rm 8:22, Gal 4:27, Rev 12:2.)

⁷³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 22.

⁷⁴ ToB 19:4-5.

f. Problems with Biblical exegesis of key passages

The key texts John Paul II explicated in his catechetical series popularly called *Theology of the Body* are at the heart of these difficulties. John Paul II's explication of certain key Biblical texts in relation to the distinction between and inter-relativity between male and female present us with a number of problems in relation to an understanding of Catholic teaching on masculinity.

The starting point for theological anthropology is that humankind, each and every human being, is created in the image of God. As we have seen above, the teaching that the body is good, the sexes are created in difference, complementarity and equality, the body is sacred, has a "nuptial" or "spousal" meaning, together with his comments on original innocence, and original nakedness, are all evident in John Paul II's comments on the first two chapters of Genesis. The section "communion and difference" in the previous chapter expands on what distinctions can be made in John Paul II's treatment of man and woman as gift to each other (in Genesis 1 and 2) in different ways. In order to find distinctions between man and woman, we must continue with John Paul II to Genesis 3, because it is in the effect of sin on the primordial couple that John Paul II also finds evidence both of what was intended by God, and the corresponding effects of sin on their communion.⁷⁵

In his exegesis of Genesis 3, a text which he admits differentiates between the sexes and provide specific theological treatment of both sexes, John Paul II quite deliberately attributes all that the text says about "the man" to the woman, and yet reserves all that the text says about "the woman" for her.⁷⁶ He seems to do something similar when explicating the Ephesians 5 text on husbands and wives, insisting on a mutual submission where the text speaks of female submission.

⁷⁵ ToB 11:5: "[The change in the meaning of nakedness in the garden] "outlines in a concise and dramatic way – perhaps in the most direct way possible – the relation between man and woman, between femininity and masculinity"

⁷⁶ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 9: "The biblical description of original sin in the third chapter of Genesis in a certain way "distinguishes the roles" which the woman and the man had in it."

i. Genesis

Let us begin with some of the issues arising from the magisterium's interpretation of Genesis 3.

To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."⁷⁷

The passage clearly distinguishes between punishments to man and woman, which seem to correspond with their respective sexualities, and the relationship between them. The woman's labour (in childbearing) is greatly increased in difficulty. The man's labour (in the field) is greatly increased in difficulty. Yet the fruit of the woman's labour, that is children, is still good and necessary, and the fruit of the man's labour is equally necessary and good. The third pair in this parallel is the woman's desire for her husband, and his "ruling" over her, which seems parallel to the blunt assertion of the man's limitations and mortality.

This seems a peculiar pairing. It would seem more appropriate to juxtapose fecundity and mortality as two sides of a coin. Unless the statement of the man's mortality is intended as a stark reminder that his "headship" is already tainted and limited by sin and can only surpass his mortality by placing it within the divine headship of Christ.

In offering an exegetical reflection on this passage, John Paul II seems to attribute all that is particular to the man in this text equally to the woman, while retaining a distinction between the man and the woman in relation to that is particular to the woman. Admittedly he includes man in the generation of life, but he insists that his part in the generation is through the female, and that he has access to his fatherhood through her, learning the meaning of his sexual identity through her. It seems that he avoids a corresponding emphasis in relation to the man and his work. He gives her full access to the man's work, with no mention or hint that this would be mediated or involve

⁷⁷ Gen 3:16-18 (RSV).

the man in any way. To some extent this is understandable. The biological reality of childbearing dictates the respective roles in parenting to the extent he observes. But when John Paul II is basing his entire teaching on the fundamental equality, dignity and vocation of the man and the woman, it would seem that there is a case to be made for the woman finding some part of her femininity mediated via the man. Could it be that the receptivity of woman to the man's love is that reliance in her that corresponds to his reliance in fatherhood?

In relation to the woman's childbearing, as we have seen above, John Paul II insists that her motherhood is a unique and unrepeatable cooperation with the creative act of God, and in relationship with the child within her. While the magisterial teaching insists that the contribution of fathers is also unique and unrepeatable in its own right, John Paul II points out that, aside from his initial biological contribution, a man is external to the gestation and nurture of the child, and that he is only able to access his fatherhood *through* the woman. In fact, he pushes further to suggest that a man must learn his fatherhood through the woman.

In treating the corresponding work of the man, John Paul II attributes to woman everything that the text attributes to the man, making almost no distinction. The only distinction that remains seems to be the warnings against turning a woman's right to work into a means of pseudo slavery, where the woman is forced to work in an undignified manner and/or situation in order to sustain herself and her family, at the expense of her role as wife and mother.⁷⁸ In his effort to support all woman's freedom and rights to equal access to work, to have their labour equally valued and rewarded in just terms, John Paul II seems to have interpreted the Genesis account in a way that limits the man's unique contribution in family to his biological contribution to conception.

It might be argued, however, that John Paul II, and the entire Catholic magisterium, apply this interpretation of work and its relationship to family equally between the sexes. The concern John Paul II and other recent Popes have expressed in regard to mothers being forced to work by economic or social pressure, at the expense of her role in the family, should also apply to husbands.

⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, sec. 19: "The true advancement of women requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role." Cf. Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, sec. 11.

But does the absence of reference to the man's labour mean that John Paul II has neglected the man, or does he work on the assumption that the matters of dignity, freedom and respect for family in relation to man's labour have been adequately treated elsewhere in magisterial teaching, not the least of these being his own teaching letters on the dignity of work?⁷⁹ There are numerous warnings against treating a man as a resource to be used and discarded according to the profits of the enterprise he is engaged in. These warnings almost always name the primary goal of work as the man's service to his wife and family. In other words, the question of free and dignified work with just recompense, enabling the flourishing of family life and the worker's proper participation in that family life, is a question that applies equally to man and woman, albeit recognizing that they are faced with slightly different challenges to this principle. There is great concern in Catholic teaching that the purpose of a man's work is to serve his dignity and freedom in fulfilling his part in his family. If we can apply these teachings directly to the labour of the man, then we can see a similar focus on the man's work. Or, rather, that John Paul II has simply taken the universal teaching on work and demonstrated that it applies equally to women, albeit with some slightly different emphases to address questions raised by her relative position in family and society. Any treatment of masculinity in the modern context, then, must express this concern about the modern workplace. Does it provide sufficient recompense for the family to thrive with prudent management? Does the work dignify him and allow him to participate in the fruits of his labour? Do the conditions of his work provide him with sufficient time and space to properly contribute to the education and welfare of his family? In any case, it would seem that more could be said to clarify this teaching as it specifically applies to men, as has been done for women. In what way, for example, should the man be guarded against work conditions that undermine his primary vocation, in relationship with his wife and children?

John Paul II's treatment of the woman's 'desire' and the man's 'rule' is more nuanced but equally concerned with questions raised by Catholic woman regarding so called 'traditional' roles within marriage. The description of the woman's desire for her husband and his 'rule' over her is interpreted here as a description of the state of post-fall relationships. Dominance is not part of God's plan or the original condition, but a description of the tragic effects of the fall.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁹ eg., John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*. See chapter 3 for a discussion of Catholic teaching on work.

⁸⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 10.

woman's 'desire' for her husband seems to indicate her continued longing for the original unity, which is thwarted by the man's dominance. The corruption of the most sacred bond which unites man and woman in their imaging of God undermines the flourishing for which they were created. The man's rule seems to be a corruption of the 'headship' to which he was called. This 'headship' can only be described in terms of an imitation of Christ the Bridegroom who 'heads' His Church by sacrificing everything of Himself for her good. He describes the unfortunate tendency of men through the ages to dominate and subjugate women as not merely a selfish and sinful way to treat another human being, but as a tragic and sacrilegious misuse of the responsibility that has been entrusted to him. A man who has been called and entrusted to be a Christ-like 'head' cannot use any part of his entrusted authority in a selfish manner, nor in any way which denies the woman is equal to him in dignity, worth, freedom, self-determination and love. He rules out any interpretation of the text which subjugates or lessens woman in any way.⁸¹

Some authors falsely assume that, in referring to the woman's 'receptivity', John Paul II implies passivity.⁸² Even though the *Theology of the Body* assumes that the 'masculine' in the spousal analogy images God, while the 'feminine' images the Church, as we have seen in the previous chapter, receptivity is both active and free, enabling the true exchange of self in the couple.

In turn, woman is granted the privilege and responsibility of the first place in intimate cooperation with God's redemptive plan.⁸³ Women are involved in God's intervention throughout the Scriptures, usually in some miraculous intervention and often involving motherhood, whereas God makes his formal covenants almost exclusively with men, with the obvious and profound exceptions of Eve and Mary.⁸⁴ In these cases the covenant and their place within it, is intimately tied with their feminine genius. They are both called as mothers, and yet the significance of that motherhood is not limited to the biological event of childbirth. In both cases the implications of their motherhood has a reach as vast as the world itself, and even into eternity. In other words, the

⁸¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 10: "The woman cannot become the "object" of "domination" and male "possession"."; Waldstein, *A Theology of the Body*, 473 (ToB 89:4): "Love excludes every kind of submission by which the wife would become a kind of servant or slave of the husband, the object of one sided submission."

⁸² Grimes, Katie. "Theology of whose body?: Sexual Complementarity, Intersex Conditions, and La Virgen de Guadalupe." *Journal Of Feminist Studies In Religion* 32, no. 1 (2016): 75-93. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, EBSCOhost (accessed April 21, 2017).

⁸³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 10: "She is assigned the first place in the Proto-evangelium as the progenitrix of him who will be the Redeemer of man."

⁸⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 11.

covenants made with Eve and Mary are not of secondary importance. They are, in fact, at the very centre of the Christian understanding of sin and salvation, and intimately involved in its economy. After pointing out such a distinction, John Paul II limits himself to the observation that God favours neither men nor women in his divine plan.⁸⁵

Having observed the distinction between modes of involvement in the divine plan, would it not be possible to expand on this distinction along the lines of the vocations of each sex? Both women (Eve and Mary) were approached in relation to their role in immediate or extended motherhood and involve specific promises to the mother regarding their offspring; while the men approached tended to be involved in some form of headship, of a family or of God's entire people, and are engaged in formal binding agreements. Could two modes reflect something of the character of the sexes? Surely it is worth exploring the matter a little further than the observation that God engages them both in different but equally important ways? Could not Abraham's fatherhood, for example, be an essential element of the covenant God makes with him and his descendants?

ii. Ephesians

In order to examine the matter more closely, it is helpful to examine some of the issues arising from the magisterium's interpretation of the spousal analogy as it is found in Ephesians 5.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 11: "It is a sign that points to the fact that "in Jesus Christ" "there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28)."

⁸⁶ Eph 5:22-33. (ESV)

The discussion of the respective admonitions to husbands and wives, John Paul II takes great pains to explain that the command that the woman to “be subject to” her husband should be understood in the context of the “customs and religious traditions” of the time. He suggests that the command that husbands to “give himself up” for his wife is the corresponding half, which completes their mutual submission to each other in Christ.⁸⁷ Just as John Paul II asks his readers to read the scriptures in the context of their time, we must also read his in the context of his time. His emphasis on mutual submission seems to be an attempt to answer contemporary critics of the Christian Scriptures and certain erroneous theologians, who suggested that the ‘submission’ called for here subjugates women to a lesser place in the hierarchy of relationships, family and society. His answer emphasizes the equal dignity of man and woman cannot be compromised by false readings of St Paul’s discussion of “headship” and “submission”. False, that is, if any such interpretation implied that a woman was in some way subjugated to the man’s will or authority or deemed lesser in any way.

When discussing Christ’s choice of apostles, however, John Paul II does not hesitate to assert that Christ does not exclude women from his apostolic ministry based on merely social concerns. He insists Christ was not restricted by social conventions of the time but acted in a “free and sovereign manner” in choosing only men as his apostles.⁸⁸ Choosing men in this context is specific to their masculinity. There is something specific in the apostolic ministry that requires the ordinand to be male.

In discussing the Ephesians passage, John Paul II uses the verse immediately preceding the text, “[submit] to one another out of reverence for Christ” as the prism through which to read the following instructions to husbands and wives. Guided by this hermeneutic, he reads St Paul’s admonition to wives “submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” as a command that applies to both man and woman, commanding them to submit *to each other*.⁸⁹ While it is true that the preceding command could be read as the principle by which the entire text is to be understood, St

⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 24: “In the relation between husband and wife the subjection is not one-sided but mutual.”

⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 26.

⁸⁹ Eph 5:21-22.

Paul clearly addresses specific, distinct and separate commands to husbands and wives respectively, and this distinction cannot be ignored without doing a certain violence to the text. Without disputing that St Paul intends the reader to understand that all his instructions are expressions of mutual submission, he commands the husbands to love as Christ loved, and the wives to submit as the Church submits to Christ. Just as the love Christ has for His Church, and the Church for Christ cannot be blurred into one and the same, the analogous comparison seems to insist that the instruction that husbands love their wives cannot be blurred with the instruction to the wives to submit to this love.

John Paul II appeals to “a linguistic viewpoint” to justify his inclusion of men and masculinity within the feminine image of the bride.⁹⁰ Given that he has been discussing the implications of the analogy of the bride to women and femininity, he seems to use this association of men with the bride to sidestep the inevitable comparison of men and masculinity to the bridegroom, Christ. Whatever he means by “linguistic viewpoint” here, there is a certain legitimacy in the observation that all human beings, including male human beings, are obviously included within the Church who, in this analogy, is represented by the symbol of the bride. If John Paul II is drawing conclusions about femininity on the basis of the feminine imagery in the spousal analogy, surely an equal and complementary comparison and conclusions could be drawn regarding men and masculinity in comparison to the masculine image in the same spousal analogy.

The feminine mode of self-giving in this passage seems to reflect the same receptivity John Paul II himself has spoken of in his exegesis of Genesis 3, while the masculine mode seems to reflect the eager searching love the divine Bridegroom has for his bride, the Church. Christ eagerly seeks out his beloved and lays down his life for her to redeem her, sanctify her and bring her to his Father spotless. He does emphasise the woman’s receptivity, modelled on Mary’s own submission, is neither passive nor reduces her dignity or part in salvation. In fact, her part in the economy of salvation is essential. What seems to be lacking here is any discussion of the redemptive aspect of the masculine genius, the priestly role of the man.⁹¹

⁹⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 24.

⁹¹ See Peter Elliot. *What God has joined: The sacramentality of marriage* (Homebush: St Pauls Publications, 1990), 21-37 for a discussion of the divine Bridegroom as priest/sacrifice, king and redeemer.

