

Towards a Conjugal Spirituality: Karol Wojtyła's Vision of Marriage Before, During, and After Vatican II

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THE TRAJECTORY AND DEVELOPMENT of Pope John Paul II's (Karol Wojtyła's) thought on marriage and the family, though a fairly obscure topic for American moral theologians, serves as an important hermeneutic key to understanding his subsequent papal corpus. With an eye toward clarifying that obscurity, this article recovers and explores some underappreciated (and untranslated) resources from his early years as a pastor in Kraków, his interventions at the Second Vatican Council, and his subsequent implementation of the Council in his diocese to bring to light key aspects of his early thought regarding marriage and the family. In part one of this article, I re-trace the development of *Gaudium et Spes* with a specific focus on Wojtyła's role in shaping the central concerns during the drafting of this crucial document. Indeed, Wojtyła played a larger role than is typically thought, and he established himself as an authoritative voice in the Council's direction during the last two sessions. Focus then shifts to his written intervention *in sessio* about marriage, which demonstrates some of his most important pastoral concerns regarding marriage as a specific vocation. Part two turns to several untranslated essays by Wojtyła to show his insistence on the importance of developing an authentic "conjugal spirituality" as one of the most important tasks in the Church today. In light of his work at the Council, Wojtyła returned to Kraków with a clear vision of continuity with the work he had begun and developed new diocesan initiatives to implement the Council, especially helping married couples understand their call to holiness according to their specific state in life. I conclude by gesturing toward important further research that needs to be done, both in order to appreciate, and effectively appropriate, the thought of a figure as influential as John Paul II, and in order to reflect with greater depth on the specifically unique character of the married vocation as a path to holiness in the Church.

WOJTYŁA AND *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

The following presents several translations of Bishop Karol Wojtyła's interventions during the Second Vatican Council with regard to marriage, which show that his impact upon the conciliar teachings was the fruit of his own pastoral experience and which emphasize that his conciliar contributions constitute an indispensable prism through which to view his papal corpus.¹ However, it is first necessary to point to several difficulties when engaging in a discussion of thought in this area.

Critiques and Omissions

Pope Saint John Paul II's theology of marriage and the family and his vision of sexual ethics have received critiques from many sectors.² In addition to criticism of papal teachings, many accounts of the Second Vatican Council overlook Bishop Wojtyła's role in debates concerning the sacramentality of marriage, conjugal life, and its

¹ During the first two periods of the Council (fall of 1962 and 1963), Bishop Karol Wojtyła was "vicar capitular" of the Archdiocese of Kraków and was elevated to Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków in December of 1963, thus attending the last two conciliar periods as an archbishop (the youngest from Poland).

² While it lies beyond the scope of this article to summarize such critiques, the journalist Robert Blair Kaiser offers an account that summarizes many common criticisms. See Robert Blair Kaiser, *The Politics of Sex and Religion* (Missouri: Leaven Press, 1985). In a discussion of John Paul II's positions on gender roles, contraception, and the teaching authority of the Church, Kaiser argues that the pope's views exhibit the "limitations of his own culture and his own nation" (10), characterized by a citation of "cultural norms, especially old rules on sexual behavior, as if they were direct revelations of God" (227). His teachings are indicative of an "absolutist" (231) vision of the papacy that does not heed the experience of faithful Catholics but seeks rather to impose norms "written...by a tiny group of celibate clerics who were more eager to preserve what they perceived as traditional doctrine than inclined to plumb the depths of God's intentions for humankind" (239). Rather than listening to the sense of the faithful of the universal church, the pope has a slant of "a cleric, a celibate and a Pole with old world (if not pre-Christian) ideas about the 'roles' of husbands and wives" (242). While perhaps not all critics of John Paul II would hold his nationality against him, many critics of John Paul II have suggested that his theology of marriage misses the mark, since it does not comport with daily experiences of married Catholic lay people. Kaiser identifies John Paul II as being historically insensitive, personally authoritarian, and out of tune with the "signs of the times" in relation to the contemporary Church, as a result of his formation in an antiquated and simplistically pious cultural tradition. Most recently, strong critiques emerged during a closed-door meeting of fifty theologians and bishops in the time leading up to the 2015 Synod of Bishops, in which some theologians and bishops suggested rejecting John Paul II's idea of a "theology of the body" in favor of a "theology of love." As will be seen, to oppose these two ideas is to radically misunderstand John Paul II's vision of Christian marriage. See Chris Deardurff, "The Secret Meeting," *Inside the Vatican*, June 1, 2015, www.insidethevatican.com/news/the-secret-meeting. For a recent criticism of John Paul's position on sex differences, see Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Differences in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2015).

