



Women, Sex, and the Church

A CASE FOR CATHOLIC TEACHING

EDITED BY ERIKA BACHIOCHI

*Women, Sex, and the Church:
A Case for Catholic Teaching*
A Study Guide

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Study Guide for *Women, Sex, and the Church*

Thank you for your interest in *Women, Sex & the Church: A Case for Catholic Teaching*.

My initial vision for the book was that it be read and studied by both academic and non-academic audiences, inspiring ordinary Catholics as well as students of Catholic ethics and feminist ethics in their search for deeper understanding of Church teaching on these controversial matters. To serve as an effective textbook for classroom, parish, and home-based study, I knew that the book would have to be easily accessible yet jam-packed with cutting-edge data and the best of pro-woman arguments. I am confident that the book's contributors met and surpassed my greatest expectations.

Just months after the book was released, we discovered that study groups of all ages had emerged to read and discuss the book's contents; university and seminary professors had already begun to assign the book in their syllabi; and the central five chapters of the book were being translated for distribution in the Philippines. We can only hope that satisfied readers, classroom teachers, and study group members will continue to spread news of the book so that it might serve as a means and a method for Catholics and non-Catholics alike to think through some of the Church's most difficult teachings.

We have drawn up these questions as an aid to such study, in the hope that guided discussion of these difficult topics will assist in reflection and insight. The study guide is organized by chapters, and each chapter (save the Introduction) is divided into three sections:

- questions for understanding the text (with references to book page numbers)
- questions for further reflection and discussion
- resources for further study (e.g., books, articles, movies)

Though the book's contributors have purposefully not relied on theological argument for our defense of these teachings, we hope that in thinking through these questions, you will approach each chapter with a prayerful disposition, confident that the God of lights will guide your study onward.

— Erika Bachiochi, editor

February 1, 2011

Introduction

For reflection & discussion:

1. What has been your experience of the sexual teachings of the Church? Have you attempted to live them or ever witnessed them lived? Do you or others close to you regard any of them as disfavorable to women or hostile to sex?
2. What is your experience of how non-Catholics (and Catholics) view these teachings? Have they been a subject of ridicule in conversations, news stories, even within the pews?
3. Have you assumed the Church would change one or more of these teachings to catch up with “the times”? Which ones and why?
4. Which teachings do you personally find most challenging to live, and why? What do you find gives you strength?
5. Have you read any theological or otherwise scholarly feminist criticism of these teachings? How did it strike you?
6. Explain the distinction between doctrine and explanations of such doctrine found on page 6. Is this a compelling distinction?
7. Have you had occasion to read the papal writings, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (1988) and the *Letter to Women* (1995)? Have you read some or all of the *Theology of the Body* or had any other experience with that material? What were your reactions to such writings and experiences?

Chapter 1: On Equality and Freedom

On Equality:

1. Discuss the Church’s understanding of “human nature” or “human dignity” as foundational for the equality between men and women. (17, 20–21)
What are the alternative explanations for equal rights between men and women? (20)
2. How does a view of equality based upon achievement or attributes, rather than the moral principle of a shared human nature, undermine feminist arguments? (18, 20)
Does the achievement and attribute-based view of equality end up denigrating relational values more often associated with women? (18–19, 21)
3. Should the struggle for women’s rights be considered in the same category as the struggle for racial and religious minorities or people with disabilities? Why or why not? (20)

4. Try to define the differences between men and women. Do all women share certain attributes? All men? Is there a way to make intelligent distinctions without alienating those of either sex who do not share such attributes? (22–25)
5. Does “difference” necessitate “inequality”? Discuss both historical and current views. (19, 21)
6. What is meant by the “complementarity of the sexes”? (16–17, 24)
7. How could society better recognize “equality in difference”?