Even though John Paul II acknowledges that the Bridegroom is the “masculine symbol” in the analogy, and that this symbol represents the “human aspect of the divine love” that God has for His people, he restricts his observations to insisting that the example of Christ’s actions towards women demonstrates their equality with men. Any explication of Christ’s headship, or his example or analogy to masculinity, is muted in these discussions of sex specific vocations and roles.⁹² For that matter, associating masculinity with the priesthood and connecting it directly to the divine Bridegroom begs the question. There would seem to be a logical extension of this analogy which would compare the designations of Christ as prophet, priest and king to the men who are husbands in the “domestic church.”

As we have seen in previous chapters, the magisterium refers to the spousal language of the Old Testament as an image of the intimacy of God’s love for His people. This links the husband with the divine Bridegroom, making him a symbol and type of the Bridegroom, expressed, though imperfectly, within the spousal communion. Christ is referred to as prophet, priest, and king, and these three carry on into other analogous incarnations of his divinity. By virtue of baptism, for example, the faithful have both the privilege and responsibility to image Christ in a prophetic sense, proclaiming the glory of the Father, in the priestly sense, in the sense of the intercession and sacrifices of the priesthood of all believers, and in the regal sense, in that the faithful share in Christ’s divine “rule” over creation, through acting out his divine command here on earth, as a foretaste of their rule with him in heaven for eternity. Applying this threefold designation of Christ as prophet, priest and king to “the great analogy” of marriage, John Paul II writes on the prophetic nature of sexual love and spousal love which is manifest in masculinity and femininity respectively. He describes the imaging of Christ’s ‘kingship’ or ‘headship’, if we may put them together for this purpose, at length in several teaching documents, though their treatment raises some of the problems noted in this chapter. Clearly the image of the divine spouse is intimately related to the image of the divine redeemer.⁹³ What seems to be missing from this image is a proper treatment of human husbands as priests, and husbands as *imaging* the Redeemer.

⁹² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 25.

⁹³ Isa 54:5.

Is it possible to speak of human husbands as exercising a kind of priesthood in the domestic Church? Or to speak of husbands as participating in the redemptive aspect of the divine Bridegroom, the Redeemer? John Paul II certainly seems to allude to this aspect of human husbands,⁹⁴ but an explicit unpacking of the redemptive aspect of human husbands, imaging the redemptive aspect of Christ as Bridegroom, seems to be missing thus far. It is possible that this language and imagery was explicitly avoided due to the way it is likely to be misunderstood in the context of accusations that the Church relegates women to a secondary and unequal position in relationships and in the Church. If there is an analogous comparison to be made between Christ as divine Bridegroom and human husbands, then this element of divine spousal love must either be carefully explored, or it would be best that it was explicitly ruled out as applying to husbands at all.

Within the analogy of the bridegroom and bride, though he claims that femininity in its imaging of the bride is an exemplar of Christian receptivity of Christ and His love, John Paul II takes pains to include men in the bride, as a part of the Church wedded to Christ, the Bridegroom. At the same time, he neglects to make any connection between men and the bridegroom, save to acknowledge that the image of bridegroom is explicitly masculine.

If all woman bear, in their femininity, an image of the bride, and if both men and women should be understood as within the image of the bride in this analogy, this reading would seem to go beyond an assertion of equal dignity to the implication (at least) of sameness. Perhaps even that a man has even less to bring, in his masculinity, to the divine wedding.⁹⁵ In this admirable pursuit of an egalitarian reading of the text, a certain violence seems to have been done to the text itself, to the specificity of the admonitions to husband and wife.

⁹⁴ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 25: “The symbol of the Bridegroom is masculine. This masculine symbol represents the human aspect of the divine love which God has for Israel, for the Church, and for all people... Precisely because Christ's divine love is the love of a Bridegroom, it is the model and pattern of all human love, men's love in particular.”

⁹⁵ Tina Beattie, “A Man and Three Women. Hans, Adrienne, Mary and Luce.” *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 927 (1998), 97–105; cf. Agnetta Sutton, “The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II.” *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1010 (July 2006), 418–433: “if the proper human response—both male and female—to God is feminine in relation to Him, then ‘this account of sexual complementarity entails not the affirmation but the eradication of genuine difference.’”

In relation to masculinity, the headship of Christ is directly related to Christ's sacrifice for His bride, the Church, and His desire to see her flourish in her full beauty and glory. Surely the image and analogy of the Bridegroom, the head, could be more than an assertion regarding equality? In John Paul II's explication of Christ's divine love as the bridegroom, perhaps we can find a starting point for unpacking the head and bridegroom in relation to human husbands? This would be consistent with the text itself, which applies the analogy of Christ as the bridegroom directly to the husbands' attitude and actions towards their wives, commanding husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church.

iii. Song of Songs

It is in his exploration of the themes of sexual distinction, sexuality, and sexual intimacy in the Song of Songs that John Paul II brings a new and exciting contribution to magisterial teaching. Yet he is not introducing a new theme to Christian teaching. As we have already noted, the analogy comparing spousal love with God's love for His chosen people is present in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The focus of the *Theology of the Body* on the joyful celebration of spousal love, bodily and spiritually, brings a new dimension to the theology of spousal love.

The "closed garden" analogy

In his exegesis of Song of Songs, John Paul II touches on the analogy of the bride as a "closed garden".⁹⁶ It seems that this analogy could be unpacked much more. If the wife can be poetically compared to a "closed garden", it could be read as an allusion to the first garden, the garden in which the first couple enjoyed communion in original innocence. This comparison evokes a threefold consideration. Firstly, the original paradise, where they were naked without shame. Secondly, the conditions of maintaining that paradise, and finally, the effects of sin in and on that paradise.

The original paradise evokes the image of the original innocence of the first couple's communion, where they stood before each other without any fear of misuse or selfishness on the part of the other, and with complete trust in and communion with God. The image is a hopeful one, in that

⁹⁶ See ToB 132:5 and commentary in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

the future bridegroom looks for, and sees hidden in his bride, that which was intended for them both in the very beginning, and he rejoices.

The conditions of care of the garden include the warning that attempting to seek out lordship for oneself, to raise oneself above the other, and especially above God, is to cause the downfall and disastrous collapse of the entire good of the garden and all it signifies. The couples' mutual submission to God and his instructions of care in the garden is a requirement of paradise.

Finally, the effects of sin on the garden indicate that seeking to taste the pleasures, to make oneself "wise", "like god", at the expense of obedience to their created purpose, undermines and shatters the couple's communion.⁹⁷ In their sin they become a threat to each other's good.

The fact that the man utters this poetic acclamation of his future bride seems to indicate that he sees in her a sign and hope of the original paradise, the original shameless communion of persons with her, and with his God. This evokes in him the appropriate wonder and joy in response to God's goodness, expressed in her. A case might be made to use this image of the closed garden as an expression John Paul's understanding of the prophetic nature of human sexuality. In his longing for communion with a spouse who completes his humanity and calls him further into loving communion with God, a man's spousal love draws him into fulfillment of his humanity and toward his eternal destiny.

This image portrays man and a woman, seeing in each other the potential of redemption. For the pure communion of the garden to be restored to them, they must be able to give completely and freely of themselves and be received freely and completely in return. A complete self-gift is only possible by the grace of the sacrament, but the sacramental restoration of this communion is not limited to merely undoing the damage to a natural state of happiness. It potentially unlocks the original intent and purpose of humanity. It restores us to the original garden, the experience of receiving the profound mystery of the other in pure joy and wonder and being received in return.

⁹⁷ cf. Gn 3:5-6.

In pastoral terms, this means that grace is not reduced to damage control in relation to sexuality. This is an incredibly important aspect of John Paul II's message, and one which might be communicated by further exploration and explication of the closed garden analogy.

g. Bodily masculinity

One problem with the magisterial treatment of masculinity is that it has begun, quite properly, with reference to the Blessed Trinity. Since God is pure spirit, all analogy to God in relation to masculinity must acknowledge that God is not physical, save in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The fatherhood of God, then, cannot be adequately expressed by the physical accidents of masculinity.⁹⁸ Unless we suppose that the physical elements specific to masculinity express in some concrete way certain aspects of the fatherhood of God.

This problem is true of all references to the Trinity, save that of the incarnate Son, who walked the earth in a male body. Even in the case of the Son, His masculinity is expressed in a celibate, non-conjugal way, presenting Himself as the spiritual Bridegroom of the Church. This masculinity might be mirrored in male religious, who give themselves over to stand *in persona Christi* in spousal unity with the Church. But it seems more remote from the young man struggling with his sexuality, or the married man learning to reconcile his conjugal love with that of the divine nature he is 'imaging'.

Beyond the incarnate and celibate Son, the nearest human example in Catholic teaching is St Joseph. Whatever we conclude regarding St Joseph's life before he took Mary as his wife, St Joseph is acclaimed and celebrated as Mary's "most chaste spouse".⁹⁹ While he demonstrates possibly the finest example of human fatherhood in his self-sacrificial love and care for his family, it is difficult to look for examples in the conjugal aspects of spousal love in a man who is acclaimed as a totally chaste spouse. Even looking at a list of the most significant saints in Catholic calendar reveals that most of them either lived celibate lives or repented from debauchery of some kind to live celibate lives.

⁹⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 8: "Thus even "fatherhood" in God is completely divine and free of the "masculine" bodily characteristics proper to human fatherhood."

⁹⁹ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Decree Regarding the Mention of the Divine Name of St. Joseph in the Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV*, (May 1, 2013).

So where does Catholic theology look to for an example and starting point for a practical theology of spousal love and its pastoral application to conjugal relationships? We will take up this question in our next chapter.

Specifically masculine love

In his discussion on the Song of Songs, John Paul II proposes that the communion of persons is generated by the desire of both, but “above all from masculine desire”.¹⁰⁰ Does this mean that masculine desire has a different character to feminine desire? Is this different desire different in its very nature, or merely different by virtue of its expression through masculinity or femininity? Or does the man have the same desire as the woman, but simply more of it? By calling it a specifically masculine desire, John Paul II seems to be referring to more than a higher measure of desire. He seems to be referring to the character of the desire. When analysing the Genesis text, he uses the same word to describe the woman’s desire. But the woman’s desire seems to be of a different kind. The woman’s desire here seems to be an unfulfilled longing for the unconditional and self-sacrificing love of her husband which has been warped by sin into a perversion of headship and becomes domination over her. The man’s desire is also affected by the fall, but it too represents at least an echo of the man’s yearning for the original pure wonder at the woman given to him. What is the difference between the two kinds of yearning then? The woman’s desire seems to be her yearning to be open to and receive the pure love of her husband.¹⁰¹ The man’s desire seems to be an eager, searching quest for her beauty and for the meaning towards which her beauty points him. John Paul II describes this ‘masculine’ desire in terms relative to the love the man has for his wife. The man ‘knows’ the woman, and the woman is ‘known’ by the man.¹⁰² The man desires his wife, and she is desired by him. The man loves his wife, and she is called to submit to his love.¹⁰³ This masculine desire is a restless, searching love that not only seeks out the woman but, upon finding

¹⁰⁰ ToB 113:1: “the reciprocal belonging of both ... seems to be *generated from desire*, above all from masculine desire, to which there corresponds on the part of the bride the desire and the acceptance of this desire.” (emphasis original.)

¹⁰¹ ToB 31:3.

¹⁰² ToB 21:2; 20:4.

¹⁰³ ToB 92:6.

her, continues to examine and search her with restless wonder at her beauty, and eager attention to defending, enabling, and nurturing her beauty.¹⁰⁴

This ‘masculine desire’, steeped in joy and wonder in the beauty of his bride and the desire to nurture it, seems to correspond to the woman’s receptivity, or openness to human beings, which is placed within her motherhood, both physical and spiritual. While the Church recognizes the boundaries of the spiritual motherhood expand far beyond her biological children and into every sphere in which she has influence, the spiritual impact of the man’s desire seems unexplored. There seems to be an obvious application of this concept of masculine desire, this joyful wonder that eagerly seeks to know, guard and enhance the beauty it finds, which might be applied in a more general or spiritual sense in ways that might explain the particular gifts of masculinity, a “masculine genius” perhaps, in family, Church and society.¹⁰⁵ Just as the corresponding vices and sins would transform the good of this desire into a grasping, self-seeking use of God’s creation which undermines both the beauty and dignity of that creation, and the man’s own dignity and purpose.¹⁰⁶ We will explore this theme further in our next chapter.

h. Defining “love”

One of the most important recent developments in magisterial teaching in this matter was from John Paul II’s successor. It could be suggested that Benedict XVI’s first encyclical went back-to-basics, to the very building blocks of the discussion. He began his pontificate with an encyclical on the concept that lies at the heart of the whole discussion on male, female and the love between them, the definition of love itself.¹⁰⁷ Some scholars have welcomed this encyclical as a “valuable contribution” to the response to John Paul II’s call for a search for an “adequate anthropology”,

¹⁰⁴ For an argument against interpreting the woman’s “desire” in Gen 3 as sexual, see Joel N. Lohr, “Sexual Desire? Eve, Genesis 3:16, and תשוקה”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011): 227-246, doi:10.2307/41304198.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. ToB 12:1, 92:4.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. ToB 31:3, 32:4, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est: on Christian Love*, (Dec 25, 2005); Stephen M. Fields S.J. “On Nature and Grace in *Deus Caritas Est*.” *Nova et vetera* 15, no. 3 (2017): 817-833. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed March 26, 2019): “One can only marvel at the subtlety with which the Pope develops his own vision of love and justice in light of the Church’s tradition and his reading of the signs of the times. The resulting paradigm is bold, flexible, and nuanced.”; Samuel Gregg, “*Deus Caritas Est*: The Social Message of Pope Benedict XVI.” *Economic Affairs* 26, no. 2 (June 2006): 55. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0270.2006.00631.x: “Anyone reading *Deus Caritas Est*, believer or unbeliever, is sure to be struck by the power of Pope Benedict’s theological and philosophical insights.”

and answer to the worldly critique of Christianity's approach to *eros*.¹⁰⁸ While there has been some attention given to this encyclical, it does not seem, as yet to have received the attention it deserves. While many are impressed with the opening reflection on the nature of love, they tend to reserve their commentary and critique for the later part of the encyclical which deals with the practical application of love, in the form of organized and personal charity.¹⁰⁹ Given the depth and insight in this “vigorous reevaluation of human love”, “the central message of Christianity”, calling it a “valuable contribution” may be something of an understatement.¹¹⁰

Wainwright sums up the remarkable novelty and nuance at the heart of the encyclical's treatment of love,

Theologically, the most striking feature of the encyclical is the assertion—borrowed from "Denys the Areopagite"—that God is both agape and eros (paragraph 9 and note 7). God "erotically" desires his human creatures and graciously seeks them out in a love—agape—that is no less than a self-gift for the redemption of the world (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10).¹¹¹

It is, perhaps, understandable that Christians have remained somewhat cautious regarding the joy of spousal love, insisting that Christians must love with God's unconditional love, not the eager yearning of physical need. But this aversion has led to distortions of spousal love in themselves. Benedict XVI admits that the tendency to retain an inherent suspicion of sexual union has always

¹⁰⁸ Cardinal Camillo Ruini, “The Way of Love” in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 14-15; Jon Radwan, “Contact Rhetoric: Bodies and Love in "Deus Caritas Est"." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 15, no. 1 (2012): 41-93. <http://www.jstor.org/ipacez.nd.edu.au/stable/41955607>.

