

Why I Am Catholic

Respect for women

The Church's growing commitment to the protection of and respect for women and its defense of and promotion of motherhood. "No job, no plans, no possessions, no idea of "freedom" can take the place of love. So anything that destroys God's gift of motherhood destroys His most precious gift to women—the ability to love as a woman," stated Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta.

Yet we live in a time when the gift of motherhood—especially in marriage—is under attack. A growing number of young women have no intention of having children. Others want motherhood on their terms, not according to God's plan. And they don't know what His plan is.

Women are being viewed and treated as sex objects and sadly many young women are promoting themselves in this way. Currently one in five females ages 15-25 are involved in the sex industry (pornography, prostitution, dance clubs, escort services, etc.). Most young women dress provocatively and fail to understand the value of modesty. Or personal responsibility.

Young women want men to respect them but far too often dress in ways that will bring unwanted and excess attention. When guys have no interest in their mind, their feelings, or their faith, and look at them only with lust, they want to blame others. Guys are responsible for their actions, their eyes, and their words, but women gain respect when they show respect for themselves.

Some young women seek love in relationships before they love themselves. They relate out of low self-esteem, poor body image, and a lack of self-knowledge. They wear certain clothes based on the advice of others—fashion magazines, movies, friends, "the popular girls," etc. Clothes are a form of advertising—they say something about us—and sometimes we are not aware of the message we are sending or the impact.

Eight years ago I was at a high school football game. One female student walked by wearing a white t-shirt with the following words written on: "You know you want it."

We need to respect our bodies. Our bodies are given to us by God. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." (I Cor 6:19-20)

St. Paul reminds husbands, "So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body." (Eph 5:28-30) The Catechism states: "The unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our Lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection." (1645)

Sadly domestic violence, rape, and other mistreatment of women continue. Especially in relationships focused on the physical.

"Living together outside marriage increases the risk of domestic violence for women and the risk of physical and sexual abuse for children. One study found that the risk of domestic violence for women in cohabiting relationships was double that in married relationships; the risk is even greater for child abuse." (*USA Today*) Both increased dramatically in 1973 after abortion was legalized.

This past week we celebrated again Mary's Assumption into Heaven—her yes to God's plan for her to be the Mother of the Savior of the World. In the history of the Catholic Church, the saint who receives the highest honor and respect is not a priest or a nun, not a person who did something extraordinary by human standards, but a mother. Mother Mary, pray for us.

Footnote

Last Sunday, John Witte Jr., director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University, wrote an opinion piece in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* entitled "Sex may be free, but children come with a cost we must accept."

Witte notes, "Compared with children born and raised within marital households, non-marital children on average impose substantially higher costs on society for anti-poverty, criminal justice and education programs and in lost tax revenues. According to the Institute for American Values, those costs exceeded \$1 trillion this past decade." Or \$112 billion per year.

Illegitimacy has more than doubled since 1975.

One thing Witte fails to point out is the cost of human suffering—how much children suffer when adults are irresponsible. He does state boldly: "a single impulsive act of conceiving a child should trigger a lifetime of responsibilities to care for that child."