related moral norms. Theodore Mackin, S.J., offers an insightful account of the revision of Catholic marriage law in the light of the Second Vatican Council's debate concerning the section on marriage in *Gaudium et Spes*.³ Although he notices the rising influence of personalist language in this discussion in the final draft, Mackin omits a discussion of Wojtyła's role in that language. Likewise, Michael Walsh presents an intellectual biography of Wojtyła's thought, rightly acknowledging the dynamic role of theologians such as Yves Congar, O.P., and Henri de Lubac, S.J., at the Council, but he overlooks any discussion of Wojtyła's role at the Council, which these theologians themselves greatly praised.⁴ George Huntston Williams does provide a discussion of Wojtyła's role at the Council, especially in the drafting of *Gaudium et Spes* but omits from his account Wojtyła's crucial intervention *in sessio* about marriage and chastity (which I analyze in what follows).⁵

Given these omissions, one might conclude that the conciliar discussions were foreign to Wojtyła, given the lack of analysis of his role in the drafting of this constitution, and common critiques of his conjugal ethics. On the contrary, through his role in drafting *Gaudium et Spes*, and his intervention *in sessio* on the Council floor, Wojtyła re-oriented the debates of the Council itself, and his subsequent papal magisterium must be seen in light of his pre-conciliar ministry and his conciliar work.

Bishop Wojtyła and the Ante-preparatory Commission

While the origins of *Gaudium et Spes* attract ample treatment in historical scholarship, it was by the end of the deliberations that Wojtyła emerged as a respected leader among the worldwide

³ See Theodore Mackin, S.J., *Divorce and Remarriage* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 453-504.

⁴ Michael Walsh, "From Karol Wojtyła to John Paul II," in *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence*, ed. Gerard Mannion (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2008), 10-28. See also Paul McPartlan, "John Paul II and Vatican II," in *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence*, ed. Gerard Mannion (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2008), 45. De Lubac's comments can be found in Henri de Lubac, SJ, *At the Service of the Church* (California: Ignatius Press, 1993), 171. For Congar's comments, see *History of Vatican II*. Vol. 4, ed. Joseph Komonchak (New York: Orbis, 2003), 537.

⁵ George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 164-185. In an *entire chapter* devoted to Wojtyła's conciliar work, Williams omits one of the most important interventions which Bishop Wojtyła made. This can either be due to a selective choice of texts for reasons of pragmatic organization of his chapter, or due to a judgment of the relative unimportance of Wojtyła's intervention in this area, or a simple oversight. In what follows below, I hope to show how this short intervention actually encapsulates Wojtyła's vision of marriage and the Church's pastoral care for couples, and must not be ignored.

episcopate. According to León-Josef Cardinal Suenens, whose relationship and friendship with Wojtyła was strengthened during the work of the Council, Wojtyła's theological contributions were driven by his pastoral sense and universal vision of the Church, and its needs in the modern world. "He thinks right in the way that those in authority must; he feels with all humanity, because you can only bring God to that humanity if you feel with it from the inside."⁶ His "feeling with" humanity was based on his strong Christocentric personalism, the conviction that only Christ fully reveals the human person to himself and that only in the light of Christ does the fullness of the human vocation become clear.⁷ He believed in the "priority of Christ for the Christian, the priority of the true Christian values, of allowing Christ to be in you, with all the human consequences, and with all the spiritual consequences."⁸

Suenens argued that a robust Christocentric personalism is the key to John Paul II's theological vision, a claim that would later become evident in John Paul II's first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*. A central consequence of this personalistic vision, which respects each person as a locus of the encounter with Christ, is not an authoritarian and doctrinaire imposition of teachings upon the faithful but an insistence on the value of the experience of each person, created in the image and likeness of God, redeemed by Christ, and joined within the Church to all the baptized, who possess, in communion and complementarity, many diverse vocations and their charisms.⁹ Wojtyła presented this theological vision consistently at the Council, and it gained force from his personality, as he was recognized as a man of "deep spirituality, prayer, and contemplation," and whose abilities as an intellectual, professor, and scholar were matched by his experience as a shepherd and a teacher.¹⁰

⁶ Leon-Josef Cardinal Suenens, "The Pope and the Person," in *The Pastoral Vision of John Paul II*, ed. Joan Bland, SND de N (Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 3-21.

