

Familiaris Consortio:
The Biblical and Theological Foundation
of an Adequate Anthropology

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INTRODUCTION

The directions that are taken on the moral issues of life and the valuation that is placed on the human person are fundamentally determined by the anthropological understandings one brings to these questions. Modern society is in the midst of a cultural crisis in which there is an ideological conflict over the very definition of what it means to be human, what constitutes human life, and what is properly constitutive of human relationships.

What lie at the root of this conflict are the differing ideologies that seek to provide competing frameworks for assessing and determining the constitutive specificity and value of our human nature. Powerful and pervasive forces, both political and philosophical, are seeking to deconstruct and re-create both the meaning of marriage and sexuality and their purposes, with the resulting consequence of redefining the nature of the human person. Inevitably, the inner logic of each ideology determines how fundamental moral questions concerning the human person are answered.

The year 2001 marks the 20th anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*.¹ While its theme is the family, the document nonetheless provides *in seminal form* a critical analysis of modern society and its root problems. Many of the observations John Paul II makes here are taken up and developed at greater length in his other later works. But in this early exhortation he formulates the major critical principles which (a) help to accurately discern the problems underlying the modern misconceptions of the human person and (b) provide the philosophical and theological ground upon which an “adequate anthropology” can be constructed, that is, one that is

consonant with and that explains the true meaning of the human person.

This paper will examine the seminal contributions *Familiaris Consortio* makes towards the development of an adequate anthropology along with giving an outline of their subsequent development in other papal writings. A three-fold approach will be followed. First, there will be an exposition of the false notion of freedom that lies at the heart of the modern culture of death. Second, the paper will investigate the two interrelated fundamental principles constitutive of the human person: the *specificity* of personhood and its essential underlying vocation to communion. Here the biblical ground for an adequate anthropology will be examined. Third, this paper will look at the mystery of the person in terms of symbolic reality and will explore how the created realities and *relationalities* of the person are never merely biological but are intrinsically linked to a greater reality which they image forth and make present.

I: FREEDOM: FALSE NOTIONS VS. LIBERATING TRUTH

Familiaris Consortio speaks of a “disturbing degradation of some fundamental values” (FC 6) and proceeds to enumerate numerous problematic areas: misconceptions concerning the independence of spouses and their parental authority, divorce, abortion, sterilization, and the emergence of a contraceptive mentality. While the hydra has many heads, a common root cause is often discernible: the prevailing misconstruction of the notion of freedom:

At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being. (FC 6)

John Paul II is here expressing in seminal form one of the major critiques he makes of the modern period. As we shall see, he will return again and again to this central idea which must be faced if the relativism of modern rationalism is to be overcome. He does not decry the experience or reality of freedom but rather its corruption, which has taken hold of the modern

mind. Freedom, to be properly understood, must be understood *relationally*, that is, within the context of the creature's relationship to the Creator. Once this primary relationship is properly understood and constituted, then freedom becomes the means by which man achieves his proper end. Through freedom man comes to realize the "truth of God's plan" for human nature itself. This capacity of freedom orients the person towards God and truth. It opens him up and allows him to become fully the being God wills him to be. Only through this fundamental openness to objective reality (to God and Truth) is human nature fully realized.

However, when the primacy of the relationship to God is denied, "freedom" as a capacity turns the individual in upon himself. It takes on a negative quality inasmuch as it often becomes the "autonomous power of self-affirmation" in defiance of any external norm. As the relationship to God is denied, so too is the truth, which is also objective and external to the person. Instead, what emerges is the self-referential autonomous self. Increasing, the relational dimension of man atrophies. No longer is he related to God, truth, or even his fellow creatures. This is not freedom but bondage.

One of the pope's most perceptive insights from this seminal thought is to be found at the end of *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. In reflecting on the relationship of God the Father to the creaturely man he writes:

The 'rays of fatherhood' meet a first resistance in the obscure but real fact of original sin. This is truly the key for interpreting reality. Original sin is not only the violation of a positive command...Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood...placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only a sense of the master-slave relationship.ⁱⁱ

The profundity of this analysis lies in the realization that freedom is the result of our recognition of the fatherhood of God and our own sonship towards Him. Freedom lies in being properly related to the Father. Only God is absolutely free. Man has only a contingent freedom, which is predicated on his filial relationship. His freedom is realized precisely in filiation, which provides the context and content of specific acts. In the original act of sin (and all consequential sinful acts thereafter), the *turn*

towards the self results in the loss of freedom, identity, and fulfillment.