¹⁰⁹ Even some of Benedict's would-be detractors acknowledge the significance, and the comparative lack of commentary on *Deus Caritas Est*. See, for example, Tissa Balasuriya, “Companion to the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on "God is Love ."" *Cross Currents* 56, no. 2 (2006), 281; Philip McDonagh. "The Unity of Love: Reflections on the First Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 10, no. 1 (2007): 16-31. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed March 26, 2019); Geoffrey Wainwright, “Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's First Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est.” *Pro Ecclesia* 15, no. 3 (2006): 263–66. For a collection of scholarly papers on some aspects of *Deus Caritas Est*, see Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006); an exception might be Katie M. Grimes, "The Erotic Eucharist," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44, no. 3 (2016): 495-517, doi:10.1111/jore.12151, who agrees with the novelty and significance of the encyclical's focus on *eros*, but claims that Benedict has artificially limited *eros* to heterosexual love.

¹¹⁰ Antonio Prieto, “Eros and Agape: The Unique Dynamics of Love” in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 212; Donna Lynn Orusto, “The Harmony of Love: *Idem velle atque idem nolle*” in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 277; cf. 300.

¹¹¹ Geoffrey Wainwright, “Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's First Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est.” *Pro Ecclesia* 15, no. 3 (2006), 264.

lurked within well intentioned Christian thinkers.¹¹² Though sins against the good of spousal love tend to manifest most obviously in physical misuse of persons, Christ taught that the locus of such sins is the human heart, which subsequently gives rise to specific instances of misuse. John Paul II and Benedict XVI have, in their own ways, taught a much more optimistic and hopeful picture of spousal love. Though the word love has been interpreted in many harmful ways, Benedict XVI “insists that we must take it up again and purify it”.¹¹³ This eager, searching love is essentially a part of imaging God’s eager, searching, and passionate love for his people. Most importantly, spousal love is an image of the elective nature of God’s love, and as an image of the seeking love of man (that is humanity) for God, his Saviour.¹¹⁴ The specificity of God’s chosen lovers, His chosen people, His chosen temple, His chosen apostles, His elect who form the Church, is an element of divine love that is imaged in human love, in all senses of human love, including “erotic” love. Benedict XVI describes *eros* and *agape* as two essential elements of the same divine love.¹¹⁵ To separate them is to undermine what love really is. Attempting to “love” with the searching hunger of *eros* would, not only objectify all concerned, but would end in constant disappointment and despair. On the other hand, attempting to live with detached, dispassionate love would also dehumanize and destroy humanity’s ability to love.¹¹⁶

Sensual, seeking love provides the empathy, specificity and reciprocity required to love within human limits. The constant wonder of sensual love in its object evokes an empathic response to the needs of that subject, guarding against the danger of objective, dispassionate love becoming so distant from those needs that it is incapable of correctly assessing and responding to them. The specificity of sensual love moves beyond a general justice to all human beings on the basis of their

¹¹² Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, secs. 3, 5, 7; “Quoting German philosopher Friederich Nietzsche, the pope concedes that the church often comes across as a kind of “whistle-blower” on human pleasure.” John Allen Jr., “On love that lasts: Benedict's first encyclical.” In *National Catholic Reporter* 42, no. 14 (2006), 10.

¹¹³ David L. Schindler, “The Way of Love in the Church’s Mission to the World” in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 30.

¹¹⁴ Cardinal Camillo Ruini, “The Way of Love” in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 12; Stanislaw Grygiel, “The Love that Moves the Sun and the Other Stars: Light and Love” in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 50.

¹¹⁵ Citing Dionysius the Areopagite, (*The Divine Names*, IV, 12-14: PG 3, 709-713), who calls God both *eros* and *agape*, Benedict XVI can say “God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*.” Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 9.

¹¹⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 7.

shared human dignity, engaging the will in freely choosing a specific object as the focus of that love. This specificity guards against the danger that a general objective justice for all human beings would be beyond the scope of the finite resources of individual human beings, focusing them and enabling total self-giving, rather than the constant frustration and exhaustion of attempting to love all equally. Finally, the reciprocity of spousal love is necessary for human love. God alone can love with endless and constant self-giving. A man can only give from the resources he has at his disposal. These resources are finite, even in relation to other human beings. A man cannot perpetually give himself totally to another without being loved himself. So, the spousal aspect of love guards him from the arrogance of believing himself above his mortal limits and keeps him open to receiving love in return. Spousal love mutually sustains the couple, but where it fails, the sacrament of marriage calls the couple to receive from God in order to continue giving their self-gift. But Benedict XVI takes this analysis of love even deeper. Just as we can speak of God's *eros* being a specifically and passionate seeking out of those He loves, human beings reflect and participate in this element of God's love as they seek out and passionately seek the good of a specific other. But this love shared between human beings is, itself, a reflection of our own search for God, to specifically and passionately seek communion with their God, their saviour. As Stanislaw Grygiel puts it, "[e]rotic love is the desire for the salvific presence of the other."¹¹⁷ Christians have spoken of this seeking love, or desire for another human being, as a reflection of our desire to fill our need for communion with God. But history and experience teach us that spousal love is always under pressure from concupiscence. What does the Church say to brokenness in spousal love?

i. Brokenness and physical love

The focus on physical love is extremely important in the context of understanding the full meaning of the sacramental union of married couples. The Church has acknowledged that the sexual act is not always expected to end in conception, and that physical love between spouses has, in itself, an

¹¹⁷ Stanislaw Grygiel, "The Love that Moves the Sun and the Other Stars: Light and Love" in Livio Melina and Carl A. Anderson, *The Way of Love: Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 50.

essential role in enhancing and celebrating the unity of the spouses.¹¹⁸ But John Paul II treats the sexual act as an integral part of the sacrament of marriage and of the dignity and purpose of the human person. It is not, (in John Paul II), a private expression of intimacy, permitted in moderation. Neither is it merely a fulfillment of a legal condition for a valid sacramental marriage. Sexual intercourse is a natural and proper expression of the self-giving communion essential to love between spouses. The very act of spousal intimacy, in its full expression, is sacramental and Trinitarian. It is both performative of the spouses' unity, it bears fruit, and is prophetic of the eschatological meaning of their unity. Most of all it is prophetic and a proclamation of the unity of the Triune God, in whose image humanity has been created.

This understanding of the purpose and end of spousal love radically changes the nature of both legitimate and illegitimate use of the sexual elements of the human person. By this logic, legitimate use of our spousal capacity is a sacred act and fulfillment of a person's vocation to love with their entire person. Misuse of sexuality is, according to this same logic, sacrilegious in that it takes something God has set aside for a sacred purpose and uses that same thing to undermine that purpose. Sexual sin undermines the good which sexuality is created and destined for, using the very body, or bodies which were intended to participate in and enjoy the blessings of this good. The spousal act incarnates the spousal reality between the bride and bridegroom, he seeking her and she receiving him, and their respective vocations and associated sins becoming most visible in that most central act of physical communion.

But, if the Church emphasizes the essential and central character of physical love to the fulfillment of the spousal meaning of the person, body, and soul, then questions arise about the manner in which spousal love is spoken of in terms of irregular situations. While John Paul II speaks at length on the meaning, purpose, joy and goodness of spousal love, and Benedict XVI proposes that passionate love (*eros*) is a necessary and proper fulfillment of dispassionate love (agape) and vice versa, what about those situations where this love is not possible, temporarily, or perpetually? The Church permits periodic abstinence for couples in certain circumstances where the responsibilities

¹¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et spes*, 49. (citing Gen. 2:22-24, Prov. 5:15-20; 31:10-31; Tob. 8:4-8; Cant. 1:2-3; 1:16; 4:16-5:1; 7:8-14; 1 Cor. 7:3-6; Eph 5:25-33.); Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth, *Humanae Vitae*, (25 Jul, 1968), 11.

of responsible stewardship of their spousal love requires it. But this is permissive, not prescriptive. It is permissible in cases where it is necessary to guard against some form of danger, but not the ideal prescription. We can explain the chastity of religious vows in terms of a spiritual marriage, but what of those who long for an earthly marriage yet find themselves without practical opportunity to participate in it? What of those abandoned by their spouse? What of those who cannot find a spouse to marry? Or whose desires consistently focus on the same sex, or on some other variation of sexual desire? What of the spouse who, for no grave reason, neglects the physical aspect of the marriage?

To be sure, these are not the same questions, nor do they have the same answers. But the Church's answer to all people finding themselves in such circumstances has been to urge heroic continence. This answer seems to be a catch-all for a broad range of situations that present a board range of frustrations in both the sense of frustrations of physical desire and frustration of spousal purpose. The significant, and growing, population of persons finding themselves in these situations seems to call for a comprehensive theological and pastoral treatment. We will explore some possible answers in magisterial teaching in the next chapter.

j. Spousal brokenness and healing

The essential role of parents in the formation of children, particularly in relation to their sexuality and understanding of spousal love has implications in this discussion. The Church has identified the impact of individual sin on spousal unions and the grace that assists couples to overcome it, and even to repair the damage. But what does the Church have to say to people who have experienced firsthand the devastating effects of marital conflict, dysfunction, breakdown, and the resultant separation of spouses? What can the Church say when, in too many cases, it seems that the very definition of love has been undermined and replaced by a shallow and selfish form of self-gratifying emotionalism at best, too often descending into abusive lust. Does the Church's teaching speak to cases where the abuse is not obvious, inadequate, and neglectful parenting can be damaging? In spite of great efforts in the field of immediate preparation for marriage, a vast increase in the number of applications for annulment points to a grave lack in the remote,

proximate and even immediate preparation for marriage in most of Western society.¹¹⁹ What does the Church have to say to the children of broken families, or to those marrying a spouse from a broken family? What does she say to a spouse who was unjustly abandoned, or even one abandoned with some justification who, in spite of genuine repentance, has no real way to be reconciled? What does she say to the person whose remote, proximate, and even immediate formation for conjugal love has left them with a fragmented understanding of their own sexuality, dignity and purpose? What does she say to a society in which pornography, and the associated physical and psychological distortions of the person, has become an addiction of epidemic proportions? What does she say to the person who has no proper understanding of the meaning of spousal love?

It seems that a part of the answer is education in the Church's teaching on these matters, but there is a grave need for sound theology of sexual and spousal brokenness, and for a message of hope and good news for persons living with or near such brokenness. The Church has not abdicated its sacred duty to guard and propose the truth of spousal love on the grounds it seems impractical to modern society. Nor has the Magisterium, especially the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Popes, restricted their teaching to correction of doctrinal formulations. They have deliberately sought to address pastoral need of the flock as it arises.

Even if these questions are solely in the area of pastoral theology, they would be of interest to the Church, her ministers, her lay workers, her people, and to this thesis. But the question surely requires a deeper theological examination. Recent magisterial documents have attempted to address various aspects of this crisis. Leo XIII and others have explicitly addressed the imposition of economic conditions that force families to spend so much time apart that it undermines the father or mother's contribution to family life. Pius XI and Paul VI addressed some abuses of conjugal love and John Paul II offered us one of the most extensive and profound treatments of the theology of conjugal love. Benedict XVI addressed the very definition of love, and its implications for spousal love, for ecclesial works of love, and for love of our neighbour in general.

¹¹⁹ Cf. The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, secs. 109-110; For the definition of "remote, proximate and immediate" preparation for marriage see John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, sec. 66.

In more recent times, Francis has addressed a range of pastoral concerns, though more focused on the practical than the theology. Some have created as much confusion as they have understanding, and others are yet to be fully comprehended and applied to pastoral theology.¹²⁰ Attempts to popularize and promulgate these teachings have had limited success. Our previous chapter shows that the *Theology of the Body* is a profound and lengthy series of catechesis, which are not easily understood by the casual reader. Attempts to produce and promote popular versions of the Theology of the Body sometimes overlook the deep and subtle reasoning of John Paul II in favour of over simplified and partially skewed popular takes.¹²¹

This chapter has raised several questions important to this thesis. These will be taken up under slightly different order and headings in the following chapter. Questions raised under heading 5.a. and 5.b. around the definition of ‘gender’ and ‘masculinity’ will be taken up in the initial sections on masculinity, 6.a. and 6.b. The question of a masculine trait corresponding to feminine ‘receptivity’ in 5.c. is taken up in the section on ‘masculine desire’ 6.e. The discussion of ‘father standing for family’ in 5.d. and exegetical examination of Genesis in 5.f.i. are taken up in 6.c.i. ‘Spiritual masculinity’, 5.e., and the exegetical comments on Ephesians in 5.f.ii. are taken up in the corresponding exegetical section, 6.c.ii. and related topics in 6.c.iii, iv, v. and 6.d. Finally, the exegetical discussion of Song of Songs in 5.f.iii., the sections on bodily masculinity, specifically masculine love, brokenness and healing (5.g, h, i, and j. respectively) are taken up in section 6.e. on ‘masculine desire.’

¹²⁰ See, for example Johnathan Luxmoore, “Europe's bishops still at odds over how to apply *Amoris Laetitia*.” *National Catholic Reporter* 53, no. 11 (2017), 5-6.

¹²¹ See for example a critique of Christopher West’s popularisation of Theology of the Body in Dawn Eden, “Towards a “climate of chastity”: Bringing Catechesis on the Theology of the Body into the Hermeneutic of continuity” (unpublished thesis), 2010. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/DawnEdenThesis.pdf>.

Chapter Six

A concluding exploration, based on Scripture, Tradition and intimations in the contemporary Magisterium, of how such gaps could be filled or vagaries clarified

This chapter functions as a conclusion to the thesis. It seeks to offer an answer to the question “Is there a Catholic theology of masculinity?” It begins with a definition of masculinity, based on the examination of the magisterial treatment of the subject, guided by John Paul II’s magisterial contribution. It attempts to paint a theological silhouette of masculinity, based on what we have gleaned thus far, and on the assumption that there must be an equal, complementary “masculine genius” to match the “feminine genius” which is more clearly explicated. The bulk of this chapter is an examination of key texts already discussed, leading to some discussion of a priestly or redemptive aspect of masculinity. The thesis concludes with an examination of masculine desire, drawing on John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*.

a. What do we mean by ‘masculinity’?