⁷ As *Gaudium et Spes* would express it in its final draft; see *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

⁸ Suenens, "The Pope and the Person," 10.

⁹ See Suenens, "The Pope and the Person," 10-15.

¹⁰ See Bishop Alfred Abramowicz, "Who is Karol Wojtyła," in *The Pastoral Vision of John Paul II*, ed. Joan Bland, SND de N (Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 21-31. Abramowicz concludes that while Wojtyła was certainly a man of extraordinary abilities and talent, he was also the product of his Catholic culture, which was marked by sincere intellectualism, dialogue with the modern world, and possessed a highly educated intellectual class which constantly sought to engage with the world, in an effort to most persuasively articulate the position of the Church vis-à-vis the problems and dilemmas of modernity. It was not therefore an "unenlightened" or pietistic Church, and anyone who thinks this "is ignorant of Catholicism in Poland. Fervent and devout the people are, but the greatest moral and social problems in Catholic Poland are and have been for the past twenty-five years" issues of poverty, deprivation of human rights, injustices, oppressions, poor housing, and secular pressure on family life.

The central importance of Wojtyła's personalist thought and the insistence on drawing from personal experiences to articulate the Church's doctrine emerged as early as 1959. In his response to Domenico Cardinal Tardini, who had asked for suggestions from the world's bishops about the council's deliberative scope, Wojtyła broke from the usual method of providing a short list of doctrinal or legal questions that ought to be discussed. In contrast to even his fellow Polish bishops, Wojtyła submitted a lengthy philosophical discussion (which has not been translated into English) of nine points, all focusing on practical themes articulated in light of the human person's calling to participate intimately in the heart of the Trinitarian God, who is the answer to the human person's deepest yearnings.¹¹ The beginning of his submission is particularly important, providing the "anthropological framework" for the remainder, including the section on married persons.

The question of Christian personalism seems necessary and appropriate in order to sketch out doctrine. Human personhood, after all, is expressed in a particular way in the relation of the human person to a personal God—this is the very pinnacle of all religion, especially a religion based on supernatural Revelation. Participation in the Divine nature and the inner life of the Trinity by grace, thanks to which we can expect perfect union in the beatific vision—all of these things can only be found among persons.

Christian personalism therefore establishes the foundation of all the ethical doctrine that the Church always teaches, basing itself on the Gospel. The human person as a subject [*suppositum*] acting freely and relying upon his conscience in his acts, in a sense, "closes" morality. Indeed, in the acts of the person one needs to pay attention to the relation between the acting person and other things and persons. This is why Catholic moral doctrine indicates certain rules regarding the use of things, without abusing them, as well as rules pertaining to the

¹¹ See, for example, the submission of Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, dated September 15th, 1959, in which the primate of Poland divides his response into sections devoted to questions regarding religious life, juridical and penal acts, liturgical matters, and social questions. See *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vatican II: Series I (Antepraeparatoria), Volumen I: Consilia et vota Episcoporum ac Praelatorum—Pars II: Europa*. (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1975), 673-686. Hereafter *AS*. Wojtyła's submission can be found on 741-748. The nine points he proposes relate to 1) The fundamental re-articulation of doctrine in a personalist manner; 2) The relation between the Church and those referred to as "schismatics or heretics"; 3) The supernatural calling of the laity; 4) The discipline and formation of clergy; 5) Clerical celibacy; 6) The renewal of formation in seminaries; 7) Renewed emphasis on the evangelical counsels for both clergy and laity; 8) Greater lay participation in the liturgy; 9) A reform of canon law, especially with regard to marriage.

love of persons. The commandment to love assumes, and yet also supersedes, all that mutual and social justice requires.