On Freedom:

1. Define the view of freedom as *autonomy*. Discuss the prevalence of this view in different areas of life (law, relationships, etc.). (27)
What is the understanding of happiness that underlies this view? (28)
Does this view correspond with what you believe to be an authentic path to happiness? Discuss.
2. Explain how freedom as autonomy becomes freedom for tyranny. (27–28)
3. Define the view of freedom as *the power to choose the good*. (29)
What is the understanding of happiness that underlies this view? Why has this view fallen into disrepute? Does this view correspond with what you believe to be an authentic path to happiness?
4. Define and discuss essentialism. (29)
5. How does parenting shed light on the differences between the two views of freedom? (29–30)
6. Why is freedom as *the power to love* an even better explanation for the Catholic view of freedom? (30)
7. Discuss the idea of a “vocation” for women. (30–32)
Is this a helpful or harmful concept?
8. What would you say are the attributes of a “new feminism”? Is this something the world needs today? Why or why not?

For further reflection & discussion:

1. Have you, or has someone you know, had experiences in the Church with clergy or others that made you doubt the Church’s fundamental belief in the equality of men and women?

2. What are your fears about stating differences between men and women? What's at stake for those who reject the idea that there are real differences between the sexes?
3. Discuss some practical consequences of the differences between the sexes. How can you use the knowledge of sexual difference to improve your relationships with those of the opposite sex?
4. In your own life, how have you experienced the relationship between giving and receiving? Would you say that the one who gives, benefits as much as the one who receives? How are the benefits different for each?

For further study:

Pope John Paul II. *Letter to Women*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995.

———. *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988.

Chapter 2: On Abortion

1. Is abortion a religious issue? Why or why not? (38)
2. Define with some specificity the difference between the nature of a human embryo and the nature of human skin cells. (38)
3. Are there differences between a human being and a human person? What do some philosophers claim such differences to be? Are these claims compelling? (38–39) What is the significance of this question? (39–40)
4. Describe the feminist arguments *for* abortion and contrast them with the feminist arguments *against* abortion. (37, 41–45)
Which do you find more compelling? Why does the author argue that in seeking abortion rights, second-wave feminists have wanted women to imitate men? (42)
5. Why do women have abortions? Discuss societal changes that might help women bring their children to term and thus decrease the abortion rate. (42–45)
6. What harmful effects are associated with induced abortion? (45–48)
Are women (and men) aware of such effects?
7. How do men benefit from abortion? How can men help to reduce the number of abortions? Should the father of the child have any say over a woman's decision to abort? Should men have any say in the abortion debate at all? (48–49)

8. Is there ever a problem for which abortion is the solution? Discuss the tough cases on pages 50–51.
9. Why would parents have duties to their born children but not their unborn children? Why the distinction? Defend the pro-life perspective using the words “duty” and “responsibility” rather than “rights.” (52–53)
Which is a more compelling argument, from rights or from duties?
10. Define human solidarity. How does failure to perform a duty to God or to others hurt our bonds with the human community? (53)

For further reflection & discussion:

1. A recent report revealed that approximately 40% of pregnancies in New York City end in abortion. Why do you think abortion is so prevalent in our society?
2. If you know anyone who has had an abortion, is it an issue of regret, relief, or both? Why did they have the abortion? Did anyone pressure them or was it a decision they made fully on their own? What might have helped them not to have to turn to abortion?
3. Domestic adoption has declined because of the unavailability of babies to adopt. Yet many families, unable to have children of their own, long to adopt. Why do you think women don’t offer their babies for adoption? How might adoption become more commonplace?
4. Has legal abortion coarsened our view of human life in general? Why or why not?
5. What effect would it have on the culture if women stopped seeking abortions? If society was committed to a culture of life, what effect would that have on women who might otherwise seek abortion?
6. How does acting for the sake of another, especially when it is difficult, transform us as persons? Discuss personal experiences with such transformation.

For further study:

Bachiochi, Erika, ed. *The Cost of Choice: Women Evaluate the Impact of Abortion*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004.

Bachiochi, Erika. “Embodied Equality: Debunking Equal Protection Arguments for Abortion Rights.” *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 34, no. 2 (forthcoming).

