

THE HOLY SEE: CHAMPION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Beginning today, the United Nations will host a week-long event that marks the fifth anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women. The Beijing + 5 conference will also mark a conflict between those who see sexuality as a matter of rights and those who see it as a matter of ethics. The Holy See is clearly identified with the latter interpretation. The question is: Which vision liberates?

Sexual Rights

"I was told I had the right to have sex whenever I wanted, but now I'm pregnant out of wedlock."

"I was told I had the right to do whatever I wanted to my own body, but now I don't have my baby."

"I was told I had the right to have sex with whomever I wanted, but now I have AIDS."

Sexual Ethics

"I was told that it was wrong to have sex outside of marriage, and now I have a family."

"I was told to respect human life from the time of conception, and now I have a family."

"I was told to practice sexual restraint, and now I have a family."

The Holy See champions women's rights by respecting human dignity, motherhood and the family. It understands that rights unhinged from ethics can never liberate and that a vision of liberty grounded solely in the individual is inherently flawed.

It would be so refreshing if the critics of the Holy See spent less time trying to downgrade its U.N. status and more time trying to emulate its moral status. Then women might genuinely be free.

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