One of the most important things that must be clarified before we venture a proposal on masculinity is what we mean, precisely, by the term ‘masculinity.’ In most contemporary studies, at least in the disciplines of humanities and the social sciences, it is common to refer to plural ‘masculinities’, which encompasses a wide range of gender types, defined by a combination of self-determination and socio-political environment. This kind of definition requires a certain separation of gender from biological sex, though it is almost never completely separated. A person with a male body, for example, is rarely allowed to identify as being lesbian. A person’s sex seems to be a starting point from which a wide range of possible genders are possible. While acknowledging the word ‘gender’ as describing social and political habits and expectations related to a person’s sex, the Church warns against the separation of sex and gender, making them independent of each other to a lesser or greater extent, as is usually assumed in humanities and social sciences. On the other hand, the Church warns against a false and rigid characterization of masculinity and femininity,

which might impose unreasonable norms or oppress people who express masculinity or femininity differently to a majority of males or females in their cultural context.

The difference between Edith Stein's idea of femininity and that of John Paul II may be useful in defining terms for the purposes of this discussion. When Edith Stein proposes a list of characteristics that are significantly more present, or perhaps more prominent, in female persons but which also exist in male persons, she seems to be describing traits and habits which are better described, in modern parlance, as gender. She describes traits which we more commonly observe and/or expect in female persons, but which can also exist in male persons to a lesser extent in general, or more rarely in particular persons. In contrast, John Paul II uses the words 'masculinity' and 'femininity' to describe that which is unique and irreplaceable to male and female persons, respectively. This definition tends to avoid listing or speculating on specific manifestations of masculinity, in terms of behaviour and social expectations, preferring to examine the foundational and ontological difference which constitutes masculine and feminine persons, respectively. While Stein's approach permits the inclusion of elements, attributes and characteristics which are proper to human persons, perhaps to a greater or lesser extent in males or females respectively, it is less helpful in drawing precise distinctions in a discussion of masculinity at the conceptual level. Since the Church regards both masculinity and femininity as unique and irreplaceable, John Paul II's approach seems best equipped to describe the Church's positive and negative statements on sex and gender. This chapter will use the word 'masculinity' to designate the aspects of a male person which are unique to male persons, that are present in all male persons and not present (or not present in the same ways) in female persons. This is not to deny that there are elements of personhood essential to all male human beings which are shared, at least in part, with female human beings. If we are to distinguish between masculinity and femininity, it seems right to distinguish on the basis of what is distinguishable.

The Church speaks of humankind as ontologically male *and* female. The very essence of humanity, an important aspect of human reflection of, or revelation of God's image, is that humanity is male and female *in relationship* to each other. An individual human is revealed as either male or female.

Male and female are not different species, but all instances of humanity are incarnate as male or female. Both are human but being male or female is one of two possible modes of being human.¹

Within this framework the word ‘sex’ refers to the reality of the person being male or female, both biologically and in the very heart of their being human, and ‘gender’ will describe those traits, common observations and social expectations and/or conditioning associated with a particular sex within a given context. By this definition, the various ideas associated with a person’s ‘gender’ may vary from place to place, being influenced by different social norms and expectations that arise in different societies, cultures, social settings, families and even within individual experience. The Church notes that temporal expectations and norms may come into conflict in ways which can cause an individual, or even an entire sex to experience great personal distress and unjust discrimination. It is important to distinguish legitimate pastoral concern for these problems from the question of the truth of an individual’s sex and sexual identity.

b. The boundaries of the shape of a theology of masculinity

If we are to propose any Catholic theology of masculinity it must be at least consistent with magisterial teaching to date. Even better, it should be consistent with the trajectory of current development, and properly express the examination of these matters that several magisterial documents have called for.

The starting point for theological anthropology is that humankind, each and every human being, is created in the image of God. Sexual difference between men and women is an important element of the imaging of God. In fact, the spousal nature of human beings is itself an essential element of this divine image. Just as God is three persons engaged in mutual self-giving love, often called a communion of persons, human beings are created and fundamentally ordered to live in a communion of persons. They are created to make a gift of themselves in self-giving love, and to receive an equal gift in return from an equal person. This communion of persons is a mirror of the

¹ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational guidance in human love: Outlines for sex education* (1 Nov 1983), sec. 4; The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and meaning of Human Sexuality*, sec. 10: “Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love.”

Triune God. Being made in the image of God, the perfect and eternal communion of persons, sheds light on the communal aspect of man and woman, particularly expressed physically in spousal union. Whatever we say about masculinity, it must take into account that the distinction between male and female, and the interaction between the sexes, has a specific purpose to image the distinction and the perfect communion of divine persons in the Trinity.

This same spousal union is perhaps the clearest and most important sign and revelation of God's self-giving love to be found in our ordinary human experience. Human beings find their highest happiness and fulfillment in this union, not merely through enjoyment of its temporal benefits, but precisely because it is both a foretaste and a prophetic revelation of the blessed union for which we were all created and towards which we are destined. Spousal union, spousal love is prophetic in that it demonstrates, albeit in flawed and limited fashion, the love of God whose image we bear and are called to imitate. God is pure love, pure self-gift in perfect communion. Those created to image God are also properly living out their created purpose when they give themselves completely in self-giving love to an equal and complementary spouse. Whatever we say about masculinity, it must take into account that the purpose of masculinity (and femininity) is to imitate, participate in and demonstrate the self-giving love of God.

John Paul II speaks of the dignity and vocation of women as being at the heart of her feminine identity. Whatever we say about masculinity, it must present an equal and complementary dignity and vocation of masculinity. This means that whatever we say of men must maintain that his dignity and vocation are at the heart of his masculinity. Let us, therefore, take each aspect of feminine dignity and vocation as presented in the magisterial teaching, propose boundaries for a treatment of masculinity, and speculate on a possible treatment of masculinity in these areas.

According to John Paul II, motherhood is an essential element in defining all femininity. His *feminine genius* seems to include a spiritual motherhood, in which all female human beings share. Just as motherhood is an essential component in understanding and defining femininity, fatherhood must be the basis for corresponding definition and understanding of masculinity. The corresponding argument seems to be that fatherhood is an essential component of a *masculine genius*. As we have noted in previous chapters, all men share in a spiritual fatherhood, which is

manifest in priesthood and familial fatherhood, but also in all masculinity. What light does this spiritual fatherhood shed on masculinity? Motherhood and fatherhood are relational terms. Motherhood is defined by the relationship a woman has with her own child. From this most direct of experiences of motherhood, we can extrapolate broader aspects of spiritual motherhood. The relationships a mother has with the child inside her is so intimate, indeed within her own flesh, that she has a unique appreciation of the dignity and value of the human person within her. Since women are ordered to this maternity, they carry this interpersonal insight into every aspect of life and interactions with human persons. Even without a personal experience of childbearing, the ordering of the woman to motherhood carries within it this awareness and orientation based on the intimate appreciation of the value of every individual human being.

How, then, could we understand the relational elements of fatherhood as definitive of his masculinity? A father is necessarily external to the gestation of his own child.² There are two important elements of his experience of fatherhood. First, he is external to the experience of gestation, yet he is not indifferent to the child. The child is flesh of his flesh, in his image, and he has equal responsibility in the nurture and flourishing of the child once born. The second element is that he only has access to his fatherhood through the mother. He learns his fatherhood, the Church teaches, through the mother.

In the previous chapter we discussed whether a man's unique position of 'being outside' the creation of his child while still being invested biologically and emotionally in the child's nurture from conception onwards, could be an aspect of imaging the fatherhood of God. Just as God is wholly 'other' than His creation, a man is 'other' or external to his child's gestation.³ Just as God created everything that is, but remains outside of creation, a man's contribution to conception is essential, yet he remains outside the process. In both the divine and human example, his being outside does not preclude his interest, concern, or his intimate and self-giving love. Rather, it is precisely by virtue of being outside of creation, of being 'other' that God invites created persons

² John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 18: "The man - even with all his sharing in parenthood - always remains "outside" the process of pregnancy and the baby's birth; in many ways he has to learn his own "fatherhood" from the mother."

³ Fourth Lateran Council (1215) *Confession of Faith*, sec. 1: "We firmly believe and simply confess that there is only one true God, eternal and immeasurable, almighty, unchangeable, incomprehensible and ineffable."

into intimate union with the ultimate ‘other.’ God invites human persons to realise their destiny by looking beyond themselves to communion with the ‘other’. Perhaps man could be said to be an image of this aspect of God in his human fatherhood.

We have seen that the bodily intimacy of motherhood yields a unique perspective on the personhood and inherent value and dignity of each individual person. If we can take a father’s ‘external’ relationship with his child as a starting point, what can we say of the unique perspective that fatherhood gives a person? A merely apophatic definition here seems insufficient. We cannot simply say that a father lacks this bodily intimacy and thus is defined by the lack. As in all things theological we must look first to God. What does the ‘otherness’ of God bring to us?

Otherness is the first requirement of relationship, of a communion of persons. One cannot properly have a relationship with oneself. There must be an ‘other’ to relate to. Even God’s internal communion is described as an analogous kind of ‘otherness’ between the persons, and the relationship between God and humankind is predicated on a radical ‘otherness’, the distinction of the creator from His creation.⁴ Could we say that, while mothers and fathers share the task of imaging God’s paternal love for His children in the immediate context of a family, the father’s unique perspective images the ‘otherness’ of God from His creation? Perhaps the father provides an analogous external reference point which draws the child to communion to step outside of the child’s selfish and comfortable surroundings, and simultaneously provides an image, example and proof of God’s intimate and personal care for His creation?

It might be tempting to see the man’s distance from the intimacy with creation as a deprivation of some aspect of the image of divine parenting. Since we understand that man and woman are equally imaging God, and in complementary fashion, this aspect of the man’s fatherhood being outside of the process of gestation might itself be said to image an important aspect of divine fatherhood. God is wholly ‘other’ than His creation.⁵ He created all that is but remains outside of

⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian Meditation* (15 Oct, 1989), sec. 14: “from eternity the Son is "other" with respect to the Father and yet, in the Holy Spirit, he is "of the same substance.”” Also in sec. 14: “and there is also otherness between God and creatures, who are by nature different.”

⁵ Fourth Lateran Council, (1215) *Confession of Faith*, sec. 1: “We firmly believe and simply confess that there is only one true God, eternal and immeasurable, almighty, unchangeable, incomprehensible and ineffable.”

creation. His being outside does not preclude His interest, concern, or self-giving love. Rather, it is precisely by virtue of being ‘other’ that God invites created man into intimate union with the ultimate ‘other.’ Perhaps man could be said to image this aspect of God in his human fatherhood. If we can propose this kind of imaging, it would not suppose emotional or physical distance from the child or the mother. It would instead engage a father in the same level of knowledge of the pain of his family, his ear keenly attuned to their cry in need, and his determination and effort in fulfilling the covenant he made with his bride at the wedding altar.⁶

This ‘otherness’ provides another point towards which the child can look, strive and obtain communion above and beyond the immediate and comfortable love of his mother. Providing an example, guide and inspiration for the young person to strive beyond themselves for relationship, self-fulfilment, and self-giving love for others, for a greater purpose. Indeed, this relationship is prophetic of the greatest and most fulfilling relationship, that with the ultimate ‘otherness’, that is God.

From the man’s perspective, the experience of being ‘other’ or apart from the gestation of the child who is created “in his own image” yields its own insight into the nature of persons and their relationship with God. His understanding of the human person is not so much to view it with less dignity than the woman’s perspective, but to see it a step back from her intensely intimate and personal perspective, within a broader context. The father’s perspective requires him to take into account the world around the family, so that he can take the necessary steps to protect and nurture the child to full flourishing adulthood. While God’s awareness and love stretch from the beginning of creation to the end, it is impossible for human beings to comprehend the entire mind of God. Just as God answers Job’s cries for justice with a reminder that Job’s perspective is limited, a father images this perspective analogously, by representing God’s love from the outside.⁷

It is important to note that this is an argument from perspective, not that either perspective prohibits intimacy with the child nor a broader perspective, but that the perspectives from which these are approached are distinguishable.

⁶ Cf. Ex 2:23-25.

⁷ Job chapters 38-41.

In a fallen world, where a man ignores the insights that flow from a woman's unique perspective and considers his own perspective to be the only one worth consideration, he is in grave danger of overlooking the individual experience and dignity of the child for what he perceives to be broader concerns. But in communion with his wife, their perspectives keep a balance in awareness and response to both immediate and remote concerns.

Masculine dignity entrusted to the woman

The Church reminds men that the woman's dignity and beauty is entrusted to them, and that they have the awesome responsibility and privilege of guarding, caring for and enabling that dignity to flourish in true freedom.⁸ It is worth recalling that the primary danger to the woman's dignity, and therefore the primary and pressing concern of the man, is the man himself. Specifically, the man's attitude and behaviour towards the woman. His responsibility for her dignity begins, and finds its primary task, in ordering his own heart and mind to ensure that his thoughts and deeds are all in accordance with her dignity. Assuming this is the case, we should be able to propose a corresponding and complementary treatment of the man's dignity. Firstly, that the man's dignity, his masculinity, is entrusted to the woman. Secondly, that the most immediate danger to his dignity is herself and yet, at the same time, she bears the greatest responsibility and potential for defending, nurturing and encouraging his masculinity to flourish. As with the man's responsibility toward her, it is not enough that she avoids direct assaults on his dignity, although that is obviously essential. She must order her heart and mind so that her thoughts and deeds not only protect that dignity, but encourage, enable and celebrate that masculine dignity. As the woman's dignity is intimately related to her chastity and motherhood, a man's dignity is related to his chastity and fatherhood. As the man's love is the overarching safety within which the woman can thrive free from threat from the man or any other, so the woman's love is the space within which his masculinity can thrive without being undermined by the woman herself, or anyone else.

⁸ Cf. discussion of dignity in Ch.5, p 193-4.

c. Insights from Scripture

i. A reflection on ‘work’ in Genesis 3

In our discussion of John Paul II’s treatment of Genesis 3, we noted that he did not hesitate to attribute all that relates to the man’s work to the woman, while specifically noting that man is external to her ‘labour’ of childbearing, and that he must even learn his fatherhood through her. God’s address to the man and the woman seem to describe the post fall state of humanity, rather than representing God’s prescriptive will, but the distinction between the man and the woman seem to offer us an insight into pre-fall humanity and the distinctions between man and woman both pre fall and post fall. We have already seen that the Church takes the matter of the woman’s labour to represent her universal motherhood. We have also discussed the relationship between the two, specifically relating to the phrase “he shall rule over you” and the husband’s ‘headship’ discussed elsewhere in Sacred Scripture.⁹ We noted that the text addresses both man and woman about their ‘labour’, though it distinguishes between them, the more recent exegesis of the passage, particularly that of Pope St John Paul II, attributes all that is addressed to the man in the passage also to the woman, and yet does not hesitate to attribute the woman’s labour to her exclusively. Since our task is to clarify what a Catholic can say about masculinity specifically, it is necessary to explore this matter further.