Feminists for Life. <http://www.feministsforlife.org/>.

Chapter 3: On Pre-Marital Sex

1. In the Church's view, what meaning and purpose does sex have? (58–59)
Discuss the differences between the Church's view and that of secular feminism. (58–63)
Why does secular feminism ignore the biological fact that sex sometimes produces babies (despite attempts to prevent such an eventuality)?
2. What is society's attitude toward casual sex? Is it possible for sexual partners to remain emotionally detached from one another? Are women more emotionally affected by sex than men are? Why might this be? (67–68)
3. List and discuss the documented negative effects of casual sex. (63–68)
What are the documented negative effects of abstinence/chastity?
4. How and why is casual sex more harmful to women than to men? Do you think young women are aware of these consequences? (63–68)
How might they become more aware?
5. How does the collegiate culture of casual sex stand up against the feminist goal of academic and intellectual success? Is there a tension? (70)
6. Discuss the prevalence of cohabitation in Western society. Is this a positive or negative development? Does cohabitation strengthen or weaken future marriage? How? Why should we care? (70–72)
7. How do men and women sometimes exploit each other?
8. Contrast secular feminist views of feminine vulnerability with the author's view. (68–69, 73–74)
Which is more appealing? Which is more true to your experience?
9. How is the virtue of fortitude or courage helpful in living chastity? What role does self-control have? How does training for sports parallel the attaining of self-mastery that chastity requires? (74)
10. Define *eros* and discuss its corruption, according to Pope Benedict. (76)
How does sexual license lead to emotional slavery and a lack of freedom? How does authentic freedom relate to sex?

For further reflection & discussion:

1. Have you ever felt that you were being treated like an object, not a person? What experience triggered that feeling?
2. Have you ever felt you were an emotional slave to another person? What caused this feeling?

3. Courage is the capacity to endure hardship for what you love. Does this describe your sense of courage? What do you love? What are you saying yes to when you practice chastity?
4. How do young people deal with pressures (internal and external) to have sex? What other ways could they deal with such pressures?
5. Discuss the “power” women have over men with regard to sex. How could young women raise the sexual standards, especially on college campuses and among young adults?
6. How does chastity before marriage serve as a means of witnessing my potential spouse’s strengths and weaknesses? How might these strengths and weaknesses reveal aptitude for marriage and parenting?

For further study:

Eden, Dawn. *The Thrill of the Chaste*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007.

Grossman, Miriam, M.D. *Unprotected*. New York: Sentinel Trade, 2006.

The Love & Fidelity Network. <http://loveandfidelity.org/>. A Web site for college students.

Meeker, Meg. *Epidemic: How Teen Sex is Killing Our Kids*. Washington, DC: LifeLine Press, 2002.

Sessions Stepp, Laura. *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2007.

Shalit, Wendy. *Girls Gone Mild*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Chapter 4: On Marriage

1. What is marriage? What is unique about *Catholic* marriage? (80)
2. Is it possible to redefine marriage according to changing cultural standards? Why or why not? (80)
3. What philosophical or ideological presuppositions underlie the ideas of those opposed to the Catholic view of marriage? (81–82)
4. What do studies say about the impact on children of non-marital child-rearing and parental separation? Is there a debate among social scientists in this regard? How does this impact on children affect society at large? (83–84)

5. What is the Church's teaching on divorce? On remarriage? How does recent sociological data corroborate these teachings? (84–86)
6. What are the particular disadvantages the poor experience in a culture that increasingly devalues marriage? How are marriage and poverty related? Discuss Lucy's story. (86–90)
7. Attempt to list all the negative effects on women, men, children, and society of non-marital child-rearing and divorce. What impact does marriage have on the rest of society? Discuss ways that political, civic, and educational leaders might revive the culture of marriage. (83–90)
8. What benefits does marriage have for married people and for children? (91–92)
9. How is our being both “gendered” and social human beings critical to the Catholic view of marriage? (93–95)
10. Why marry in the Church? (95)