Human freedom can never be properly absolutized but must always be qualified by the phrase “in truth.”ⁱⁱⁱ *Familiaris Consortio* expresses this by speaking of the need in the modern world for a restoration of “covenant with divine wisdom.” Man is not an absolute autonomous subject. Rather, his very being is inscribed with, and oriented towards, an external reality with which his nature is consonant:

The education of the moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and of discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth, thus becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced. Modern culture must be led to a more profoundly restored covenant with divine Wisdom. Every man is given a share of such Wisdom through the creating action of God. (FC 8)

To reject this wisdom is ultimately to reject oneself. The secular pursuit of freedom all too often cloaks a rejection of God and the determined limits of creaturehood and brings the person (and society) in direct conflict with both external truth and with his own nature. Authentic freedom moves the person beyond himself and allows the individual to enter into profound communion with those external to himself. The differentiation between authentic and inauthentic freedom is decisive:

We thus come to the very heart of the Gospel truth about *freedom*. The person realizes himself by the exercise of freedom in truth. Freedom cannot be understood as a license to do *absolutely anything*: it means a *gift of self*.^{iv}

This theme is developed more extensively in sections 18-23 of the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (hereafter, EV). Here the relational aspect of freedom is explicitly developed along with the intrinsic link between freedom and objective truth.^v Like *Familiaris Consortio*, this section seeks to show how “a perverse idea of freedom” is a root cause of the major attacks on human life and dignity.^{vi} In rejecting human nature as it is, the secular mind has striven to redefine the person in terms of his own isolated subjectivity and rights. Little or no regard is paid to the communitarian aspect of the human experience. In this scenario, only the strong has power and dignity. The root cause of the many attacks against

life reside, as he states in *Evangelium Vitae*, “in a notion of freedom which exalts the isolated individual in an absolute way, and gives no place to solidarity, to openness to others and service of them.”^{vii}

For John Paul II, authentic freedom is operative within the matrix of the human corporate reality. It orients the person towards the other and propels the person to “give,” to be concerned, to be his brother’s keeper:

[E]very man is his “brother's keeper,” because God entrusts us to one another. And it is also in view of this entrusting that God gives everyone freedom, a freedom which possesses an *inherently relational dimension*. This is a great gift of the Creator, placed as it is at the service of the person and of his fulfillment through the gift of self and openness to others; but when freedom is made absolute in an individualistic way, it is emptied of its original content, and its very meaning and dignity are contradicted. (EV 19)

Admittedly this personalistic category which sees relationality as constitutive of modern freedom is difficult to follow. But the category of freedom is critical in his assessment of the assault against life. Unless the relational aspect of human freedom is rediscovered, there is only the possibility of further distortion of human nature. In this regard *Familiaris Consortio* is prophetic in that (a) it acknowledges the fundamental causal effect of the misconceptions of freedom and (b) calls man back to a covenant with divine wisdom.

II: SPECIFICITY OF PERSONHOOD

In the early church, the struggle was with Christological heresies in which numerous sects were distorting the nature of Christ. In the modern era, these controversies are largely past. What does confront the Church are anthropological heresies, and it is these which the pope desires to address in *Familiaris Consortio* by the development of an adequate theological anthropology. Accordingly, the exhortation issues an urgent call for the development of an integral vision of the human person.

As we shall see, this document is paradigmatic of the way in which the pope deals head on with the culture of death and its root causes. Unlike past approaches, John Paul II wants to engage secular thought on its own terms, lay bare its faulty foundations, and re-present the authentic

Christian witness to the truth about the human person. In particular, he wants to show that the life-and-death struggle of the modern era is over the “two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality.” Here he lays the foundations for the ideas and the approach which he takes up and will elaborate in greater detail in later works. Thus, *Familiaris Consortio* becomes a *paradigm* for his confrontation with the modern rationalist mindset.