It might be argued that John Paul II was simply altering his observations on the basis of what we take for granted in modern civilisation. Specifically, that, while women have entered and have proven themselves in the modern workforce, men remain physically incapable of childbearing. The problem we noted is that this interpretation, however harmonious it might seem with modern sensitivities, seems to sit awkwardly with the text itself. Even though the term “man” here (אָדָם in Hebrew) refers to an individual human person using an unmarked form, as opposed to the “man” (זָכָר in Hebrew) referring to a specifically male individual, used in verse 6, it is difficult to argue that it refers to humankind in general in this case. The text clearly refers to the man and his wife, distinguishing the man from his wife seems to indicate that he is a male person, and represents male persons in the text. The text offers the parallel of a woman’s labour in childbirth, and the

⁹ Eph 5:23, Col 3:18-19, 1 Pet 3:1-7.

man's labour in the field. Both the man and the woman will find that the "fruits" of their labour are much more difficult to obtain in the fallen world.

The Church has interpreted this passage in relation to 'man' in response to the impact of the industrial revolution on family life. The problem with this treatment is that, while it does specifically address the right and responsibility of a man to work to provide his family with all it needs, the magisterial documents in question are very much a product of their context. When treating the subject of work, for example, Pope Leo XIII speaks of a man's right to work in order to provide for his family. Not that woman and children do not have this right, but that they access this right through the man. These documents assume that man is the primary breadwinner in a family and assume that the woman would only find herself working for a wage where she forced into such labour against her own will and to the grave detriment to her modesty, her dignity, and to her family. They assume that the right to form a family and have access to the means to provide for that family are, in a society based on monetary recompense for labour which is traded for necessary goods, primarily accessed via the husband's work. Modern society does not share these assumptions. Women now willingly and eagerly enter and thrive in the workforce as equals, and their contribution in almost every field is impossible to ignore. While noting frustrating exceptions, women now receive equal pay and equal opportunity in the workforce. It is not small thing that modern governments and private enterprise are presently wrestling with the problem of how to recognise and support a working woman in her 'labour' of childbearing.

Pope St John Paul II, on the other hand, attributes the labour of childbearing to women alone, and only allows man access to this 'work' through his relationship with the woman. He considers all other work to be equally available and proper to all persons regardless of sex. It seems that this is not so much an expansion of rights to the woman, but a different approach to the woman's access to those rights. It could be said that John Paul II speaks from an era where work is more available for women and is actually necessary for an increasing number of families who do not have fathers, or where the father's wage is insufficient to provide for the family. Pope Francis seems to have taken this one step further in his pastoral comments on roles within the family suggesting that a man may, and indeed should, engage himself in a "healthy exchange" of tasks with his wife, adapting his own life so that their shared life incorporates her work life and his participation in

domestic matters.¹⁰ While Pope Francis offers general comments on men and work in a pastoral context, John Paul II bases his comments explicitly on an exegetical reflection on God’s address to the man and the woman in Genesis 3. Equal attribution of work ‘in the field’ to men and woman leaves us without a specific treatment of masculinity in a text that clearly distinguishes between masculinity and femininity. Given that the same text is drawn upon for some of the distinctive aspects of the feminine genius, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is possible to draw some conclusions about ‘man’ from this text.

In considering John Paul II’s use of this text, we need to take a closer look at God’s address to the couple in Gen 3:11-19 specifically noting the Hebrew usage for ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Earlier in Genesis, the generic *adam* (אָדָם), is used for the man where he seems to represent all humanity, and the word *ish* (אִישׁ), referring to a specifically male individual, is used only where the man is distinguished from and in relation to the woman *ishah* (אִשָּׁה). It should be noted that while *ish* (אִישׁ) and *ishah* (אִשָּׁה) are used where husband and wife are specifically referred to in relation to each other, *adam* (אָדָם) is used at least twice in juxtaposition with *ishah* (אִשָּׁה), which could indicate that אָדָם refers to the specifically male husband.¹¹ In any case, it seems that Adam and Eve sin differently, they respond differently to their sin and receive different punishments and given different tasks to follow. But consider the following structure.

God questions Adam (אָדָם) – Adam blames the woman (אִשָּׁה)

God questions the woman (אִשָּׁה) – the woman (אִשָּׁה) blames the serpent

God curses the serpent

God addresses the woman (אִשָּׁה): fruit of womb difficult (her desire will be for אִישׁ.)

God addresses Adam (אָדָם): fruit of ground becomes difficult.

The specificity of אִשָּׁה, referring to childbearing is obvious, and reflected in John Paul II and most commentaries. It might be argued that Adam (אָדָם) stands as a representative of humanity on both ends of this *inclusio*, while *ish* (אִישׁ) refers to the husband specifically in relationship to his wife.

¹⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 286.

¹¹ Gen 2:23: “she shall be called *ishah* (אִשָּׁה) for she was taken out of *ish* (אִישׁ)””; Gen 2:24: “For this reason *ish* (אִישׁ) shall leave his father and mother and be united with his *ishah* (אִשָּׁה)””; Gen 2:25, 3:8, 17.

The word אָדָם here could be taken as an unmarked form, referring both to the man as an individual and as standing for all humanity. The phrase (in verse 20) “for dust you are and to dust you shall return” is grammatically linked to, and a pun on, the word Adam (אָדָם), clearly refers to both the husband and wife included in *adam*, as ‘mankind’ who are all mortal and will return to dust. If we entertain the possibility of the specific and general senses of אָדָם being deliberately concurrent, the man simultaneously represents the husband in the primordial couple and humanity as a whole. In this case, it could be argued that the use of אָדָם in relation to work could legitimately include all of humanity, while the specific relational term, ‘wife’, is used of the women, indicating that references to motherhood are for her alone. We could further speculate that human ‘work’ began with the task of naming the animals (signifying man’s ongoing responsibility for them) and with the care of the garden which preceded and set the preconditions for the account of the fall. This interpretation supports John Paul II’s treatment of the consequences of the fall in relation to masculinity and femininity, and his corresponding conclusions regarding their cooperative participation in the ‘work’ of creation.

How then can we speak of the man’s uniqueness in relation to work, specifically in relation to this text and its implications for our understanding of masculinity? We cannot return to an assumption that woman should only ‘work’ in the home and not properly beyond it. There seems to be no convincing theological argument for such a restriction of the feminine genius. Indeed, there are Scriptural arguments for the ‘work’ of women to be extended into every economic and social sphere.¹² In the discussion of woman and work, however, we should ask why the man is told to leave his home, his family of origin, in the first place. Almost all magisterial treatment of the family portrays the married couple as a unified team, providing between them the necessary ingredients for safety, nurture, education and human flourishing of each other and their children. The texts addressing the working conditions of the day became urgent at the time when rapid industrial development was drawing men, woman and even children away from their families and into work that often exploited their vulnerability and left them vulnerable to many other assaults on their dignity. Perhaps a modern Catholic theology of masculinity and work will be less

¹² Some examples include Gn 29:9, Ex 2:16, Jdg 4:4, Rth 2:2-3, 2 Sam 20:15-22, Prv 31:10-31, Acts 16:14, 18:3, Rom 16:1-2.

interested in discussing why women enter the workforce and focus instead on why men find it so difficult to do anything other than work outside the home.

In too many instances, a modern family would struggle to feed, clothe, and educate their children on one income, or even on a balance of workloads that permitted husband or wife to engage in their proper parental relationship with their children. The Church has always taught that the children need their father's active and engaged presence for a healthy development in faith and life, and that the husband should be constantly attentive to his wife. It is time, perhaps, for the urgency of Pope Leo XIII's admonitions to be heard again. The Church did not restrict her concerns to women and children being exploited in the workplace at the expense of their families. The treatment of men in the workplace has always been based on the premise that his work is primarily *for* his family. Much focus has been placed on the requirement that a wage must be sufficient to provide for his family and to save for financial independence, but the man's joint responsibility to oversee and contribute to the education of his children seems to have been largely overlooked in modern societies or outsourced to institutions.

Nor can the man's contribution to his family be limited to money and lessons. As we have previously noted, his fatherhood, his masculine genius is an essential component of the healthy development of their children. Now more than ever companies judge recompense for labour on the basis of financial interests of the enterprise alone, with little consideration for the welfare and flourishing of the individual worker. A modern Catholic discussion of masculinity, therefore, should seek to apply this age-old concern for the equal and complementary contribution of husband and wife to be respected and facilitated in modern workplaces without prejudice to their family's sustenance and wellbeing.

Perhaps in this approach is where the answer to the interpretation of Genesis can be found. While we can recognise both the historical and theological emphasis on childbearing at the very heart of the feminine genius, we can also recognise and rejoice at that her genius legitimately extends in every aspect of private and public life. Rather than see this as a deprivation of man's unique gifts, the exegesis could be reciprocated in equal and complementary fashion, providing us with an interpretation and a theological anthropology which extends from the text into a coherent

understanding of male and female as they are found in action within modern society. While we find self-sacrificing labour, work *for the family*, at the heart of the man's masculinity, we can recognise and rejoice in that *masculine genius* legitimately extending to all elements of private and public life. A woman in the workplace is not more a challenge to a man's masculinity than is a man rocking the baby in the home a challenge to the woman's femininity. In rocking his baby, he is not "getting in touch with his feminine side" as the popular saying goes, but in fact is truly manifesting his masculine genius, bringing his own labour into the place where it is most significant and most needed. It is the highest priority of his masculinity, and the proper expression of his spousal partnership, his *masculine genius*.

ii. The great analogy in Ephesians 5

In what St Paul calls a "great mystery" and Pope St John Paul II describes as "the great analogy", the Church reads the analogical comparison of the relationship between Christ and his Church with the relationship between husband and wife.¹³ The Scriptures apply the analogy of Christ as the bridegroom directly to husbands' attitude and actions towards their wives, commanding husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. The Church has no hesitation in applying this spousal analogy to the priesthood. The priest stands *in persona Christi* in the person of the Bridegroom, and is spiritually wedded to His Bride, the Church. In a similar, but not identical way, consecrated women embody the Bride in their betrothal to the Bridegroom. Both priests and religious enter into a kind of eschatological marriage, a spousal union which participates in the ultimate relationship, that of the eternal Bridegroom and His Bride. Of particular note to our study is that fact that the Church unhesitatingly attributes the elements of Christ's mission to those who stand *in persona Christi*. Just as Christ is prophet, priest and king, the ordained ministry participates in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry of Christ, as a participation in the spousal love of Christ, the Bridegroom, for his Bride, the Church.

This same analogy is clearly applied to all marriages, comparing husbands to the divine Bridegroom, and calling them to live up to the astounding standard of Christ, giving up their lives completely for their bride. In respect to the three aspects of Christ's mission, as we have noted

¹³ Eph 5:32: "το μυστηριον τουτο μεγα εστιν."; See discussion of the analogy in ToB 89-90.

above, the Church has taught that husbands are entrusted with a kind of headship, even lordship, in the family. It is important to note that the Church, particularly in recent times, has been very carefully to explain the lordship (kingship) or headship of Christ in relation to the husband as a self-sacrificing servanthood, presumably to avoid misuse and misunderstanding in its practical application to marriage, and as a remedy to those places and times where men have misappropriated this text as justification for, and even a blessing of, the dominance of man over woman, which is not legitimately God's intention but a result of the fall. We have also noted that the language of the body and indeed the entire spousal union is prophetic in its proclamation of the heavenly reality towards which earthly marriage points and urges us. The Church clearly applies the kingly and prophetic aspects of Christ's love to the man. It seems consistent with this analogy that we examine what the application of the third and final aspect of Christ's mission to husbands might yield in terms of a better understanding of the mission of husbands and about the implications for all masculinity. What seems to be missing from this image is a proper treatment of human husbands as priests, and husbands as *imaging* the Redeemer, since the image of the divine spouse is intimately related to the image of the divine redeemer.¹⁴

iii. The redemptive aspect of the Bridegroom

We have seen that the sacramental priesthood is intimately related to the masculinity of the candidate and the eternal Bridegroom, Christ. This connection implies that all men share in this spousal love and responsibility by virtue of the spousal nature inherent in their masculinity, in a manner comparable to the way all men share in fatherhood and women in motherhood. In a similar way that women share in the dignity of spiritual motherhood and the receptivity of their spousal femininity, all men might be said to share in spiritual fatherhood and the redemptive nature of their spousal masculinity. This idea will need to be explored and explained carefully in order to avoid possible misconceptions inherent in proposing all men as 'saviours' to all women. To be clear, speculating on the redemptive aspect of masculinity cannot be construed in such a way as to suggest that man is the saviour of woman, relegating her to being passively 'saved'. Men and women share in the image of God, and they image God in their relationship with each other.

¹⁴ Isa 54:5, cf. Peter Elliott, *What God has joined: The sacramentality of marriage* (Homebush: St Pauls Publications, 1990), 30-31. "Jesus Christ, "the Bridegroom in virtue of being the Redeemer"" (citing Karol Wojtyła (St John Paul II), *Sign of contradiction* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1979) 97-98.

Women's part is as essential and important as the man's is. Although it is not the primary task of this study to re-examine the feminine genius in regards to its cooperation in salvation, we should keep firmly in mind that woman is granted the privilege and responsibility of the *first* place in intimate cooperation with God's redemptive plan.¹⁵ This aspect of redemptive love in masculinity needs to be understood in the context in which it is proposed, and within the strict boundaries imposed upon it by the analogous comparison from which it comes.

A man's love can only be described as redemptive insofar as it participates in the love of the divine and perfect Bridegroom, Christ. Even within this analogy, the definition of Christ's salvific spousal love is specific. Christ *emptied himself* and gave up his life for his bride.¹⁶ A proper study of the meaning of Christ's 'self-emptying' is not within the scope of this study, but in the context of this analogous comparison, we shall assume that it applies this way: that the man sets aside his own importance, his own wants and needs, and dedicates himself solely to loving service and self-sacrificing love of his wife. Christ did not merely die for His bride; He gave His life for her. Christ loved us from eternity, and we can observe that, from the very beginning, His every breath, thought and action was selflessly ordered to the ultimate good of those He loves. There is not one action, decision or thought that was ordered to His own gratification or whims. Christ's kenotic love is the perfect example of the redemptive aspect of spousal love.¹⁷ Not grasping for self, but eagerly seeking to bring all people into the love of His Father. A man can only claim to participate in this redemptive capacity of the groom insofar as he images this selfless love of Christ, giving every ounce of his energy, thought and effort to the wellbeing and flourishing of his spouse, and of others by extension. Not that her wellbeing in a natural sense is the end of this love. The purpose of Christ's love is to purify His Bride and bring her spotless into union with Him and, through Him, the Father. This mission includes all earthly and spiritual welfare of His Bride, and no part of that welfare can be neglected without contradicting the end. But participation in this spousal love joins the man to Christ's purpose, to His redemptive love. This principle indicates something of the exercise of his masculinity in the world.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 10: "She is assigned the first place in the Proto-evangelium as the progenitrix of him who will be the Redeemer of man."