For further discussion & reflection:

1. How do you feel about the fact that your parents are (or were) married or divorced? How has their marriage or divorce affected you?
2. Do you think life-long love is possible? Do you know married couples whose marriage you would like to emulate?
3. What are your fears about marriage?
4. How does the possibility of divorce in the minds of the spouses change a marriage? What are the practical consequences?
5. Do you know someone who is living with unwanted separation due to spousal abandonment? How can you support that person?
6. Though same-sex marriage is not explicitly discussed in this chapter, how do the evidence and arguments presented here cut against current arguments in favor of same-sex marriage?

For further study:

Family Scholars. <http://familyscholars.org/>.

Institute for Marriage and Public Policy. <http://www.marriedebate.com/>.

Gilder, George. *Men and Marriage*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1986.

Girgis, Sherif, Robert George, and Ryan T. Anderson. “What is Marriage?” *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 34, no. 1 (2010).

Roback Morse, Jennifer. *Smart Sex: Finding Life-long Love in a Hook-up World*.
Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2005.

The Ruth Institute. <http://www.ruthinstitute.org/>.

Chapter 5: On Contraception

1. List the many arguments, both scholarly and colloquial, against Catholic teaching on contraception. Explain in some detail the charges of sexism and “physicalism.” (98–99)
Much of the chapter defends against the former charge. How does Dr. Franks defend against the latter? (116–117)
2. Discuss the genesis of the modern-day movement for contraception. Who is Margaret Sanger? What is her connection with eugenics? (100)
Describe her “ideology of control.” (100–101)
How did the early American feminists’ views of women differ from Sanger’s? (102)
3. What rights do governments violate when they try to force contraception on women? Why is it a violation if, as is claimed, contraception is good for women? (101, 103)
What’s wrong with enforced sterilization? (103–4)
4. Discuss the charge of overpopulation and Dr. Franks’ response. (104–105)
5. What are the health risks of contraception? (106–107)
6. Since women have had access to contraception, do you think they have become more or less at home in their bodies? Do you see a connection between contraception and women’s body image issues, e.g., eating disorders? (105–106)
7. How would you define “reproductive health”? Since the purpose of the reproductive system is to have children, does it make sense to define its health in terms of contraception (or abortion), which thwarts that purpose? (103)
8. What social problems did the promoters of contraception expect to solve? What was the actual result? (108–110)
9. What is the Church’s actual teaching on contraception? (110)
How does the media incorrectly portray the teaching?
10. Explain in some detail how NFP differs from contraception. (110–115)
11. How do children improve and strengthen a marriage? (111–112)

12. How does NFP promote virtue and communication between spouses? (115–116)
How does contraception tend to foster self-centeredness? How is self-centeredness inversely related to happiness? (116)
13. Why should men learn to measure their sexual desires by those of their wives?
What is marital spirituality based on Pope John Paul II's teaching? (118)

Further discussion & reflection:

1. What would your life be like if contraception did not exist?
2. What is the relationship between NFP and “going green”?
3. Who makes money from contraception? (Think not only of those selling contraceptives, but also those who deal with their effects.) How does that compare with who profits from NFP? Why isn't there a male chemical contraception industry?
4. What's the nature of a child—what are they for? Why have children? What are your fears about having children?
5. What are the merits of a large family? What benefits do children from large families receive?
6. How might unnecessarily delaying childbearing affect marital relations?

For further study:

Eberstadt, Mary. “The Vindication of Humanae Vitae,” *First Things* (Aug/Sept, 2008).

Franks, Angela. *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005.