The essential conflict between the Christian’s and the rationalist’s views of man is rooted in the latter’s dualistic tendencies. In the modernist perspective the body is only an instrumental good and the person and the body are not intrinsically linked. This leads inevitably to a serious distortion of the understanding of the human person and the human act. *Familiaris Consortio*, in contrast, shows that there is a successive and intrinsic link between sexuality, the specificity of the person as male and female, and its grounding in the image of God. Every element here is essential if human nature is not to be distorted.^{viii} In section 11 the key anthropological principles grounded in the first two chapters of Genesis^{ix} are clearly laid out:

God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to existence through love, he called him at the same time for love. God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. As an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love. (FC 11)

From this can be distilled three fundamental principles foundational to an anthropology authentic to the biblical revelation:

- (1) human nature as vocation
- (2) the intrinsic link between person and the body, and
- (3) the orientation towards love and communion.

What is critical to grasp here is that the struggle between the culture of life and death centers precisely on the meaning of the human body. As

Familiaris Consortio shows, the moral confusion over contraception is illustrative of this. When the body ceases to be expressive of, and intrinsically linked to, the person, the fundamental connection between fecundity and marital *communio* is broken. Only actions which are respectful of these fundamental dimensions of human nature can be considered good for the person and hence moral.^x

(1) HUMAN NATURE AS VOCATION

After reviewing the present crisis situation of marriage and family, the pope begins to lay down the foundation upon which his response will be built. The first key to this response is to go back “to the beginning” and examine the biblical revelation as it concerns the creation and nature of man: “God created man in His own image...(and) inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation...of love and communion” (FC 11). By grounding itself in the creation account in Genesis, *Familiaris Consortio* confronts the modern assertion that man is an autonomous subject. Increasingly, this belief has led to a profound loss of the sense of God and as a consequence, society has steadily begun to collapse morally in upon itself.^{xi} Later, in *Evangelium Vitae* this problem is given clearer articulation:

We have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: *the eclipse of the sense of God and of man*, typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism...with its ubiquitous tentacles...*when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man*, of his dignity and his life; in turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect for human life and its dignity, produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God’s living and saving presence. (EV 21)

The Christian vision which *Familiaris Consortio* proffers, however, stands in direct contrast to this and firmly announces that man is always creature. As such, he is not the arbiter of his own nature. His nature rather is a gift of which he is the steward and for which the individual must render an account. Hence, man is invited not to manipulate his nature in some act of self-creation but rather to discover its hidden interior structure inscribed within himself and intended for his own

flourishing.

It is precisely out of an authentic theology of creation that understands man's created nature as reflective of God's own that this document shows the moral order to be not extrinsic to the person but actually grounded in that human nature:

Since the moral order reveals and sets forth the plan of God the Creator, for this very reason it cannot be something that harms man, something impersonal. On the contrary, by responding to the deepest demands of the human being created by God, it places itself at the service of that person's full humanity with the delicate and binding love whereby God himself inspires, sustains and guides every creature towards its happiness. (FC 34)^{xii}

Building its anthropology on the Scriptural truth of the *imago dei*, this document not only shows that man is provided with a given nature but also reveals that the essence of that nature is relational. *God created man in His own image*. There is a fundamental relationship of dependence of human nature to the divine. To discover himself, man must come to know God. Man is thus not the autonomous subject seeking existentially to create himself as his will determines, which is at the heart of modern ideologies. Rather, he needs to discover the truth of his person, which is already inscribed in his very being and which is predicated on the divine nature. Human nature is not a manipulable entity but a gift to be received and a vocation to be followed.^{xiii} It is only such an authentic theology of creation rooted in the Scriptural revelation that can over-come the roots of the culture of death so entrenched in modern society.

(2) INTRINSIC LINK BETWEEN PERSON AND BODY

The burden of *Familiaris Consortio* is to present an integral vision of the human person precisely because of the misrepresentations and distortions which are the currency of today:

In the context of a culture which seriously distorts or entirely misinterprets the true meaning of human sexuality, because it separates it from its essential reference to the person, the Church more urgently feels how irreplaceable is her mission of presenting sexuality as a value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God. (FC 32, where this theme and its justification are treated at great length)