¹⁶ Phil 2:7.

¹⁷ "Kenotic" refers to the Greek verb "κενόω", meaning "to empty, specifically in the form "εκένωσεν" in Phil 2:7, used to describe Christ's self-emptying love.

As we have already discussed, the magisterium refers to the spousal language of the Old Testament as an image of the intimacy of God's love for His people.¹⁸ Christ's redeeming love is spousal love in that He gives Himself for the Church. The gift of Himself, which saves and sanctifies us, is the definitive instance and example of spousal love.¹⁹ The spousal analogy describes the heart of the sacramental nature of marriage, specifically the self-gift of Christ which purifies and redeems his Bride in order that she can give herself to Him in return.²⁰ Christ washes His bride and presents her "to himself in splendour without spot or wrinkle".²¹ Pope St John Paul II playfully suggests that the "wrinkle" in this text applies to the effects of age on the wife, encouraging husbands to love with a love that is "eternally young".²² As valid as this playful application of the analogy is, the analogy has deeper implications than a husband's appreciation of his wife regardless of her appearance. Spot and wrinkle could, perhaps, refer to the stain of sin and the wrinkle of aging and death, which are the ultimate consequence of sin. The purpose of the love of Christ for the Church is her sanctification.²³ Without attributing divine qualities to individual Christian husbands, it is consistent within the analogy to insist that a husband participates in this aspect of Christ's Bridegroomhood (for want of a better word). This seems to be implied in the text itself.

- A. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
 - B. that he might sanctify her,
 - C. having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
 - D. so that he might present the church to himself in splendour,
 - C. without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
 - B. that she might be holy and without blemish.
- A. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.²⁴

¹⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9: "[T]his symbolism is indispensable for understanding the way in which God loves his people: God makes himself known as the Bridegroom who loves Israel his Bride."

¹⁹ See discussion in Chapter 4.

²⁰ ToB 90:4.

²¹ Eph 5:27.

²² ToB 92:2.

²³ ToB 91:6.

²⁴ Eph 5:25-28 (ESV).

The first and last lines (A) are a parenthesis, linking the love of Christ for his Bride, who is also His Body, and the man's love for his bride, as he loves his own body. The lines contained within this parenthesis (B and C) clearly demonstrate that this love is cleansing, sanctifying and has the goal of the glorification of the bride (D) and perfect union with her newfound splendour.

While the analogy attributes Christian husbands with some share in the redemptive love of Christ for His bride, and the Church sees this redemptive self-sacrificing spousal love manifest in the priesthood, it seems less clear exactly how this plays out in Christian husbands and Christian marriages. Or, at least, this aspect of the Divine Bridegroom does not seem to have been spelled out in Church teaching yet. We can confidently say that the analogy is certainly not suggesting the husband is in any way elevated above the wife, or that she is somehow more in need of 'saving' than he is. Just as we do not pretend that a priest is in any less need than the laity of the sacramental grace he has the privilege of administering. As we have already noted in several places, since male and female are equal and complementary, anything we say about one is only valid in that it finds an equal and complementary aspect in the other. It is not within the scope of this study to examine the participation of Mary in redemption, and the implications of this for all women, save to refer to our notes on the light motherhood sheds on the *feminine genius*. This study is focused on masculinity, and our present concern is the application of the spousal analogy to human bridegrooms, and all men by implication. Since the love of Christian husbands is modelled on Christ and his relationship with the Church, let us examine this spousal love and see what light it sheds on a *masculine genius*.

The analogy of God as the jealous lover, and tender husband of His bride, Israel, is a significant theme of the Old Testament. The relationship between God and His people is expressed in terms of a bond of love, a marriage.²⁵ God is described as a "jealous" husband, claiming exclusive right to his brides love and devotion.²⁶ Israel's rejection of God through sinful behaviour is portrayed

²⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9: "[T]his symbolism is indispensable for understanding the way in which God loves his people: God makes himself known as the Bridegroom who loves Israel his Bride."

²⁶ The claim of exclusive and intimate relationship of His people is expressed frequently in Scripture. (Ex 20:5, 34:14, Deut 4:24, 5:9, 6:15, Josh 24:19, Nah 1:2, cf. 2Co 11:2). A jealousy provoked by the infidelity of His 'bride' (Deut 32:16, 21, 1Ki 14:22, Ps 78:58) and occasionally expressed as human zeal for God (1Ki 19:10, 14, Jn 3:29-30)

as infidelity, described in terms of adultery, unfaithfulness and even prostitution.²⁷ Human infidelity does not negate God's eternal and unchanging love. God responds to His bride's infidelity with love and fidelity to her. The image of God as the Bridegroom is an unmistakably masculine image, but it is also intricately connected with the redemption of the bride, Israel.²⁸

The concept of 'kinsman redeemer' provides us with a focus on this aspect of spousal love. The word 'redeemer' can be used in a wide variety of contexts not necessarily directly related to spousal love, including the redemption of land belonging to a family member, the redemption of family who have sold themselves into slavery for debt, and a duty of seeking justice against an unjust aggressor.²⁹ The 'family' in these cases, has stretched to uncles and cousins, yet these are still strongly connected to the responsibility of a family to love its own, specifically to save its own, even from self-inflicted problems.

Perhaps the most peculiar application of this familial redemption is that of the redemption of a brother's name, by providing an heir for the dead man's wife.³⁰ If a man died without an heir, the nearest male relative would normally be the beneficiary of that man's wealth and land, leaving the man's wife and any female children without any wealth or means of making a living. Old Testament law, however, reverses this equation, requiring the dead man's nearest male relative to grant the widow protection and sustenance as if she were his own wife, but without claiming ownership of her family's wealth and property. His responsibility is to provide her with a son, and to be a good steward and protector of her, her son, and all her family owns, until such time that the son is old enough to carry on the family affairs. The son even carries the family name of the widow's husband, and legally continues his lineage.

or of a jealous husband for his wife (Num 5:14); cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 12: "sin which can harm the conjugal covenant becomes an image of the infidelity of the people to their God: idolatry is prostitution, infidelity is adultery, disobedience to the law is abandonment of the spousal love of the Lord."; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9: "in this relationship, God can be described as a "jealous God" (cf. *Ex* 20:5; *Nah* 1:2) and Israel denounced as an "adulterous" bride or "prostitute" (cf. *Hos* 2:4-15; *Eze* 16:15-34)."

²⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, sec. 8: "In many passages God's love is presented as the "masculine" love of the bridegroom and father (cf. *Hosea* 11:1-4; *Jer* 3:4-19), but also sometimes as the "feminine" love of a mother."; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9 speaks of "the male figure of the suffering Servant as well as to the female figure of Zion."

²⁹ Hebrew גֹּאֵל (*go'el*); *Lev* 25:24-28; *Lev* 25:47-54; *Num* 9:5-35, *Deut* 19:6, cf. *Josh* 20:5.

³⁰ *Deut* 25:5-10, *Ruth* 4:1-13, cf. *Gn* 38:6-30.

This astounding reversal of fortunes is only possible by the self-sacrificing love of the kinsman redeemer. The kinsman redeemer gains little from the exchange. He has no permanent claim over her lands, her son or even over her as if she were his own wife. His provision of a son, and of the necessary protection and sustenance while he comes into majority, is a redemptive love. It rescues her and her family, even her dead husband's name, from poverty and obscurity and restores them to their rightful place in the community. This love comes at personal cost to the redeemer. It is not an investment, because he has no claim over the persons and property in which he has invested so many years, and it may even damage his own investments.³¹

This word (kinsman redeemer) is used in reference to God as Israel's redeemer, particularly in situations where Israel's self-inflicted plight seems otherwise hopeless and is explicitly linked with the spousal imagery.³² When Isaiah declares that God is Israel's husband, he uses a parallelism that links husband with kinsman redeemer.

For your Maker is your husband,
the Lord of hosts is his name;
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called.³³

Here *גֹּאֵל* (*go 'el*), translated above as "redeemer", is explicitly paralleled with "husband", and the following verse likens Israel to "a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit". The beginning and end of that very stanza set up the parameters of this redemption. The wife's shame and disgrace are assuaged by the everlasting love and compassion of the redeemer.³⁴

³¹ Cf. Gn 38:9.; Ruth 4:6. For more discussion on the custom and legalities of leverite marriage see Brad Embry "Legalities in the Book of Ruth: A Renewed Look." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 41, no. 1 (2016), 31-44.

³² Isa 41:14, 43:14, 44:6, 24, 47:4, 48:17, 49:7, 36, 59:20, Ps 19:14. Though there has been much discussion of the meaning of 'redeemer' in Job 19:25, all interpretations include the concept of a personal redeemer who will raise up at least some of Job's significant goods. For more discussion see Matthew J Suriano. "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 49-66.

³³ Isa 54:5 (NRSV).

³⁴ Isa 54:4 and 54:8 respectively.

An even more intriguing reference to spousal redemption is Isaiah's later reference to God providing justice to Israel. After briefly describing Israel's plight, specifically that justice has been thwarted, righteousness far away, truth has stumbled and uprightness locked out, the LORD is displeased that there is "no man" and takes it upon himself to be, the redeemer that comes to save Israel.³⁵ While the Hebrew word used here, *שׂוֹמֵר*, is sometimes used in a more general sense indicating an individual person, it always refers to a specifically male individual. When used in connection to a specific woman, it almost always refers to her husband. The absence of the "man" leads to the LORD's intervention with "salvation and righteousness." Even more interesting is the parallel of "vengeance" and "zeal" with salvation and righteousness. The passion evoked by the plight of the bride provokes the kinsman redeemer into action, spurring Him to bringing justice and salvation to Israel. On this basis he is declared to be kinsman redeemer to Zion.

It is important to note that, while the kinsman redeemer provides a son, protection and assistance that the widow would have otherwise received from her deceased husband, this is in no way prejudicial to her autonomy. She remains the regent of her infant son, and the family retains its independence from their redeemer. Indeed, the entire purpose of the redemption is to restore her, and her family to full flourishing autonomy.

From these texts it would seem that, if we are to link God as heavenly husband to Israel with the concept of kinsman redeemer, and if we are to apply this example of the love of a bridegroom, we might be able to propose some principles guiding husbands. In each case the need which presents itself is a grave and unjust deprivation of some basic good suffered by a person or group who are powerless to address the lack. In each case the redeemer is moved by compassion or similar emotion to gratuitously supply the lack, correct the wrong and even distribute proportional justice where appropriate. In each case there is no evidence that the man seeks some personal gain or benefit from the help offered. In fact, in most cases the help is offered at personal cost, and specifically rules out self-interest. Where these laws apply to men, in most cases the person charged with protecting the assets and interests of a vulnerable family member would normally be the very person who would benefit most from that very help not being offered. So, the person who is most likely to take advantage of the vulnerability of the other is charged with the responsibility

³⁵ Isa 59:14; Isa 59:16; Isa 59:20.

of guarding them from such misuse, and with restoring them to a position of self-sustaining prosperity. It does not seem difficult to apply this principle to the married man. We have already noted in our examination of the Church's teaching on Genesis 3, that the man himself is the greatest danger to the woman's dignity, chastity, and freedom, and that he is the very one charged with guardianship of all three. The primary task of protecting, preserving, and nurturing his wife's dignity, chastity and freedom falls on the one most likely to place it at risk.

The Church teaches that the particular perspective and unique gifts associated with the feminine genius are not restricted to her spouse or biological motherhood. The feminine genius brings its unique contribution into every aspect of human life. By the same token we can confidently propose that the various aspects of any masculine genius could also be expected to extend to every aspect of human life. Not that it is possible to provide a list of manly or masculine qualities or behaviour. Even at their very best, such lists are bound to particular culture and time, and are likely to become more problematic than helpful in guiding young men to proper expressions of their masculinity. There are some aspects that we can point to as general characteristics of masculinity that would then need to be translated into local culture, and constantly revised to ensure they do not fall into rigid forms that no longer reflect the principles they once promulgated.

It is not hard to see how the principle of kinsman redeemer could apply in many areas of our broader society. It is fitting and proper for a man to develop such powers, skill and/or strength with which he is blessed. By his self-control he is then able to ensure that he, himself, does not undermine or directly threaten the good of persons, families, and society as a whole. Furthermore, he is able to identify the vulnerability and needs of his neighbours and respond to them appropriately in order to restore to them the goods which they have been unjustly deprived. While an individual man cannot be omniscient nor omnipotent, he is capable of identifying individuals in a state of vulnerability and/or need within his sphere of influence. If his passion for his neighbour's good is properly ordered he will not only guard himself from exploiting his neighbour in any way, but he will also deplore any injustice his neighbour suffers and use such strength and skill he possesses to restore his neighbour to his or her proper dignity and flourishing. In following the example of Christ there is no cost too great to meet this goal, the priority of discharging his responsibility to those specifically entrusted to him by bonds of family notwithstanding.

The analogy of Christ as Bridegroom to his Church is the definitive revelation of this spousal aspect of God in the New Testament.³⁶ Christ the Bridegroom purifies His bride, the Church, by sacrificing all on the cross. In this gift of self, this definitive act of love, He purifies her and wins her for Himself.³⁷ This is the purpose of God's sacrificial love, to restore to Himself a pure bride who will join Him in blessed union.³⁸ While affirming that Christ reveals and includes the humanity of both men and women, the image of Christ as heavenly Bridegroom analogously reveals an essential component of male expression of conjugal love.³⁹ True love of an earthly bridegroom is expressed in sacrificial love, just as Christ sacrifices all for His bride, the Church.⁴⁰

iv. The problem of the "unequal" analogy

As we have noted in our first chapter, the spousal analogy itself presents a problem of at least perceived inequality. Since Christ is perfect and sinless, and it seems that His bride is both imperfect and sinful, the analogy would seem to present man as superior in some ways to women. This problem is intensified by our focus on the priestly, or redemptive, aspect of masculinity. If this redemptive aspect of masculinity is drawn from the clearly redemptive themes in Christ's relationship with His bride, then it seems difficult to avoid the assumption that man is an image of the divine saviour, and woman the poor hapless, even sinful creature who needs saving.

³⁶ Mk 2:19-20, John 3:29, 1 Cor 6:15-17, 2 Cor 11:2, Eph 5:25-33, Rev 22:17, (cf. parables in Mt 22:1-14, 25:1-13), CCC, 796, 808.

³⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 13: "This revelation reaches its definitive fullness in the gift of love which the Word of God makes to humanity in assuming a human nature, and in the sacrifice which Jesus Christ makes of Himself on the Cross for His bride, the Church."

³⁸ Eph 5:25-27: "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her..., that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish", (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 10; John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, sec. 19; cf. John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, secs. 23- 25; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9: "it is because of the hope, reinforced by the prophets, of seeing Jerusalem become the perfect bride."; Of God's rejoicing see Is 62:5, and the human response Hos 2:17; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 9.

³⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 13: "By virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner. Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church."

⁴⁰ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, sec. 13: "Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross."; sec. 25: "As for the Christian, he is called upon to develop a new attitude of love, manifesting towards his wife a charity that is both gentle and strong like that which Christ has for the Church."

In previous chapters, however, we noted that any attempt to justify dominance of husbands or males over females in general, either by violence or other forms of power are categorically rejected as incompatible with the equal dignity assigned to both sexes.⁴¹ In fact, the necessary conditions of spousal communion include absolute equality between the spouses. Since they must be equal in dignity, respect and worth, any attempt to reduce either bride or bridegroom reduces both.⁴² Given the near universal agreement among theologians on the equality of men and women, how do we read the spousal analogy from husband and wife to Church and Christ? Dismissing the tension on the grounds that all analogies have limits is unsatisfying and seems to undermine the entire analogy.

If we concede that the spousal analogy portrays an unequal relationship, we must assume that the ideal of marriage the entire Old and New Testament appeal to as an analogy of God's relationship with His people was from the beginning an inherently unequal relationship. The equality implied by the ultimate purity of the Bride and her marital unity with her divine Bridegroom that completes the analogy do not sufficiently allay the feminists' concerns about the respective starting points and roles within the relationship. But focusing on the starting points seems to misread the analogy. The fact that there is a redemptive element in the love of the Bridegroom does not necessarily imply that men who are called to live in the image of this spousal love are redeemers and their spouses hapless and helpless sinners, any more than Mary's participation in redemption implies the reverse is true. The analogy of spousal love is focused on the redeemed, purified, and glorified spouse. Christ takes His body into Himself, making her His own body, so that He and His bride are "one flesh". The spouses in this heavenly union are mutually self-giving and equal in the sense that Christ has drawn his Bride into Himself, into His relationship within the Trinity.

⁴¹ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 53: "Surely it is legitimate and right to reject older forms of the traditional family marked by authoritarianism and even violence."; sec. 54: "Unacceptable customs still need to be eliminated. I think particularly of the shameful ill-treatment to which women are sometimes subjected, domestic violence and various forms of enslavement which, rather than a show of masculine power, are craven acts of cowardice. The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union."

⁴² Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 53: "There are those who believe that many of today's problems have arisen because of feminine emancipation. This argument, however, is not valid, "it is false, untrue, a form of male chauvinism". The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear, and within families there is a growing reciprocity."

What would the understanding of the equally dignified and self-donating spouses bring to ecclesiology? What does it mean that ‘the Word made flesh’ becomes ‘one flesh’ with His bride? First, intimacy is personal. In recent studies of the evangelical efforts of Catholics and non-Catholic Christians, a persistent theme is that modern Catholics are too often lured away from mother Church by the promise of a personal relationship with Christ.⁴³ Clearly this is an ancient and proper theme in Catholic theology, though perhaps it has been neglected or badly misrepresented in recent times, in the West at least. Second, intimacy calls for unity with the divine spouse. It unifies the symbolic relationship between husband and wife with that of head and body, meaning that care of the bride, attending to her beauty and perfection is a legitimate and ever urgent emphasis in ecclesiology. The idea that there may be many ‘churches’ united to Christ evokes the image that instead of a spotless spouse, Christ has a divine harem made up of particular churches, or perhaps portrays Christ as the sailor with a bride in every port. Third, intimacy emphasises the need for fidelity to the Bridegroom. Almost the entire use of the spousal imagery in the Old Testament is a call for fidelity to the ‘husband’ of Israel. The spousal analogy emphasises the need for the Church’s complete and joyful fidelity to her Bridegroom. This guards against the false idea that familiarity with Christ is a permissive familiarity. Fourth, the spousal analogy evokes the theme of fecundity. This marriage, this unity of The Bridegroom and His bride must bear fruit. It surely says something that Catholics have the lowest percentage of newcomers in the Western world.⁴⁴ Fifth, in light of the emphasis on the equal and mutual self-giving between spouses, the spousal analogy would seem to provide a strong counterpoint to any idea of God being stern, absent, or coldly demanding of His spouse. Most importantly it also rejects any attempt to portray the bride as merely passive in her reception of God’s love. This seems to me to be one of the important implications of the marital analogy. If Christ the Saviour, the one who sanctifies and cleanses His Church, is analogous to a Bridegroom, and he seeks a marriage with His Bride, then the Bride’s own personal dignity, intellect and will must play a part.⁴⁵ He has chosen the Bride, but the Bride must choose Him and give herself to Him each day, each moment. By this analogy the Church cannot be portrayed as passive, inert or an unwilling partner in the marriage.

⁴³ Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 28, Kindle.

⁴⁴ Weddel, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 25-26.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 24: “In this love there is a fundamental affirmation of the woman as a person.”

Just as Mary's intellect and will were engaged in her glorious *fiat*, The Bride is neither cajoled nor threatened into submission, but invited to give herself over to the embrace of her beloved Bridegroom. This intimacy requires a free gift of self, and ongoing act of self-donation in spousal love. The love of the Bridegroom in this analogy becomes the standard and challenge to the Bride to submit herself to this love and to offer herself in self-donating love in return. This image of intimate self-donation emphasises the dignity to which the Bridegroom calls us, lifts us, and sustains us.

v. A priestly aspect of masculinity

It seems that we can, according to this “great analogy”, speak of human husbands as exercising a kind of priesthood in the domestic Church. Or at least we can speak of husbands as participating in the redemptive aspect of the divine Bridegroom, the Redeemer in some way.⁴⁶ This should not be difficult to argue, given the clear connection between Christ's self-sacrifice for His bride, and the command for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. The theme of saving help seems clear enough in the passage at the heart of this “great mystery”.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
that he might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
so that he might present the church to himself in splendour,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.⁴⁷

In previous chapters we have observed that the Church strongly emphasises the self-sacrificing love by which Christ gives Himself for the Church should be the model for husbands in their love

⁴⁶ Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005, 77-80. Drawing on Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Scola insists that Christ's bridegroomhood is redemptive. He notes that Von Balthasar's term “suprasexual” includes sexuality but surpasses it. He prefers the term “nuptial”, in which he defines by Balthasar's suprasexual bridegroom redeemer.

⁴⁷ Eph 5:25-28 (ESV).

for their wives. But what do we make of St Paul's description of the method and purpose of Christ's love? St Paul explicitly names the cleansing and washing of water, together with the Word, as the means of making her holy. In the midst of an analogical comparison of Christ the Bridegroom with earthly husbands, this cannot be limited to describing Christ alone. How then, does a husband make his wife holy? And in what way and to what extent does this involve the washing of water and the word? It would seem that the washing of water, particularly related to Christ's loving self-sacrifice, refers directly to the baptismal cleansing which joins us to Christ's suffering and death and, in turn, to his resurrection. The 'word' would seem to be related to the same command to make disciples, which says that Christ's disciples are 'made' by baptism and obedience to all Christ has commanded us. To be clear, husbands are not to wash or command their wives on the basis of any authority or ability of their own, but it could be argued that, in virtue of their participation in Christ's Bridegroomhood, they participate in Christ's priestly mission by encouraging and enabling their wives to live out and flourish in their baptismal vocation, by immersing their shared life in the Sacred Scriptures and in sacramental grace, and by becoming a living example of Christ-like spousal love, exemplified by self-sacrificial love, forgiveness and grace. Even if we are to take this as a responsibility of the husband, it would not necessarily manifest in the same way in every home. The responsibility is to enable and encourage her through his service. Not through command, dominance, or imposition, but by facilitating her access to sacramental grace and the teaching of the Sacred Scriptures without impinging on her own freedom in these matters. The manner in which this could be achieved would obviously differ from family to family, making prudential judgement in each case. But it is clear that the primary concern of the husband is his wife's unrestricted access to Christ's word and grace, while maintaining the autonomy necessary for genuine religious assent and for individual approach to her relationship with God.

While the mode of encouragement and enabling could describe any Christian's relationship with another Christian, it takes on a particular hue when viewed within the context of the spousal relationship. While their responsibility is not limited to their spouse, husbands have a particular and specific responsibility to serve their spouse in this way.

One of the primary aspects of priesthood is intercession on behalf of others. While priests live a life of intercession, their entire life being ordered around the divine office, and standing for the

people of God in sacred liturgy, all the faithful participate in the priesthood of all believers. All baptised Christians are called to join the priests in praying the divine office, or suitable substitutes, as to intercede specifically for those people whose needs they are aware of. Surely a husband's first responsibility, in his priestly capacity, is to intercede on behalf of his wife, pleading before God for her freedom, her faith, and her flourishing, specifically asking for the grace and strength to be an agent of these things himself.

d. A 'priestly' blessing

Exploring the "priestly" element of the bridegroom in a different but related direction, lets us consider the authority and responsibility of the priest to mediate God's blessing to His children. Scripture supports a father's particular prayer for his children. In the Old Testament, those who have received a blessing from God can give that blessing to others, in some way passing the original blessing on. Fathers bless their children, sometimes with their entire family imparting the blessing, and Jacob gives his patriarchal blessing even to Pharaoh.⁴⁸ God promises His blessings specifically on and through His ordained priesthood, placing His own name on them, with its corresponding goods.⁴⁹ The New Testament affirms this fatherly blessing, stating that Jacob was able to invoke future blessings on his sons "by faith".⁵⁰ A father's prayer seems contingent on his respect and reverence for his wife. Since her unique vocation, both as spouse and mother, is presented as complementary to his prayer, it seems that his prayer is related to his own unique vocation as bridegroom and father.⁵¹ In this passage, the admonition to prayer includes the practice of blessing. Here the command to bless is presented as part of their calling.⁵² Fathers regularly intercede on behalf of their children, especially concerning their physical and spiritual wellbeing, and Christ Himself sets the example of praying for children, laying hands on children who are brought to Him.⁵³ It even seems that the words of Christ's high priestly prayer echo the sense of Him having represented the Father, and commending those in His care to the Father's care.⁵⁴ What Christian father could not pray, with Christ, "Yours they were, and you gave them to me" and "I

⁴⁸ Gn 27:28-39, 28:3-4, 31:55, 48:15-16. Cf. Tobit 7:13, 9:5, 10:11; Gn 24:60; 47:10.

⁴⁹ Ex 20:24; Lev 9:23, Num 6:22-27, Deut 10:8, 21:5, 2 Chr 30:27.

⁵⁰ Heb 11:20.

⁵¹ 1 Peter 3:7. cf. 1 Tim 2:8-9.

⁵² 1 Tim 2:9: "bless, for to this you were called".

⁵³ Gn 17:18, 2 Sam 12:16, 1 Chr 29:19, Job 1:5; Mt 19:13-14.

⁵⁴ John 17:1-26.

made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”⁵⁵

This element of priestly life is both fatherly and spousal, in that the blessings flow from the divine Father to His children, but Christ also blesses His followers in various ways as part of His spousal love. As we have seen, His redemptive love is spousal in character.⁵⁶ Christ is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that through him all nations will be blessed.⁵⁷ The Church’s instructions on blessing in formal and liturgical settings quite rightly focus on the sacramental priesthood and its mandate to bless with the authority of the Bridegroom.⁵⁸ Without claiming the same authority for husbands and fathers, but acknowledging their participation in the spousal love of Christ and their part in the imaging of God’s divine Fatherhood, it is possible to speak of a man being able to impart a certain blessing on those to whom he has a particular ministry, a man expressing his vocation to be a father to his children. The share he has in the divine fatherhood and the redemptive bridegroom are entrusted to him specifically for his participation, within the grace of the sacrament of marriage, in the physical and spiritual wellbeing of his spouse and their children. It is clear that a male layman does not have authority to impart specifically sacramental grace by virtue of his participation in divine fatherhood or the divine bridegroom. The task, authority and responsibility entrusted to him as such, however, would seem to indicate that his ‘office’ might be appropriately expressed by way of imparting such blessings as God has imparted on him, for the specific task of fatherhood and bridegroomhood. There is no specific directive on parental blessing, but we might find some guidance in the Church’s use of sacramentals. According to the Catechism, a layman may legitimately impart a blessing using sacramentals. These blessings do not impart sacramental grace, but they do “prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ John 17:6; 17:25.

⁵⁶ Peter Elliot, *What God has joined: The sacramentality of marriage* (Homebush: St Pauls Publications, 1990), 30-31: “Jesus Christ, “the Bridegroom in virtue of being the Redeemer”” (citing Karol Wojtyla (St John Paul II), *Sign of contradiction* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), 97-98.

⁵⁷ Gen 22:18, 26:4, Acts 3:25-26, cf. Eph 1:3.

⁵⁸ CCC 1669: “the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).”

⁵⁹ CCC 1670.

In answer to the question whether a father can make use of a form of sacramental, Canon Law instructs us that “according to the norm of the liturgical books and to the judgment of the local ordinary lay persons who possess the appropriate qualities can also administer some sacramentals.”⁶⁰ It seems theoretically possible that the Church could permit and encourage fathers and husbands among the faithful to clearly express the blessing of God, mediated by way of their own vocation, to their children. The expression of such blessings should be guided by carefully suggested wording, under the oversight of the proper ecclesial authorities, to ensure clarity of purpose and meaning. Canon Law, however, explicitly limits the composition and oversight of these sacramentals to the appropriate magisterial office of the Church. While such a composition and accompanying authorisation of father’s and husbands to use them might be possible in theory, the practical concerns of oversight, proper use and potential misuse make would make the exercise impractical within the current ecclesial situation.

With respect to Canon Law and the proper use of sacramentals, however, the intention of such regulations is to guide the faithful regarding public gatherings and general use of performative blessings of various kinds.⁶¹ While every baptized person is called to be a blessing, and to bless, neither the Catechism nor Canon Law directly address common prayers and blessings usually administered by laypeople within a familial context.⁶² Simple prayers such as the blessing of meals, are clearly recognised and approved of as a proper part of Christian life.⁶³ It is hardly surprising, then, that they do not explicitly address the situation of father imparting his blessing on children within the context of the family home.

An excellent summation of the Catholic practice of parental blessing is offered within the context of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger’s (the future Benedict XVI) reflection on his childhood.

⁶⁰ Code of Canon Law, 1168.

⁶¹ Cf. CCC 1672: “Certain blessings have a lasting importance because they consecrate persons to God, or reserve objects and places for liturgical use. Among those blessings which are intended for persons - not to be confused with sacramental ordination - are the blessing of the abbot or abbess of a monastery, the consecration of virgins and widows, the rite of religious profession and the blessing of certain ministries of the Church (readers, acolytes, catechists, etc.). The dedication or blessing of a church or an altar, the blessing of holy oils, vessels, and vestments, bells, etc., can be mentioned as examples of blessings that concern objects.”