Smith, Janet. “Contraception: Why Not?”
<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/sexuality/se0002.html>

Chapter 6: On Infertility Treatment

1. What is the definition of infertility? List some of the known causes of infertility. How prevalent is infertility in women of childbearing age today? (122–125) Are young women aware that certain lifestyle choices put them at greater risk for future infertility?
2. What is ART? Describe how IVF works. What happens to embryos that are created but not implanted? How is this morally problematic?(126–127)

3. How much does IVF cost? How is IVF regulated? What kind of testing did IVF undergo before its use on humans? (126–127)
4. What are the health risks to women and to the children conceived through IVF? (127–130)
5. What is selective reduction? (129)
6. What are some reasons secular feminists have been critical of IVF? How does IVF objectify women? (130, 132)
7. How are children treated as commodities by ART? (131)
8. What is the Church's official critique of ART? (131)
What are other theological or philosophical critiques from a Catholic perspective? (132–133)
9. How is NaProTECHNOLOGY different from ART? (134–136)
Why would the Church affirm use of NaProTECHNOLOGY?
10. How successful is NPT? How do babies conceived naturally with the assistance of NPT fare when compared to their IVF conceived counterparts? (139)

For further reflection & discussion:

1. How would you feel if you found out that you were conceived by an anonymous sperm donor?
2. Is it wrong to deprive a child of a father?
3. How would you feel if you discovered that one or more of your siblings were eliminated before birth, and that you were born?
4. If a person desires a child, does that mean the person has a right to a child?
5. There are people who postpone childbearing into their late 30s because they believe that ART is always an option if they have difficulty conceiving. Do you think they would make this same decision if they knew that ART has only a small chance of successfully bringing forth a child?
6. What would you say to a happily married friend who wants to pursue IVF?
7. What would you say to a healthy young woman who wants to sell her eggs?

For further study:

Anonymous Us. <http://www.anonymousus.org/>. A website dedicated to collecting stories of persons affected by reproductive technologies.

Eggsplotation, written and directed by Jennifer Lahl (2010; The Center for Bioethics and Culture). See <http://www.eggsplotation.com/> for upcoming showings.

Gattaca, directed by Andrew Niccol (1997; Columbia Pictures). Watch the movie and discuss (rated PG–13).

Hilgers, Thomas W., M.D. *The NaproTechnology Revolution: Unleashing the Power in a Woman's Cycle*. New York: Beaufort Books, 2010.

The Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction
<http://www.popepaulvi.com/>.

Spar, Debra L. *Baby Business: How Money, Science, and Politics Drive the Politics of Conception*. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2006.

Weschler, Toni. *Taking Charge of Your Fertility*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002.

Chapter 7: On the Priesthood

1. How does the issue of the all-male priesthood differ from other issues discussed in this book? (143)
Which other Catholic doctrines are inextricably linked to and relied upon to understand the doctrine of Holy Orders? (144)
Explore why all of these other doctrines serve as prerequisites for understanding the all-male priesthood. Does this make the issue of the Catholic priesthood difficult for non-Catholics to understand? For non-theologians?
2. Why does the Church teach that the priesthood be reserved to men alone? (144)
What is the distinction Sr. Butler makes between “fundamental reasons” and “theological arguments” in this regard? Name the Church’s “fundamental reasons” for the teaching. (148)
3. *Historically*, what types of “theological arguments” were made *to support and elucidate* the Church’s teaching of an all-male priesthood? (147)
What types of arguments have theologians (and non-theologians) used to claim *more recently* that the teaching *ought to be changed*? (145–147)
4. *Does* official Church teaching rely on antiquated views of women? What evidence is there that Jesus was not constrained by cultural conditions to choose men rather than women as his apostles? How is it relevant that Jesus both claimed to be, and is understood by the Church to be, the Son of God? (148–149)
Does this teaching on the priesthood relegate women to second class citizens in the Church? Why or why not?
5. How does the Church view the “radical equality” of men and women? To what does such equality pertain in both the social order and the Church? How does the