It is precisely in the differentiation of humanity into male and female that the *specificity* of the human person is revealed. Man is not created generically nor in a wholesale fashion but rather directly and immediately by God, and through the *human person* the divine image enters into the created sphere. It is at this critical junction that an adequate anthropology must be careful to prevent the development of any dualism. Material/bodily reality must not be severed from its capacity to express metaphysical meaning. *Familiaris Consortio* painstakingly safeguards the authentic vision of man when it states: “Sexuality...is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such” (FC 11). It is precisely the differentiation of the body, expressive of ontological realities^{xiv} which can never be overcome or collapsed into a homogeneous or androgynous construct. It is the sexual differentiation that allows for the *communio* towards which the human person is propelled. This understanding has profound implications for the issues of our day which seek to overcome the male-female distinction, to redefine the bodily realities of marriage, and to sever in ever more radical ways the connection between generation and the human reality of sexuality as *communio personarum*. Often the profound theological and metaphysical meaning of our sexuality is missed. As Eric Mascall said:

I suspect, in fact, that even on the level of nature, we have come to look upon sex in far too superficial a way, as if there were a kind of undifferentiated human nature common to all human beings, male and female alike, but itself essentially sexless, and that sex was superimposed upon this as a sort of extra...Humanity is, so to speak, essentially binary; it exists only in the two modes of masculinity and femininity.^{xv}

All of this points to the fact that the very structure of the human body manifests the vocation towards which all human beings are called.^{xvi} In this way, the body is not extrinsic to, or merely instrumental for, the purposes of man but is rather prophetic of it. As the Hebraic insight demonstrates, the human person is a body-soul composite reality.^{xvii} While *Familiaris Consortio* rarely develops to any great extent the points

it makes, it does pause at this juncture and makes explicit this crucial anthropological principle: “As an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love” (FC 22).

From this it follows that to evaluate the morality of certain human acts one needs to consider if the act is consonant with and respectful of the structure of the human person as a body-soul unity. For example, it becomes apparent that the totality of the person-body complex is denied by a contraceptive mentality, that the intrinsic importance of the body is rejected in such practices as *in vitro* fertilization, and that the symbolic structure of the body is contradicted by homosexual practices.^{xviii} In these cases, the body is often instrumentalized and a dualistic understanding of the person is operative.

As John Paul II points out, human sexuality is never purely biological (see FC 11). To maintain its specific human integrity it must respect the dignity and value of the total human person:

[C]onjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, the unity that, beyond union of one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility. (FC 13)

When any of these essential elements (self-gift, sexual differentiation, personal bodily unity, indissolubility and fecundity) are rejected or contradicted by a society, a culture of death will inevitably begin to take root.

(3) ORIENTATION TOWARDS LOVE AND COMMUNION

Fundamental to Hebraic anthropology is its linking of the creation of man to the image of God.^{xix} Not only is human nature a given, but its specificity is determined by its relationship to God. What is constitutive of the human person is its being reflective of the divine nature. *Familiaris Consortio* defines this essentially as the vocation to love: “God

inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” (FC 11). Love is intimately tied to the concept of self-gift and is constituted by “the value of ‘total’ self-giving” (FC 32).

Later in the same section John Paul II develops the “integral vision of the human person” by showing how contraception distorts the meaning of the human person by attacking the totality of self-giving:

When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as " arbiters " of the divine plan and they “manipulate” and degrade human sexuality—and with it themselves and their married partner-by altering its value of “total” self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. (FC 32)

Here we see clearly the juncture between the several elements constitutive of an authentic anthropology:

- (1) The body is truly expressive of the person.
- (2) What one does to the body, one does to the person.
- (3) To treat the body as an instrument is in effect to instrumentalize the person as well.
- (4) The person as a composite body-soul reality is called to the gift of communion precisely in and through his bodily reality.
- (5) Metaphysically this communion requires a fundamental openness to the other which in turn, to be fully human, requires a totality of self-giving.
- (6) In this way, and only in this way, can there be participation in the *imago dei* which is inscribed in the human person.