⁶² CCC 1669, (citing Gen 12:2; Lk 6:28; Rom 12:14; 1 Pet 3:9).

⁶³ CCC 1671, cf. CCC 2698.

I shall never forget the devotion and heartfelt care with which my father and mother made the sign of the Cross on the forehead, mouth, and breast of us children when we went away from home, especially when the parting was a long one. This blessing was like an escort that we knew would guide us on our way. It made visible the prayer of our parents, which went with us, and it gave us the assurance that this prayer was supported by the blessing of the Savior. The blessing was also a challenge to us not to go outside the sphere of this blessing. Blessing is a priestly gesture, and so in this sign of the Cross we felt the priesthood of parents, its special dignity and power. I believe that this blessing...should come back in a much stronger way into our daily life.⁶⁴

It seems possible to propose a form of prayer that, with the guidance and approval of the appropriate ordinary, could be offered to fathers as a prayer which is appropriate to their particular vocation and in virtue of their unique relationship with their children. The purpose and power of such blessings would, of course, remain limited to the preparation and disposition of the faithful to receive grace. Clearly not claiming to offer sacramental grace, the nature of such a blessing would be related to both the sacramental grace of baptism and of marriage.

e. Masculine Desire

Pope St John Paul II identifies a specifically masculine desire, which seems stronger and more aggressive than the corresponding feminine desire. He identifies feminine desire as focused on receptivity of love, whereas masculine desire is focused on seeking, pursuing, cherishing, and nurturing the good and beautiful. Even while clearly acknowledging either can be the active party, Pope St John Paul II maintains the distinction that man is the desirer and woman desired.

We have discussed the ‘outside’ perspective of man, and his role as kinsman redeemer of the other as aspects of his masculinity. These would seem to be an essential element of his masculine genius. This begs the question; how might these apply beyond the boundaries of his own marriage? Like woman, man is created for and called to love. Though this love is most obviously and clearly expressed in spousal union, it extends into all aspects and spheres of human action. In order to be ‘personal’ love involves, and is perhaps partially mediated through the crucible of masculinity and femininity, in the context of the whole person.⁶⁵ In our discussion above, Pope Benedict XVI

⁶⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, (Benedict XVI), *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 184.

⁶⁵ ToB 46:6.

described the combination of ‘seeking love’ with ‘self-giving love’ as a movement toward “authentic self-discovery and the discovery of God.”⁶⁶ We noted that this love finds its prototype and exemplar in the love Christ has for His bride, the Church, and that this love is the clearest example and prototype of masculine love.⁶⁷

It is in the specificity of these relationships that love takes its concrete form. In committing himself to one cause, a man shares in the ‘elective’ nature of God’s ‘seeking’ love. Though this cause is properly and primarily his bride and their shared family, this seeking love also seems to apply to all areas of life. A man who looks for the good in others, wonders at its goodness and seeks to address any lack therein, finds fulfilment in giving of himself to selflessly serve another’s good. This is not limited to a general sense of justice and being generally committed to respecting the rights and goods of others. A man’s limitations, his finite nature, mean that attempting to make himself a gift to all would be impossible. One person attempting a total gift of self to all people, even if limited to all people he was capable of interacting with in his short life, would result in a general and limited kind of intimacy. It seems that a certain kind of desire is necessary for human love. A love that provides a limited human with a focus for his love that is within his limitations. In our discussion of the feminine genius, we have noted that this focus seems to express itself in receptivity to the child, and by extension other persons. It seems that masculine desire, this seeking, hungry love might provide us with the corresponding impetus of the masculine genius. It is a love that is attracted to a specific good, a specific situation and which arouses a desire in him to see the good free from evil and to see good flourishing in itself. Not for his own gratification but out of pure and disinterested commitment to seeing its goodness flourish in its own right and for its own end.

As we have noted in previous chapters, this seeking aspect of love is a proper and good element of true love. The bridegroom seeks out the beloved and strives for her good. If relationships which

⁶⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 6: “Love is indeed “ecstasy”, not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.”

⁶⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Collaboration of men and women in the Church*, sec. 10: “On the one hand, Mary, the chosen daughter of Zion, in her femininity, sums up and transfigures the condition of Israel/Bride waiting for the day of her salvation. On the other hand, the masculinity of the Son shows how Jesus assumes in his person all that the Old Testament symbolism had applied to the love of God for his people, described as the love of a bridegroom for his bride.”

are founded in self-giving love are the prototype of our true humanity, then the desire which urges us to self-giving love is the ultimate human expression of the nuptial meaning of our bodies, and the entirety of our humanity.⁶⁸ Every human being is wanted and desired by God, who also desires good for each one he has created.⁶⁹ The specificity of God's love is not a generic benevolence but a love that actively seeks out its object and passionately engages with specific persons, and with the smallest part of his creation.⁷⁰ There seems to be an obvious application of this aspect of masculine desire, this joyful wonder that eagerly seeks to know, guard and enhance the beauty it finds,⁷¹ which might be applied to all areas of a man's life. His desire can extend to particular goods in the world, and often does. Not just his fatherly concern but his specific and focused desire for that particular good to flourish.

It is unfortunate that our experience demonstrates that corruption of this masculine desire is all too evident. We have noted the destructive influence of a corrupted and self-seeking desire within the intimacy of marriage, and the extension of this evil into male attitude towards and treatment of women in general. Tragically, the misuse of his masculine gifts changes these gifts into vices and sins that devastate the very goods they are created to protect and nourish. Sin corrupts a man's desire for good into a grasping, self-seeking use of persons and of God's creation which undermines both the beauty and dignity of that creation, and the man's own dignity and purpose.⁷² Just as the greatest threat to a woman is her spouse, the greatest threat to society and creation is from those who's responsibility and desire was originally ordered to wonder at, protect and nurture them.

This love finds its beginning in the heart of the man himself. We have seen that Christ challenges the man to guard the woman's dignity from 'using' her within his own heart and urges the man to form within himself the foundations of proper love for her, to build the foundations of profound

⁶⁸ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, sec. 74.

⁶⁹ Benedict XVI *Angelus* (Jan 8, 2012): "God is at the root of every created being's life and is the Father of every human person in a special way: he has a unique and personal relationship with every human being. Each one of us is wanted and loved by God."

⁷⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 6: Benedict XVI distinguishes between love described by the Hebrew word (אֱהָבָה) (Greek ἔρωσ) and the love described by the Hebrew (אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם) (Greek ἀγάπη), but insists that these work together to complete the image of God's love. Seeking love initiates and focuses love, which is then completed and fulfilled, not in the renunciation of seeking, but in its purification in unity with steadfast love.

⁷¹ Cf. ToB 12:1, 92:4.

⁷² Cf. ToB 31:3, 32:4, 6.

respect, wonder and desire for her goodness, which seeks only the advancement of that goodness for its own sake, and not for his own use.⁷³

In our fallen state, desire for success often passes disguised as a “love” or passion for a particular end which serves the man himself more than others, perhaps even at the expense of others. Self-giving becomes self-seeking. Seeking good is perverted into a grasping, even destructive abuse, and the good of his masculinity becomes a distorted mockery of itself.⁷⁴

This is particularly evident in sexual intimacy between spouses. Sexual intimacy can only be truly life giving when it is between equals. This is not just a general equality in theory, but a specific requirement that each and every act must be based on and be an expression of a mutual consent, mutual self-gift, always aimed at the good of the other. This is not saying they both have to have exactly the same desire or pleasure each time, just that the self-giving must be completely free, not coerced or forced. If it is not completely free, then both spouses should exercise respect and restraint until it is.

Drawing on a reference to sexual intimacy between spouses as a “marriage debt”, some Catholics have suggested that withholding sexual intimacy without grave reason is hurting a spouse, and therefore sinful.⁷⁵ It is possible that, if someone deprives their spouse deliberately as a way of hurting them, that would be a bad thing, as any deliberate hurt of spouses is. But a husband (or a wife) cannot use guilt, coercion, or force to pressure a spouse to have sex. If a wife's freedom is hindered or undermined in any way, by force, coercion, fear, guilt, alcohol, sleep, etc. then consent cannot be fully given. True sexual intimacy is impossible unless both spouses can freely and fully consent and commit to each other in that act.

It is possible for a man to be guilty of raping his wife if he ever forces her to engage in a sexual act when she has not fully consented. It is not somehow less problematic because they are married,

⁷³ Mt 5:27-28; cf. ToB 38:1.

⁷⁴ Cf. ToB 32:3.

⁷⁵ Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, sec. 25: “By this same love it is necessary that all the other rights and duties of the marriage state be regulated as the words of the Apostle: “Let the husband render the debt to the wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband,” express not only a law of justice but of charity.”

as if her initial consent to the marriage included all specific requests for intimacy. In fact, it would be an even worse offense against her if they are married. A husband is the one his wife should be protected by, feel safe with, and to be able to trust to respect her freedom to choose yes or no, every single time. If *he* is the one to override her consent, then he has done double evil, first the evil of imposing a sexual act without consent, which is always gravely wrong, and, secondly and perhaps more importantly, he seriously undermines the security and safety that she should be able to enjoy within marriage. The offense in such a case is not limited to the single act but undermines every consequent possible intimacy, sexual or otherwise. This lack of security extends far beyond this one act, and even beyond their entire marriage. Since a marriage is the foundation of all relationships, it extends to having a profound impact on her relationship with all men, and his with all women. It even impacts on their children's foundations for their understanding of their own sex and sexuality.

Men are called to imitate Christ, the Bridegroom in dedicating themselves to making sure the wife safe to express herself and her love freely. The closest and most likely threat to that freedom and safety is her husband. So, the first and most important battle a man has is with himself, so that he gives himself to her in such a way that never threatens her safety nor undermines her complete freedom. She has promised to use her freedom to love him in her own way, but that is not his business, nor can he make demands on that basis, nor should he.

Though this masculine 'drive' and focus has been noted to cause some damage to others, the misuse does not invalidate proper use. The rejection or suppression of masculine drive, passion or seeking desire may seem to provide temporary relief from the worst examples of its misapplication, but it would also rob us of its remedy. The remedy for misuse of a good thing is its proper use. The answer to corruption and perversion is purity and holiness. The redemption of the man, through cooperating with God's grace, and a studied self-discipline trains his desires to serve their proper purpose.⁷⁶ In doing so he brings to fulfillment in his body, and his entire person, the beautiful purpose of his creation.

⁷⁶ Cf. ToB 49:6.

By being in full possession of his own desires, rather than being a prisoner to the whims of his selfish urges, a man begins to share in the mind of Christ, drawing him to his own destiny, a destiny to grow in Christ and be an image of the love of Christ. Just as a proper ordering of his mind and heart towards his wife can lay the foundation for a love that more accurately reflects divine love, a man should seek to properly order his heart and mind to all people and goods.⁷⁷ His attitudes and actions have the potential to undermine the balance of the goods. His special responsibility is, therefore, to ensure that his own mind, heart, and actions are properly ordered to the truth of their value.

This does not mean a man must take not personal pleasure in his desire or labour. Just as it is proper for a man within marriage to enjoy a “noble pleasure” in union with his wife, and genuine joy that a father takes in his children, a man can properly enjoy a noble pleasure in aspiring to and striving for his created purpose. Just as noble pleasure participates in the spiritual purpose and end of marriage, in all other concerns and activities it lifts the man above base and self-serving desire to a spiritual plane where he rejoices in truth, goodness and beauty for its own sake, and revels in the privilege of participating in its flourishing.⁷⁸ Through these specific lifelong gifts of self, the man unites himself to the Father’s love by which he aims to heal of the whole world.⁷⁹

f. Concluding comment

This thesis set out to answer the question, “Is there a Catholic theology of masculinity?” Guided by a review of magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church about masculinity, including a specific focus on John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*, it identified several significant questions that remain unanswered or, at least, insufficiently developed in magisterial teaching thus far. The thesis proposed a definition of masculinity, including a discussion of the ‘shape’ of masculinity. This ‘shape’ uses what is either explicit or implicit in magisterial teaching regarding women and the ‘feminine genius’, with the assumption that men and women are equal and complementary, to

⁷⁷ ToB 33:2: “Although maintaining the balance is something entrusted to them both, the man has a special responsibility, as if it depended more on him whether then balance is kept or violated or even – if it has already been violated – re-established.”

⁷⁸ ToB 48:4.

⁷⁹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, sec. 9: “The one God in whom Israel believes, on the other hand, loves with a personal love. His love, moreover, is an elective love: among all the nations he chooses Israel and loves her—but he does so precisely with a view to healing the whole human race.”

paint a silhouette of masculinity or a ‘masculine genius’. This thesis proposed that, just as the feminine genius is closely connected with the intimacy of motherhood, a masculine genius may well be connected with his being outside the pregnancy, completely ‘other’ to it, as God the Father is ‘other’ to creation. Attention is given to some exegetical questions raised in John Paul II’s treatment of Genesis 3, specifically in relation to women and work. An exegetical study of Genesis seemed to support John Paul II’s treatment of the text. Based on the Church’s teaching that Christ is prophet, priest and king, and that men and women share in these three aspects of Christ by virtue of their baptism, the thesis argued that these elements could be applied to masculinity. The kingly element is discussed extensively under kingship and headship and John Paul II associates the prophetic element to our spousal nature in his *Theology of the Body*, but the priestly element of masculinity seems neglected or undeveloped in magisterial teaching. Where the Church speaks on the priestly element of Christ’s ministry it tends to focus on the ordained priestly ministers. This thesis examined the redemptive aspect of masculinity, based on Ephesians 5, including some reflection on the ‘kinsman redeemer’ theme in the Hebrew Scriptures, leading into a development of a proposed priestly aspect of masculinity. Finally, acknowledging many broken and flawed examples of masculine desire and the damage these have caused, this thesis concluded with a positive discussion of masculine desire, described by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The thesis proposes that, while the Church speaks of a woman’s ‘receptivity’ as part of her genius, this masculine desire is a seeking love that might provide us with the corresponding impetus in the masculine genius. In short, the thesis has identified some elements of a Catholic theology of masculinity already explicit in magisterial teaching, has identified a silhouette of a theology of masculinity in the same teaching, and based on the same teaching, has proposed some contributions to a Catholic theology of masculinity.

It seems that we can, according to the “great analogy” of Ephesians 5, speak of human husbands as participating in a kind of priesthood in the domestic Church, and even in a broader context. Or at least we can speak of husbands participating in a unique way in the redemptive aspect of the divine Bridegroom, the Redeemer. This thesis proposes a development of Catholic teaching, specifically of a “masculine genius”, based on the connection between Christ’s self-sacrifice for His bride, and on the command for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. It calls for Catholic men to model themselves on the redemptive love of the kinsman redeemer, to participate in Christ’s redemptive work, to discover and embrace the priestly aspect of their

masculinity, having as their goal the true and equal autonomous flourishing of others, particularly their wives as each husband's own "other".

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