

## May is for Mothers ... and Their Children

### Family Matters

Those of us in the pro-life movement strongly believe that terminating a pregnancy is an unjustified termination of human life. As such, it goes against our humanity as much as our most fundamental spiritual value -- that each of us is uniquely a creature of God, the source of all life.

In an ideal world, children would grow up in a two-parent household devoted to their physical, mental and spiritual nourishment. In that world, young people would stay chaste until marriage, a sacrament of strong vows 'till death do us part.' **Children** borne of wedlock would be viewed as **gifts from God**, and cherished accordingly.

The world in which we live, however, is seriously disordered. There is pornography that denigrates women to mere objects. There is teenage pregnancy encouraged by media of all sorts that promote sex outside of marriage; there are growing numbers of single-mother households who suffer from subsistence-level income; there is "shacking up" with no serious commitment to marry; and there is abortion as a "back-up" method of birth control. Everything gets cheapened; every thought of God and creation gets pushed aside; every sense of responsibility is ignored.

In the midst of these pressures, it's critical for Catholics to renew our sense of family, and our personal responsibility to do the right things. What is so great about our faith is that **God's arms are wide open**, waiting for us to turn to Him, to ask Him for forgiveness, and to find peace in this life.

Mary, Mother of God, can be a model and guide for all of us. That title was formally defined at the Council of Ephesus in 432. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "From the most ancient times, the Blessed Virgin has been honored with this title, and to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs."

The woman asked by an angel to bear Jesus, while not yet married, agreed to God's will; the woman who stood at the foot of the cross until Jesus' last drop of blood was shed, the woman who has appeared many times over the centuries to encourage us to stay close to the Lord -- she is the model that shows us that grace abounds in motherhood.

*"Mother of Mercy, blessed are you. Pray for us that we may do God's will. Ask your Son to give us grace and strength to do what is right in spite of what the world tempts us to do."*

### Mom's Night Out movie opens this week

Patricia Heaton, star of *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *The Middle*, is featured in this new family comedy that celebrates motherhood by highlighting a variety of parenting joys and challenges.

Heaton is the mother of four teenage boys. Speaking openly about Christianity and her pro-life views, a rarity in Hollywood, the actress stands up for what she believes, recently **tweeting a pro-life message** that gained wide attention.

"It's challenging raising kids in our culture. There is a message out there that is very detrimental to the dignity of human beings -- it's treating each other as sexual objects. I think it does a lot of damage because it doesn't deal with the realities of the human spirit."

"Parents have to be super, super involved and aware of what their kids are watching and listening to and who they are hanging out with, and they have to be monitoring all their social networking very early on."

Heaton says that parents have to be loving, yet strict, and they need to talk with their kids about life, morals and sex. "They are going to encounter all kinds of stuff, and they need that message that comes from you before it comes from anybody else." [*National Catholic Register*, 5/4/2014.]

Merck, the pharmaceutical firm, sponsors **Merck for Mothers**, to improve the maternal health of women in 30 countries, including the U.S. In April, it ran an ad in a number of papers and magazines featuring a pregnant woman. The ad reads: "She's carried her baby for nine months. We want to make sure she lives to hold him." This is yet another sign that society is coming to the realization that a human being is in the womb.

### Survey Results re: Women & Marriage

Between 1960 and 2012, the percentage of Americans who are married fell from 67% to 53%. The birth rate per thousand dropped from 23.7 to 12.6, a new record low. Of these births, the percentage to unmarried women skyrocketed from 5% in 1960 to 41% in 2011.

Catholics have exhibited a similar pattern. Pope Francis and the bishops agree that pastoral care is needed for those caught up in these problems, and new ways of teaching the Church's doctrine on marriage are needed. [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 4/6/14.]

## FOR HIGH SCHOOL GUYS & GALS

Get a group together for a Sunday night out to see Generation Life! That's on May 18, at 7:30 pm, at St. Patrick's Church in Chatham. Pizza is followed by a talk and discussion about the value of chastity in your life. RSVP [mgrady@st-pats.org](mailto:mgrady@st-pats.org) The next article was written recently by Catie Payne of Generation Life's US travel team.