- Church then distinguish between lay persons and priests if not by their sex? Do men have a right to be priests? (150–151)
6. How does Sr. Butler define “full participation” in the Church? Do you agree? Reflect on the statement, “The ultimate goal of the Christian life is to be a saint, not a priest.” (152)
Are there mediating roles for women in the church? How do women live out the royal priesthood (as priest, prophet, and king)? What are ways women can have influence in the Church? (152–153)
Cite some historical examples and discuss. What were their methods and their effects?
 7. What is the vocation of the laity? (153–154)
How is holiness achieved as a lay person? Why is this role just as critical as that of the priest? Describe a saintly priest; describe a saintly lay person.
 8. What is the difference between a classical Protestant view of the minister and the Catholic view of the priesthood? How does this difference in understanding influence the decision regarding the ordination of women? (154–155)
 9. What are some of the “theological arguments” used by theologians *to support* the Church’s teaching that Christ chose only men to be priests? (156–159)
 10. What is the significance of the fact that the priest is called to represent Christ *in his relationship to the Church*? How might maleness matter? Discuss the sacramental signs used in Baptism and compare them to the priesthood. (156–157)
 11. Discuss the “nuptial analogy” (i.e., of Christ as bridegroom of the Church). What do you think of this “theological argument”? What are its strengths? Its weaknesses? (157–158)

For further reflection & discussion:

1. Before reading this chapter, why did you think the Catholic Church reserved the priesthood to men?
2. How does viewing the priesthood as a position of power instead of service distort the discussion concerning women and the priesthood?
3. Why did God create man and woman? Did God create them differently? Why? Do men and women love in different ways?
4. Why do you think God chose only men to be priests?
5. The question of allowing married men to be ordained priests is also widely discussed among Catholics and the media. This question concerns Church discipline, not doctrine, so it could be changed. (Celibacy is a spiritual discipline

in the Latin Church, not in the Eastern Catholic Churches. See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1579-80). What are the arguments for and against allowing married men to be ordained priests?

For further study:

Butler, Sara, MSBT, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women*. Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2007.

Chapter 8: On Work & Family

1. How does this chapter differ from the rest of the chapters in the book?
2. Compare Linda Hirshman's view of work and family with that of the Catholic Church. (161–164)
How do they differ, and where does Professor Schiltz see an important area of agreement?
3. Define vocation. Describe Schiltz's understanding of private and public vocation. (164–165)
How does this view differ from the traditional Catholic understanding of vocation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Professor Schiltz's understanding? How does this distinction apply in your own life?
4. What is the "feminine genius," as defined by Pope John Paul II? How does this "genius of women" intersect with the social doctrine of the Church? (166–168)
5. Is it important in our culture for women in the workplace to be mothers as well? Do you think it makes any difference that many of the world's female leaders have no children? (For example, the last three women nominated to the Supreme Court—Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor, and Harriet Miers—were all single and childless.) (168–171)
6. Discuss how the workplace might be reformed to be more hospitable to mothers and family life in general. (168–169)
7. Describe the distinctive contributions of "care feminists." How do their views differ from Hirshman's? In what ways are they similar to the Catholic view? In what ways do they differ? (169)
8. How do Catholic views of family, work, and human flourishing, assist mothers (and fathers) in navigating the tensions between work and family? (172–178)
9. How does Hirshman's conception of human flourishing differ from the Catholic conception? (175–178)

What anthropology (i.e., view of the human person) underlies each conception?
(177)

For further reflection & discussion:

1. Are there people in your life who model an admirable integration of work and family life? What are the ingredients of their success?
2. Discuss the recent movement of many young, educated women “opting-out” of paid work entirely to care for their family at home. Discuss the potential benefits to children, spousal relationships, and society. Discuss the potential costs and/or risks. How might the law better protect women who decide to stay home? How has the increase in the percentage of women working outside the home affected the economic realities of single-income families?
3. Should husbands take extra responsibility for their children to free their wives for work outside the home? How would children benefit from having fathers who spend more time at home? How might it cost them?
4. Is flexibility a good thing for women in planning a career and life choices? How does virtue play a part in considering these choices?
5. In thinking about one’s career, how will focusing on vocation and service to others make a difference? Does God care about what you do for a job, and how you do it?
6. Might there be occupations in which it is inadvisable to marry (and have children)?
7. If you have children, do you have a healthy approach to your children, or an unhealthy attachment? Are you over-involved? If you do not have children, what are the models of family life and parenting you have witnessed in your life to which you hope to aspire?