Only if these principles are respected can any (sexual) activity be considered to be fully human and therefore moral. Indeed, to disrespect these principles is to falsify the plan of God.^{xx} As the document states unequivocally, when sexuality is instrumentalized and made into an object, there is a breaking “of the personal unity of soul and body,

[which] strikes at God's creation itself at the level of the deepest interaction of nature and person."^{xxi}

III: PERSON AS SYMBOLIC

One of the greatest contributions *Familiaris Consortio* makes lies in its insistence that the nature of man is essential symbolic. Since the time of Descartes there has been a steady erosion of the symbolic sense in man as increasingly an agnostic or even atheistic rationalism has taken over.^{xxii} As Henri de Lubac observed,

To put it very simply, the spirit of the age is carrying us in quite another direction. If we said that our age repudiated or disassociated itself from every kind of symbolism, we would still be stopping at appearances. What it does, rather, is to institute an anti-symbolism.^{xxiii}

In the modern era rationalism has been increasingly absolutized, with a consequential rejection of any other form of knowing. Only verifiable, replicable, scientific data can be considered as true. But this denies the reality of symbolic thought which alone has the capacity to convey some of the deepest truths to the human mind.^{xxiv} As John Paul II stated in his earlier work, "primary religious language is symbolic."^{xxv}

As with authentic freedom, central to the idea of the symbolic nature of man is the idea of relationality. Man is not some self-created, self-referential creature. Rather, his orientation both interiorly and exteriorly is towards God. His nature is created in the image of another whom he is to reflect and image forth in the world. When this transcendent and symbolic capacity of man is denied, the truth about the human person can never be grasped or realized.

In this area *Familiaris Consortio* makes a critical contribution by laying the ground for the recovery of the symbolic sense as an epistemological category. In a series of affirmations, the pope progressively shows how material realities show forth, participate in, and become symbolic of spiritual realities within the created order.

In particular, this is evidenced in part two of the exhortation, where he deals with the nature of man and God's plan for marriage and the

family. At the beginning of his analysis, John Paul II enunciates a principle upon which the coherence and intelligibility of his analysis depends. The presupposition of his analysis is the fact that physical realities have a metaphysical depth dimension. Physical constructs (such as the body, gender, sexual acts, etc.) are revelatory of, and intrinsically linked to, an interior reality. This principle is illustrated by his contention that sexuality “concerns the innermost being of the human person” and is therefore “by no means purely biological” (FC 11).^{xxvi} The burden of *Familiaris Consortio* is precisely to show that to isolate biology from its metaphysical grounding in the person will ultimately distort the meaning of the person.

Secondly, *Familiaris Consortio* shows how the symbolic nature of the person and the body are both intrinsically tied to divine revelation. God uses the relational aspect of the human person (love, family, and marriage) to express his own covenantal love towards the human race:

For this reason the central word of Revelation, “God loves his people,” is likewise proclaimed through the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love. Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant which unites God and his people. (FC 12)

But for such human realities to carry such meaning, they must already be interiorly structured so receive such a meaning.^{xxvii} Here, we see that human physicality (sexuality, gender, and relationality) are not only revelatory of the person but, within the divine economy, are revelatory of salvific realities as well. Hence, we begin to see the grave dangers of rejecting the symbolic dimension of our humanity and reducing it to mere biology.

CONCLUSION

Having established these principles, *Familiaris Consortio* then applies them to marriage in order to reveal its metaphysical structure. Marriage becomes “a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ” (FC 13). Again, to attempt to understand human nature within a purely biological framework without reference to its

transcendent dimension is to distort the human reality. In conclusion, *Familiaris Consortio* leads us to see that the essence of human gendered relationality is constituted by self-gift, the totality of the giving of one's person, the vocation of *communio*, and the openness to life. These are not arbitrarily determined characteristics. They are grounded in the divine reality and are the created expressions of it.

Herein lies the grave danger of redefining the nature of sexuality, marriage, human relationality and its purposes—whether it's the rejection of the procreative dimension, the attempts at the artificial construction of life, or the denial of sexual differentiation within the marital union. Whether wittingly or not, all of these are attempts to alter the fundamental symbolic structure of the person. But man is not merely biological and hence these attacks on the biology of man become attacks on his metaphysical (and divine) ground and thus are a fundamental rejection of God. Surely this rejection of the symbolic dimension to thought and of the human person is one of the root causes of the present culture of death. As Alan Jones wrote, “Symbols bind up reality for us. When the symbols die, we die too.”^{xxviii} To reject this ontological dimension of the human person is ultimately to reject life as a created gift and inevitably ushers in the culture of death in its various forms.

