

# MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN: MADE FOR EACH OTHER

In November 2014, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sponsored an international colloquium on the complementarity of man and woman in marriage; it was co-hosted by several Pontifical Councils. Pope Francis opened the event with a stirring address, and he was followed by approximately 400 scholars and religious leaders from around the world.

Plough Publishing House has just published an excellent book, *Not Just Good, but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship Between Man and Woman*, that is based on some of the presentations.

Bill Donohue chose to excerpt three of the contributors: Pope Francis, Johann Christoph Arnold, and Rick Warren. The Holy Father needs no introduction. Mr. Arnold is a senior pastor of the Bruderhof, an international communal movement dedicated to a life of simplicity, service, sharing, and non-violence. A good friend to the Catholic community (he is especially close to Father Philip Eichner, the Catholic League's chairman of the board), he offers an Anabaptist perspective. Rick Warren is the best-selling Christian author who is known the world over for his cogent insights into contemporary issues.

We hope you enjoy reading these selections. For book information, see p. 2.

## **Pope Francis**

It is fitting that you have gathered here in this international colloquium to explore the complementarity of man and woman. This complementarity is at the root of marriage and family, which is the first school where we learn to appreciate our own and others' gifts, and where we begin to acquire the arts of living together. For most of us, the family provides

the principal place where we can begin to “breathe” values and ideals, as well as to realize our full capacity for virtue and charity. At the same time, as we know, families are places of tensions: between egoism and altruism, reason and passion, immediate desires and long-range goals. But families also provide frameworks for resolving such tensions. This is important. When we speak of complementarity between man and woman in this context, let us not confuse that term with the simplistic idea that all the roles and relations of the two sexes are fixed in a single, static pattern. Complementarity will take many forms as each man and woman brings his or her distinctive contributions to their marriage and to the formation of their children—his or her personal richness, personal charisma. Complementarity becomes a great wealth. It is not just a good thing but it is also beautiful.

In our day, marriage and the family are in crisis. We now live in a culture of the temporary, in which more and more people are simply giving up on marriage as a public commitment. This revolution in manners and morals has often flown the flag of freedom, but in fact it has brought spiritual and material devastation to countless human beings, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Evidence is mounting that the decline of the marriage culture is associated with increased poverty and a host of other social ills, disproportionately affecting women, children, and the elderly. It is always they who suffer the most in this crisis.

The crisis in the family has produced a crisis of human ecology, for social environments, like natural environments, need protection. And although the human race has come to understand the need to address conditions that menace our natural environments, we have been slower to recognize that our fragile social environments are under threat as well, slower in our culture, and also in our Catholic Church. It is therefore essential that we foster a new human ecology and advance it.

In these days, as you embark on a reflection on the beauty of complementarity between man and woman in marriage, I urge you to lift up yet another truth about marriage: that permanent commitment to solidarity, fidelity, and fruitful love responds to the deepest longing of the human heart. Let us bear in mind especially the young people, who represent our future. It is important that they do not give themselves over to the poisonous mentality of the temporary, but rather be revolutionaries with the courage to seek true and lasting love, going against the common pattern.

### **Johann Christoph Arnold**

Last year my wife was diagnosed with a serious cancer and more recently she suffered a heart attack. It seemed that the devil tried everything to prevent us from coming to Rome but, praise God, we are here today.

I share this because we are just like everybody else, with our struggles and challenges, and have come to understand how important it is to belong to a community of believers that protects the values that sustain marriage. This is true in the Bruderhof, the church community that I come from, and it is so in all the great faith traditions that are here today. This is why I have hope that marriage as God intended it will shine forth even in these dark times.

While serving as elder of this movement for the last thirty years, I've watched the moral and spiritual decline of Western civilization, along with the tragic breakdown of the family. All the more, we have been determined to uphold the sanctity of life, and of sex and marriage.

We believe that marriage is more than a private contract between two people. God did not have in mind merely the personal happiness of separate individuals, but the establishment of God-fearing relationships in a communion of families under his rulership. Marriage is part of God's

original creation and sanctifies each generation as being "made in the image of God." God created male and female that through their union they might fill the earth and flourish. In God's plan, every child has a father and a mother.

In my own church community, there are people from all walks of life, including some from very broken families. Like couples everywhere, couples in our church have to work hard to nurture the kind of love that truly lasts. Sometimes they find themselves in crisis due to mistrust, unforgiveness, or sexual immorality. But through the help of God and of fellow church members, miracles of reconciliation and healing can and do happen. Prayer is a crucial part of this process: as the old saying goes, "Couples that pray together, stay together."

To protect marriages, we as individuals, families, and churches must hold each other accountable and encourage each other. Our children need to see a life of modesty, simplicity, hard work, and most of all love to God and neighbor.

We must never be afraid of the ridicule and slander our witness will bring. As the apostle Paul wrote:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper times we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Gal. 6:7-9)

So, let us hold our heads high knowing that if God is for us, who can be against us? Let us give living witness together that God's plan for marriage and children is joyful, true, and everlasting. Nothing will be able to stop us from proclaiming this childlike and simple message. It is God who holds the final hour of history in his hands, and he will be victorious.

**Rick Warren**

In Hebrews 13:4 we are given this clear command: "Marriage is to be honored by everyone."

Sadly, today, marriage is now dishonored by many. It is dismissed as an archaic, manmade tradition, denounced as an enemy of women, discouraged as a career-limiting choice, demeaned in movies and television, and delayed out of fear that it will limit one's personal freedom.

Today marriage is ridiculed, resented, rejected, and redefined. What are we going to do about this? The church cannot cower in silence! As you have heard, there is too much at stake.

When a culture claims to care about children, we must point out that children who grow up with both a mother and a father grow up healthier, happier, and stronger. They are less likely to fail in school, less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, less likely to do jail time, and less likely to experience distress, depression, and thoughts of suicide. They are also less likely to perpetuate these problems to the next generation.

When a culture claims to champion women, we must point out that women who marry and stay married have lower rates of depression, have a lower risk of being a victim of crime or violence, and have a higher net worth than those living with an unmarried man.

When a culture claims to care for the poor, we must point out that the dissolution of marriages disproportionately hurts the poor. A single mother with children has never been a viable economic unit, and poor children get hurt the most by the economic consequences of divorce. Children who grow up without both mother and father are more likely to live their entire lives in poverty.

And what about men? Men who marry and stay married have fewer illnesses, fewer injuries, and live longer than single men.

They earn more money and amass more net worth than single men with similar education and job histories, including men who live with unmarried women.

On CNN I was asked, "Can you imagine ever changing your mind about gay marriage?" I said no. "Why?" I said, "Because I fear God's disapproval more than I fear your disapproval or society's." As Saint Peter has said, "We must obey God rather than men."

The only way to always be relevant is to be eternal. What is in style goes out of style; no revolution lasts. Every lie eventually crumbles under its own deception. Cultures rise and fall, cultures come and go, but the Word of God and the church of God continues. It isn't necessary to be on the right side of culture or the right of history. It is just necessary to be on the right side!

In many ways, the debate over the definition of life, of sex, and of marriage is, in reality, a question of leadership. Who is going to lead? Will the church follow the crowd, or will the church lead the crowd? In Exodus 23:2 God says "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong." Why? Because history shows that the majority is often wrong. The dustbins of history are stuffed with the conventional wisdom of cultures that proved false. Truth is not decided by a popularity contest.