Having considered all these things, the difference between Christian personalism and all other kinds of personalism becomes clear, as any other kind can carry with it traces of individualism, or even an economic materialism. The fact that the problem of the human person and his “situation” in the world is intensively studied in today’s world is an important fact. This study leads some to an excess of “humanistic faith”; others, perhaps more often, are led to despair in human existence. For this reason, not only the faithful, but even the unbelieving await the future words of the Council in this regard.¹²

In this submission, provided three years before the beginning of the Council (the same year Wojtyła published *Love and Responsibility*), at least three central themes emerge.¹³ First, he desires to re-articulate the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine in light of the human person’s call to participate in the life of the Trinitarian God, who is the ultimate end of human life and in whom is found beatitude.¹⁴ Secondly, such a discussion necessitates a treatment of the moral life: in what kind of actions ought the human person to engage, in order to reach his final goal of partaking in the intimacy of the communion of persons of the Trinity? What is the relationship between inner-worldly action and the final goal of beatitude? Wojtyła argues that moral theology should avoid a legalistic mindset focusing on obligations of justice, the effects of sin, and the accrual of merit but rather ought to place emphasis on the actions of the person as expressions of a freely acting subject who,

¹² See *AS*, 741-742. These submissions have yet to be translated into English. Unless otherwise noted, any citations of the *Acta Synodalia* are my translation.

¹³ *Love and Responsibility*, published by Bishop Wojtyła in 1959, is a philosophical and personalist analysis of the human person and the phenomenon of human love and also includes a treatment of sexual ethics. The reflections in the book were the fruit of Wojtyła’s ministry among young people, particularly married couples, and Wojtyła himself notes that conversations with married persons about their experiences were a large influence for the argument in the book (as I will demonstrate in part two). Of particular note was his close friend and interlocutor the Servant of God Jerzy Ciesielski, an engineer with whom Wojtyła spent many hours conversing about married life and conversations with whom “formed one of the sources of inspiration” for *Love and Responsibility*. See Karol Wojtyła, “Słowo o Jerzym Ciesielskim,” in *Aby Chrystus sie Nami Posługiwał*, ed. Józefa Hennenlowa (Kraków, Poland: Znak, 2009), 111. The English critical edition of *Love and Responsibility* is Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Massachusetts: Pauline Books and Media, 2013).

¹⁴ It is possible to see here, therefore, the influence of Wojtyła’s early acquaintance with and influence by the mystical tradition, especially through the work of St. John of Cross (the subject of his first dissertation), and the lay mystic Servant of God Jan Tyranowski. For a discussion of this period of Wojtyła’s life and thought, see Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 77-81, 93-103. Also see George Weigel, *Witness to Hope* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 58-62, 82-87.

through his moral actions, becomes more capable of responding to the call to participate in divine life. Wojtyła seeks to rehabilitate charity as the central virtue in the Christian life, which, as the form of the virtues, provides the only and adequate response toward others, who exist as persons to be loved, and not objects to be used.¹⁵ Finally, such a “personalism” must be thoroughly Christian, and not Kantian, and guard against any kind of “personalism” that seeks to place emphasis on the centrality of the person apart from the truth about his good, a term that often appears throughout Wojtyła’s writings.¹⁶ Thus, any forms of “personalism” denying transcendence, or exalting the individual over-against relationships to others, are false forms of humanism that cannot lead to integral human fulfillment. Only in light of the ultimate calling to divine communion can one develop a proper personalism.¹⁷

Wojtyła therefore proposes that the Council ought to discuss the human person and her vocation in light of the mystical calling to love, the only adequate anthropology by which to safeguard against using others in interpersonal relationships and against social injustice.¹⁸ Furthermore, he emphasizes that the Council make this calling clear to the laity in particular.

The laity, who do not appear many times in the *Code of Canon Law*, appear to be presently occupying an ever greater role in the activity of Christ’s Church. The vernacular refers to the activity of these laity as “*mouvement de laïcat*.” Perhaps it would be fitting to doctrinally delineate the proper character and the supernatural foundation of their activity. Then the vocation of the laity in the Church (or: diverse

¹⁵ Again evident here is the argument from Wojtyła’s earlier work, *Love and Responsibility*, in which he argues for this “personalistic norm,” see Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (California: Ignatius Press, 1993), 41.

