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Editorial

Theology of Sexuality, Marriage and Family: From *Casti Connubii* to *Amoris Laetitia*

Catholic theology of sexuality, marriage and family has been one of the most debated and discussed areas in theology. This is particularly true from the beginning of the 20th century, due to new developments in medical and social sciences, in technology, and sudden changes in social and cultural values and life-style, as well as due to developments in theology.

The teaching of the Church through official documents from *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, and especially from *Casti Connubii* to *Amoris Laetitia* has been decisive in shaping the Catholic theology of sexuality, marriage and family. Vatican II's teaching on marriage and family in *Gaudium et Spes* (nos. 47-52) gave new directions and avenues to theological developments. The two recent Synods on the family (2014 & 2015) and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* have made this discussion very lively today. Debate over some of the issues dealt with by *Amoris Laetitia* continues. Moreover, this year is particularly important for reflections on the Catholic theology of sexuality, marriage and family, since this the 50th year of the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, one of the most discussed official document dealing with them.

Evidently, we cannot limit theological developments to the official teaching alone. A number of theological works have contributed to the ongoing development of the theology of sexuality, marriage and family. Although the relationship between the official teaching authority and some of the theologians has not been so easy, we know that voices dissenting from the official teaching have been equally important for theological developments.

Change is a basic phenomenon of life. Though sometimes it is claimed that Catholic teaching does not change, in any branch of

theology we can find clear development/progress/change/continuity and discontinuity. Catholic theology of sexuality, marriage and family is not an exception to this. Such developments have to be understood and interpreted in the web of relationship among socio-cultural changes, philosophical views, developments in various branches of science, and developments in various branches of theology. A pluralistic and globalized world adds to the complexity of this interrelationship. How all these are incorporated into the theological thinking and pastoral practice is an important question. The gap between the official teaching of the Church and practice of the faithful is also pertinent.

June 2018 issue of *Asian Horizons* proposes to reflect on the developments in the theology of sexuality, marriage and family, especially from *Casti Connubii*. Although an exhaustive study is beyond scope, we have articles on various topics by authors from various contexts.

Martin Lintner investigates into 50 years of controversy over birth control from *Humanae Vitae* (HV) to *Amoris Laetitia* (AL). As a background he gives an overview of the teaching on birth control from *Casti Connubii*, and the teaching of Vatican II. Following this he discusses in detail the appointment of the Papal Commission on Birth Control, various developments during the work of the commission, and the report/s submitted, which finally led to the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Lintner critically analyses the teaching of HV, its reception by bishops' conferences and its reception during the papacies after Paul VI. The author points out a pertinent issue based on the doctrine of the *sensus fidei*, namely, the missing consent from the part of the people of God even after 50 years of its publication, could be a sign of the need of a doctrinal rethinking. Finally, Lintner shows how AL is inviting the faithful to rediscover the message of HV. Christian Okeke opines that *Familiaris Consortio* (FC) and AL can be helpful in engaging with families and marriage in the modern world. In particular, he points out how these documents can guide pastoral response in the African context.

Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler argue that a consideration of the models of marriage in the Catholic Church is necessary. According to them, two models of marriage, namely procreation model and the spousal relation model, can be identified in the Catholic tradition. AL accepts both models, though priority is given to the spousal relation model. According to Roger Burggraeve, with AL, Pope Francis has brought to a 'tentative conclusion' a long process of evolution in the theology of marriage that began with *Casti*

Connubii, though this process is yet to continue. There is a double challenge, namely, deepening the understanding of marriage and family, and responding to the so-called 'irregular' situation. For this, AL proposes to develop an ethics of growth and discernment as a concretisation of the "logic of pastoral mercy." He underscores that the strength and the challenge of AL consist not only in mercy, but in the linking of mercy with discernment.

Rhoderick John S. Abellanosa critically evaluates the natural law approach to marriage and family ethics. Giving various examples, he argues that the use of natural law resulted in a rigid approach to marriage and family and that it has led to marginalization and exclusion. He calls for a rethinking of the natural law concept in marriage and family ethics. Joseph Loic Mben analyses the magisterial teaching on women's role in marriage and in the family. This analysis is undertaken mainly based on *Gaudium et Spes*, Post-Conciliar documents and the documents given after the African Synods. He points out that there is an ambiguity in the Church's teaching on women's role, namely, on the one hand their equal rights is affirmed, and on the other hand their role is limited to domestic duties.

Taking homosexuality as a case, Raphael Gallagher explores the criterion of practical ideal in moral thinking. After explaining different approaches to homosexuality, he proposes the criterion of the practical ideal as a working rule in pastoral ministry with homosexuals. According to him, the limitation of the traditional catholic assessment of homosexuality is its lack of realism. The criterion of practical ideal implies that we aim at the ideal while being practical at the same time. This ideal can be helpful within the context of pastoral accompaniment of gay and lesbian Catholics. According to Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Amoris Laetitia* offers a new approach to sex and gender ethics. She points out that discrimination against LGBTQ people is a reality in most cultures, though attitudes are changing. AL has adopted a new approach of understanding and encouragement toward Catholics who do not conform to Catholic sexual norms, and thus has shown a new model of discernment, accompaniment and integration. Cahill emphasises that moral theology must look beyond traditional teachings, and beyond the traditional moral categories and principles.

Ann Mary Madavanakkadu approaches sex education from an ethical point of view. She holds that the purpose of sex education is to help students become convinced that sex outside a committed love relationship is wrong because it violates the value of caring. Besides

underscoring that responsible sexual life is an ethical demand, she explains some of the practical advantages of such a responsible life. Raymond Olusesan Aina considers 'honourable courtship' as a context of vocational discernment. According to him, since marriage is a vocation, there should be a phase of vocational discernment, and proposes a framework for pastorally assisting parties in courtship to discern their vocation to marriage.

In the second part of his article on African Christianity, Johny Thachuparamban delineates some of the unique features of African Christianity and richness of this tradition. He affirms that African Church has the potential to enhance the universal Church with its unique experience and tradition.

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