For further study:

Schiltz, Elizabeth. “Should Bearing the Child Mean Bearing All the Cost? A Catholic Perspective on the Sacrifice of Motherhood and the Common Good,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 15 (2007).

Conclusion: On Sexual & Social Teaching

1. What distinctions does the author draw between “liberal” and “conservative” Catholics? Is she correct to conclude that political labels are ultimately unhelpful in discussions of Church teaching, or are these labels apt? (179–180)

2. Describe how George Akerlof's theory explains the rise in single motherhood. Is it compelling? What are some alternative theories? (181–182)
3. In the author's view, how was the feminist movement of the 1970s a movement by and for the privileged that resulted in harm to the underprivileged? List and discuss the resultant harms. (182–183)
4. Discuss this statement: "Thus, it appears that while the well-to-do can absorb some of the repercussions of the libertine lifestyle, the poor do not have the resources to do the same." Do you think the author is correct about this? Why or why not? (182)
5. According to ethnographers Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, why do the poor tend to have babies out of wedlock? Why do the more privileged marry in greater numbers than the poor? (183–184)
6. How does marriage affect male behavior? Is there anything women can do to reverse the current trend away from marriage? (184)
7. What are some ways policy-makers and citizens at large might help reconnect sexuality to marriage, family, and children? How would this be advantageous? (185)
8. Describe the author's distinction between absolute and contingent judgments in Catholic teaching. Is she correct to conclude there are areas of each in both the social and sexual teachings of the Church? (186)
9. Define prudence. What is the role of prudence in the social teachings of the Church? Why is prudence given more attention in these teachings than in the sexual teachings? (186–187)
10. What is the common thread that runs between the sexual and social teachings of the Church? Discuss the author's examples. (187–188)
How do both sets of teachings require the development of virtue?
11. How might the American form of government and the American economic system threaten their own existence? In both the American Founders' view and the Catholic view, which values and attributes serve as the necessary antidote? (188–190)
12. How does Pope John Paul II view women as the central force in the transformation of culture? (190–192)

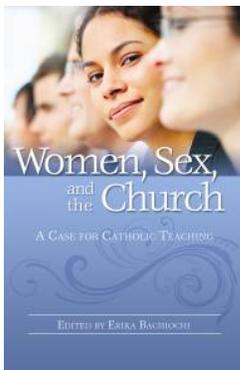
For further reflection & discussion:

1. How have you personally experienced the "schism" between "liberal" and "conservative" Catholics? Assuming a desire to live an authentic Catholic life, how does one stay above the fray? Can you classify any saints as "liberal" or

- “conservative”? How about Jesus? Discuss the life and teachings of Pope John Paul II and Blessed Mother Theresa. How did they live this tension to an admirable degree?
2. How should theology/religion and politics intersect? How do they in today’s political climate?
 3. Serving the poor is a central component of being Catholic. How do you try to do so? Does your view of “social justice” include a desire to bring about stronger marriage and family life? Having read this chapter, does it make sense to work toward a “social justice” that is devoid of concern about sexual ethics?
 4. Discuss how you experienced growth in virtue in living out a particular social or sexual teaching. Do you think the Church (and society at large) focuses enough on the development of virtue (as opposed to political change)? If not, how might political, civic, educational, and familial leaders reorient societal focus?
 5. Do you think the realm of politics, economics, or culture holds the most influence over the world? Which realm should? Do women or men hold the most influence in this area?
 6. Discuss the feminist movement of the 1970s. How was it beneficial to women—and society? How was it harmful? Discuss the contours of a “new feminism.” What might it look like?

For further study:

Benestad, J. Brian. *Church, State & Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011.



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