¹⁶ See Adrian Reimers, *The Truth about the Good: Moral Norms in the Thought of John Paul II* (Florida: Sapientia Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Wojtyła had already made this argument earlier in his habilitation thesis, in which he argued that the personalism of Max Scheler, while an important and even necessary component of ethics, cannot ultimately ground Christian ethics, since it is devoid of reference to metaphysics and the truth about the good for the human person.

¹⁸ By “mystical” I do not mean “otherworldly,” but rather I use the term as it has been understood by the mystical tradition out of which Wojtyła works, in which the mystic is the one who, already here on earth, experiences the fruits of the union with God which will come to full fruition in the beatific vision. Wojtyła here follows his first dissertation advisor, the famed Thomist Fr. Reginald Garrigou LaGrange, OP, who had taken this position contrary to other theologians of the so-called Roman School of the early twentieth century, who argued that the unitive way was reserved for only a few people who were endowed with special graces. Wojtyła and Garrigou-LaGrange argue that the unitive way is available to all human persons who respond to and cooperate with the grace of God, which moves them to increasing friendship with God.

vocations) would be more evident...The edification of the Body of Christ without the mutual labor of the laity with the clergy cannot be brought into being.¹⁹

Even prior to the Council, therefore, Wojtyła insisted that the universal Church take into account the experience of lay persons. For their part, the laity, who often organized through movements such as Catholic Action, could serve as a hermeneutic by which to articulate doctrine. At the same time, pastors should clearly articulate doctrine to help the laity more effectively guide their apostolate in the world.²⁰ It was with these pastoral and theological commitments that Wojtyła arrived in Rome to participate in the general sessions of the Second Vatican Council, as one of only twenty-five Polish bishops (out of a total of sixty) who were given passports by the Polish communist government to attend.²¹

Drafting Gaudium et Spes

By his own account, Wojtyła did not participate vocally in many of the early sessions of the council: “*The Council was a unique occasion for listening to others, but also for creative thinking.* Naturally, the older and more expert bishops contributed the most to the development of the Council’s thought. At first, since I was young, I learned more than I contributed. Gradually, however, I came to participate in a more mature and creative manner.”²² By the time of the third session (fall of 1964), Wojtyła had been elevated to Archbishop of Kraków and soon emerged as a regular contributor to the conciliar deliberations on the floor of St. Peter’s Basilica. It was during this period that he began to emerge as a crucial figure in the drafting of what came to be known as *Gaudium et Spes*, and established close relationships with Gabriel Cardinal Garrone, Henri de Lubac, S.J., Yves Congar, O.P., and Fr. Joseph Ratzinger. During this period, Wojtyła increasingly articulated the need for a personalist vision for the documents of the Council, and especially for *Gaudium et Spes*, a task that de Lubac encouraged, “Yes, yes, yes, that’s the way forward.”²³

Wojtyła came to be recognized as an authority and central influence upon this document as a result of both his work on the drafting committee and of his spoken interventions. In particular, he

¹⁹ Again, the translation is mine. See *AS*, I, *Antepreparatoria*, 743-744.

²⁰ In 1947, a young Fr. Karol Wojtyła traveled to France, where he became familiar with Catholic Action and the worker-priest movement.

²¹ See Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 125.

²² John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, trans. Jenny McPhee and Martha McPhee (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 158.

²³ See John Paul II, *Rise, Let us Be on Our Way*, trans. Walter Ziemba (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 165.

played a central role during the discussion of the document by the general sessions in October and November of 1964, during the “intersession” in the spring of 1965, and again during the fourth general period in November of 1965. The document had originally been proposed as “Schema XVII” by Leo Cardinal Suenens, and was entrusted to a “Mixed Commission” of members from the Doctrinal Commission and the Commission for the Lay Apostolate in the spring of 1963, with Msgr. Pietro Pavan as the secretary.²⁴ This Roman commission produced a largely “sociological” text, with which the Council’s Central Commission was dissatisfied, especially after the publication of Pope John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*. The drafting and revision of the text was then entrusted to Cardinal Suenens, who appointed Msgr. Gerard Philips to oversee the drafting of a new document, which was completed in October of 1963. This so-called “Malines Schema” exhibited a more “theological approach” but was criticized for its lack of a social analysis.