NOTES

i. Hereafter, FC. The edition used is St. Paul Books & Media, Boston: 1999.

ii. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Knopf, 1994), pp. 227-28.

iii. “Individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to ‘establish the truth’ of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else ‘wants’ or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to ‘give’ to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a ‘sincere gift.’ Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish.” (*Letter to*

Families #14)

iv. *Letter to Families #14*. This concept of “realizing oneself” through one’s specifically chosen actions is further developed in *Veritatis Splendor* (hereafter, VS): “Human acts are moral acts because they express and determine the goodness or evil of the individual who performs them. They do not produce a change merely in the state of affairs outside of man but, to the extent that they are deliberate choices, they give moral definition to the very person who performs them, determining his *profound spiritual traits*. This was perceptively noted by Saint Gregory of Nyssa: ‘[H]uman life is always subject to change; it needs to be born ever anew.... But here birth does not come about by a foreign intervention, as is the case with bodily beings...; it is the result of a free choice. Thus *we are* in a certain way our own parents, creating ourselves as we will, by our decisions.’” (VS 71)

v. “[F]reedom negates and destroys itself, and becomes a factor leading to the destruction of others, when it no longer recognizes and respects *its essential link with the truth*. When freedom...shuts out even the most obvious evidence of an objective and universal truth, which is the foundation of personal and social life, then the person ends up by no longer taking as the sole and indisputable point of reference for his own choices the truth about good and evil, but only his subjective and changeable opinion or, indeed, his selfish interest and whim.” (EV 19)

vi. As John Paul II notes ironically, “[p]recisely in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right to life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death.” (EV 18)

vii. EV 19. “Such a culture of death, taken as a whole, betrays a completely individualistic concept of freedom, which ends up by becoming the freedom of ‘the strong’ against the weak who have no choice but to submit.” (EV 19)

viii. “In the context of a culture which seriously distorts or entirely misinterprets the true meaning of human sexuality, because it separates it from its essential reference to the person, the Church more urgently feels how irreplaceable is her mission of presenting sexuality as a value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God.” (FC 32)

ix. To understand the depth of John Paul II's thought, one has to refer to his earlier Wednesday catechesis and see his presentation in *Familiaris Consortio* as a distillation of his previous teaching. See *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1981). The Holy Father gave these talks from September 1979 through April 2, 1980, concluding with "Marriage in the Integral Vision of Man."

x. *Familiaris Consortio* applies this in particular to respecting a woman's cycles. Only in this way is sexuality "never 'used' as an 'object.'" Artificial contraception breaks "the personal unity of soul and body" (FC 32). See below at n18.

xi. See EV 4: "At the same time a new cultural climate is developing and taking hold, which gives crimes against life a *new and—if possible—even more sinister character*, giving rise to further grave concern: broad sectors of public opinion justify certain crimes against life in the name of the rights of individual freedom, and on this basis they claim not only exemption from punishment but even authorization by the State."

xii. As an example of this, *Familiaris Consortio* speaks of the requirement of fidelity in marriage. Rather than being restrictive, to live in faithfulness to God's plan is freeing. "A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom." (FC 11)

xiii. In *Evangelium Vitae* John Paul II links this self-understanding of gift to the act of contemplation: "For this to happen, we need first of all to *foster*, in ourselves and in others, a *contemplative outlook*. Such an outlook arises from faith in the God of life, who has created every individual as a 'wonder' (cf. Ps 139:14). It is the outlook of those who see life in its deeper meaning, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty and its invitation to freedom and responsibility. It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person his living image (cf. Gen 1:27; Ps 8:5)." (EV 83)

xiv. See Angelo Scola, "The Formation of Priests" in *Communio* 24 (Spring 1997) 65: "We can characterize the relationship between male and female as a relationship at once of identity and of difference.... The question of the

difference between them is more complex...is not reducible to a mere problem of rules, but has to be understood ontologically.”

xv. Eric Mascall, “Some Basic Considerations” in *Man, Woman, and Priesthood*, ed. Peter Moore (London: SPCK, 1978), pp. 20-21.

xvi. See J. Atkinson, “Paternity in Crisis: Biblical and Philosophical Roots of Fatherhood,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 9/1 (Winter/Spring 2002), p. 6: “Revelation stands as a sign of contradiction to modernism’s theoretical constructs. It is precisely the differentiation of our human nature, and indeed of all creation, that is, to the glory of God and which can act as an antidote for our dying civilization. However, the tendency towards homogeneity and androgyny is well entrenched in the modern mindset. To effectively counter these destructive tendencies, Christians need to make a profound recovery of the theology of creation and to show how man is truly fulfilled (and indeed reflects the glory of God) when he respects his own God-informed nature.”

