

**The Seven Revolutions: The Revolution of the Family**

***The Family in the Roman Empire***

Where human dignity is not found, the family is weakened or destroyed. In the ancient world, the family as we know it largely did not exist. This is not to say that husbands and wives and their children did not exist. They did. But the understanding of the function and inner workings of the family were radically different. In the last Pastor's Pen, I wrote how the paterfamilias (the father of the family) had absolute control over his household. The family was understood as being the possessions of the paterfamilias. This was a reflection of pagan theology.

The gods, in paganism, were often very human in their actions. In the Greco-Roman religions, the gods were related. There was great animosity between the gods. They were constantly at war. Parent gods would try to kill their children. Children gods would try to kill their parents. The king and queen of the gods hated each other and were serial cheaters. Sibling gods fought. This was the role model of family that the ancients had.

In Roman society, the paterfamilias owned his family. He was not encouraged nor expected to be monogamous. His wife, unless she was wealthy, was expected to be monogamous only because she was owned by her husband. Prostitution was rampant. Pederasty was as rampant. Because daughters were often killed at birth, an imbalance in gender led to more problems. Human sexuality was seen as mere entertainment. We know from the ruins of Pompeii that pornography was commonplace and often used in the common decoration of homes. Where there is no human dignity, human depravity will exist. The Roman family, seen as a political entity, was seen as needed for the Empire, but all laws to encourage it were largely ignored. As is cited in the book, Romans would do their level best to avoid having children while having lavish funerals for their pets. Love between family members was not seen or understood to be a reality, let alone a necessary reality.

***What Christianity brought to family life***

Because of Christianity's Jewish roots, the sanctity of the family was paramount. In Eden, man and woman were created as complementary for each other and children, even daughters, were seen as a good. Even though Judaism was patriarchal, fidelity was a two way proposition. Adultery was banned. The killing of one's children was banned. The sacrificing of one's children was forbidden.

By the time Christianity came along, monogamy was the norm. Although marriage could be dissolved by divorce in Judaism, Christianity forbade it as was taught by Jesus Himself. Jesus presented Himself as in union with the Father; a stark contrast from the Roman view of the gods where fathers and sons hated and often tried to destroy each other. Oftentimes, Christians would rescue infants who were thrown out as unwanted. For Christianity, the family was a union of love that mirrored the union and love of the Trinity. Family life was seen as sacred and its rights inviolable.

Within the construct of the family, everything was to be motivated by self-giving love. The paterfamilias was to love his wife as he loved himself. This was madness in the Roman world. The

paterfamilias was to love his children. This was also considered madness. Children were called to love and obey their mothers and fathers. As adults, they were to take care of their elderly parents. They were expected to take care of their widowed mothers. At no time was a family member to be seen as a burden or as disposable. In redefining the basic building block of the society from a political entity (one where power was exercised) to a religious entity (one where mutual self-giving love was exercised), Christianity presented itself as protector of the human dignity of the family. In its early teaching against divorce, infidelity, pederasty, exposure of unwanted children, treating wives and children as possessions, pornography, homosexuality, abortion, and such, the early Church did so to protect the sanctity of life within the family; to see all human life as a good.

For Christianity, the family became the first school of the faith. Parents were to model fidelity, love, and respect. Fathers were to model for their children what it meant to be a true man and to love one's wife. Wives were to model Christian femininity and show true love for one's husband. The household was to be a place where Christian virtue reigned. Children, both boys and girls, were to be accepted as gifts from God. The practice of human sexuality was to be ordered to unity and procreation. Human dignity demanded as much.

### ***What Christianity can bring again to family life***

In the last 100 years, we have seen multiple attacks on the family. Totalitarian political philosophies such as communism, National Socialism, and other forms of dictatorships have tried hard to break down the family so as to commandeer for themselves the authority of the parents and the ability to be the first teachers of children. The scourge of eugenics has wreaked havoc on the family in its message that being a mother is beneath the dignity of women, that children be viewed as a commodity, that not all should have children because they are burden to society, that the proliferation of artificial birth control, abortion, and the abuse of human sexuality in every conceivable form should become the new norm. In our day and age we have seen the acceptance of every sort of deviancy, now with pederasty making an unwelcome return. We see the dissolution of the family through divorce and the redefinition of marriage until it is essentially meaningless. We see practice of faith dwindling within even most 'religious' households and the passing of education to entities other than the family.

Essentially we bring to the table in our society what we did 2,000 years ago. We bring an outcry to uphold human dignity within marriage. We uphold that the family is the most basic building block and our institutions should protect it. We maintain marital fidelity in the face of the proliferation of porn and other dangers to marriage. We teach our youth to respect their bodies. We protect the unborn and the dignity of women. We uphold marriage and family life as the reflection of the life of the Divine Trinity and the union of Christ and His Church that marriage is meant to be. This can be done without persecuting those who challenge these notions. We know this because we were able to first promote these things while we were being persecuted and not returning the violence with more violence.