### Today's Culture Battle [GENLIFE, 2/3/14]

Why is chastity such a battle in our culture today? It's because we have forgotten how amazing our sexuality is. Blame the sexual revolution; contraception, MTV, whatever you choose. All these have contributed to the natural cheapening of sex. Society's attempt at making sex more available at our whim is exactly what has taken away its value.

Imagine if suddenly jewelry stores around the world put their most beautiful diamonds on a 90% off clearance sale. Almost anyone could buy a 2-carat diamond ring. But the ring wouldn't mean as much to a woman getting proposed to. It wouldn't mean much to the man giving the ring to his beloved. The very value of the ring is that it is a sign of his willingness to sacrifice to provide for her good (within his means—don't worry guys, we're not all expecting 2-carat diamonds).

The point is that the very significance of the ring is tied up in the fact that it requires sacrifice and investment to get it. In a similar way, we have taken away the need to invest oneself and make sacrifices in order to have the intimacy of sex, & by doing so have lessened its value in our eyes. But a person's sexuality has intrinsic value whether he knows it or not. As a society, our problem with sex isn't that we value it too much: we don't value it enough!

Every person is designed to be a gift. Every unique, unrepeatable individual has something to bring to the world that no one else can. And in his sexuality, each person has a call to union with another person in a relationship of love that bears with it the possibility of creating new life. Human sexuality, in the two forms of manhood and womanhood, is the roadmap of the most intimate way that a person lives his or her life as a gift to another, and receives another as a gift in return. This is no trivial thing, and this is not a gift that should ever be put on a 90% off clearance sale! Exchange of this gift is a privilege that can't be earned by someone who just wants a good time, or by buying drinks at a bar, or even tentative future plans. The privilege of this gift comes to the one, and only the one, who has vowed to lay down his or her life, sacrificing and entrusting everything to his beloved.

Understanding and valuing the gift of our sexuality is not for the prude or the "uptight," but for lovers who would prefer the real, authentic, passionate love they crave, rather than a temporary imitation of the real thing.

## Who Speaks for Battered Children?

An op-ed piece by Leonard Pitts Jr. appeared in *The Star-Ledger* on March 19, 2014. In it, he contrasted the concern that many Christians have over unborn children with the neglect we show once a child is born. He was careful not to indict only pro-lifers. "Rather, the indictment extends to all of us who watch with complacent silence as budgets are balanced on the backs of the voiceless and vulnerable."

But it is evident that he is not aware of the many social services offered by the Catholic Church for all those in need, and of the many homes for unwed mothers that provide health care to both mom and baby, clothing, access to education and other services.

So rather than criticize pro-lifers, he should join with them in our mutual concern for both moms and their babies.

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Confidential Help After Abortion: 1-888-456-HOPE

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## Two New Saints ... on Life

Both of the new pope-saints spoke and wrote about the dignity of life during their papacies. In *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*, John XXIII wrote: "If we look upon the dignity of the human person in the light of divinely revealed truth, we cannot help but esteem it far more highly; for men are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ: They are by grace the children and friends of God and heirs of eternal glory."

John Paul II, in *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)*, stated: "Every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart the **sacred value of human life**, from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree." [National Catholic Register, April 2014.]

## Agnostic Author Preaches Truth

American Enterprise Institute author Charles Murray's new book, *The Curmudgeon's Guide to Getting Ahead*, has been well reviewed in the mainstream press. Geared to the 20-somethings transitioning from college life to the real world, the book provides in-depth background of the generation that mimics what they see and hear in our culture.

No. 1 on the happiness hit parade is to **marry sooner rather than later**. Marrying young, he says, encourages the couple to view the relationship as a true partnership for the long term, one that they build together. He puts this goal before strong career goals. No. 2 is for young people to **take religion seriously**, where they have to dig deep and think about the world beyond themselves – this from an agnostic in our culture that needs to hear more truths.