xvii. The critical text for this insight is Gen. 2, in which God created the body of man from the earth (*adamah*) and breathes into this form His own breath. The being that results is said to be a living being (*nephesh hayyah*). Here, man is shown to be irreducibly constituted by both his body and his spirit.

xviii. *Familiaris Consortio* carries out an extensive analysis of the contradictory language of contraception: “To accept the cycle and to enter into dialogue means to recognize both the spiritual and corporal character of conjugal communion, and to live personal love with its requirement of fidelity.... In this way sexuality is respected and promoted in its truly and fully human dimension, and is never ‘used’ as an ‘object’ that, by breaking the personal unity of soul and body, strikes at God’s creation itself at the level of the deepest interaction of nature and person.” (FC 32)

xix. The text of Genesis is of critical importance here. The surrounding mythological cults understood man to have been created to do servile work to free the gods from drudgery. As well, there was no security within the pagan worldview. Man’s relationship to the divine was essentially magical as he sought to manipulate both the gods and the fates but never knowing what would happen. The Hebraic revelation broke this asunder from its very first word (*bereshith*). Only God creates (*barah*) and this same God informs all of creation with His Word and thus informs all of reality with His purpose. In addition, the creature which is man is unique and beloved. Only he carries the image of the

divine Creator. (See Atkinson, "The Theological Meaning of the Family in the Old Testament," S.T.L. Thesis, 1997). Most profoundly, man is now seen to exist within a covenantal relationship to God. For the first time, the relationship to the divine is predicated on security and trust and not on fear.

xx. In *Letter to Families* he analyzes this problem in terms of the true (personalistic) and false (individualistic) concepts of freedom. "[W]e also *come upon the antithesis between individualism and personalism*. Love, the civilization of love, is bound up with personalism. Why with personalism? And *why does individualism threaten the civilization of love?...* We find a key to answering this in the Council's expression, a 'sincere gift.' Individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to 'establish the truth' of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else 'wants' or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to 'give' to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a 'sincere gift.' Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish." (FC 14)

xxi. FC 32. See EV 32 : "Consequently, *sexuality* too is depersonalized and exploited: from being the sign, place and language of love, that is, of the gift of self and acceptance of another, in all the other's richness as a person, it increasingly becomes the occasion and instrument for self-assertion and the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts."

xxii. See Atkinson, *Mystery of Water, Mystery of Holiness* (John Paul II Institute S.T.D. Dissertation, 1999) Section One: Symbolic Reality pp. 21-93.

xxiii. Henri de Lubac, *Sources of Revelation*, trans. L. O'Neill (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 69.

xxiv. S. K. Langer in *Philosophy in a New Key*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980) writes: "But now, an epistemological insight has uncovered a more potent, albeit more difficult, factor in scientific procedure—the use of symbols" (p. 26). See Karl Rahner's "The Theology of the Symbol" in *Theological Investigations*, trans. K. Smyth, vol. 4 (New York: Seabury Press, 1974) for the theological grounding of symbol. See also Atkinson, *Mystery of Water*, pp. 41-54 for a preliminary treatment of the subject.

xxv. John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman* (Boston: St. Paul's Books & Media, 1981) p. 160 n1.

xxvi. At a later point in the document, John Paul II shows that one cannot alter this meaning nor can it be re-described to suit our own subjective desires. He makes this point in his analysis of trial marriages “which many people today would like to justify by attributing a certain value to them. But human reason leads one to see that they are unacceptable, by showing the unconvincing nature of carrying out an ‘experiment’ with human beings, whose dignity demands that they should be always and solely the term of a self-giving love without limitations of time or of any other circumstance. The Church, for her part, cannot admit such a kind of union.... For, in the first place, the gift of the body in the sexual relationship is a *real symbol* of the giving of the whole person.” (FC 80)

xxvii. See Claude Chavasse’s *The Bride of Christ* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940). The divine reality is the prime analogate from which the human realities derive.

xxviii. Alan Jones, “The Drama of the Spiritual Journey: An Exploration of Dante’s Comedy” (Atlanta: Catacomb Cassettes of the Episcopal-Radio-TV Foundation, 1980), cited in Leanne Payne, *The Healing Presence* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1989), p. 119.