The imbalanced sociological and theological perspectives of the first Rome draft and the “Malines schema” led to the appointment of Fr. Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R., by the general subcommission entrusted with this document under the direction of Bishop Emilio Guano, whose task would be to combine the insights of the previous two documents. However, the draft produced by this subcommission resulted in a completely new document which treated the Church as a “servant of humanity,” from which followed four chapters: the anthropological foundations; the relationship between the Church’s mission and the world; the active involvement of Christians in the world; and specific problems and urgent tasks. This schema was presented to and edited by the general subcommission, which met in Zürich in February of 1964, and which consisted of seventeen members, including two lay persons. This draft elicited much criticism from several members of the subcommission who belonged to the Holy Office, including a direct attack on Häring’s discussion of marriage, but was eventually approved and sent to the Central Commission.

Having gone through many drafts and revisions in committee, “Schema XVII” was now renamed “Schema XIII” by the Central Commission, and was distributed to bishops around the world in July

²⁴ For a history of the drafting of *Gaudium et Spes*, I am drawing from the following sources: Joseph Komonchak and Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 3 (New York: Orbis, 2000), 402-419; Joseph Komonchak and Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 5 (New York: Orbis, 2006), 520-537; Jan Grootaers, *Actes et Acteurs à Vatican II* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 105-132; Bernard Häring, “La mia partecipazione al concilio Vaticano II,” *Cristianismo nella storia* 15, no. 1 (1994): 161-181.

of 1964. During the summer, Bishop Guano suggested forming two subcommissions, one theological and one which would focus on “the signs of the times,” to revise and edit the document in light of the questions that bishops would raise in the upcoming third period of the Council. Among those invited to the second subcommission was Archbishop Wojtyła. While the subcommissions had been drafting documents in Rome, Malines, and Zürich, Wojtyła had been working with the Polish bishops on an alternative draft of “Schema XVII,” which was to have a significant effect on the final result of deliberations.

In June of 1964, Archbishop Wojtyła of Kraków and Archbishop Kominek of Wrocław, in the name of the Polish bishops, composed two alternative schemata on the relationship between the Church and the modern world, and sent them to Cardinal Suenens, informing him of their intention to provide these, not as replacements, but as suggested improvements on certain elements of the schema being discussed.²⁵ Drawing largely from Paul VI’s new encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* and from *Pacem in Terris*, one schema argued that the “Presence of the Church depends not only on the will of God but also the will of human beings who freely manifest their agreement with the divine will.”²⁶ This schema, composed in Kraków under Wojtyła’s leadership, was sent to Fr. Häring during the summer of 1964. Wojtyła presented the same schema to the general session of the Council on October 21, 1964.²⁷ According to his notes from the subcommission’s meeting, Häring deemed this schema inadequate and in need of re-articulation, especially when it argued, “The People of God draws its strength from the institutional Church.”²⁸ Häring noted that Wojtyła’s role in the “collaboration on the final schema was as a whole constructive, never aggressive and rude. A large number of his suggestions were heeded.”²⁹

Nevertheless, Häring remained generally unsympathetic to Wojtyła’s suggestions for the officially-drafted text, but the majority of the subcommission’s members were impressed and recognized the need to establish a new editorial committee. Häring was revoked as editor-in-chief in November of 1964, and Congar noted that this decision had long been deliberated, as Häring had been too inflexible

²⁵ See Grootaers, *Actes et Acteurs à Vatican II*, 110-111.

²⁶ See Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 3, 414. Evident in this statement is a striking similarity to the argument made by Wojtyła in his submission of 1959, in which he also emphasizes the relationship between freedom and the truth about the person and his end, and a non-competitive account of divine and human agency.

²⁷ See Joseph Komonchak and Giuseppe Alberigo, ed., *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 4 (New York: Orbis, 2004), 521.

²⁸ See Häring, “La mia partecipazione al concilio Vaticano II,” 179.

²⁹ Häring, “La mia partecipazione al concilio Vaticano II,” 179.

in defending his own views and insufficiently open to compromises.³⁰ At the same time, a new theological subcommission was established, to which Wojtyła was appointed, and a new editorial committee chaired by Bishop Pierre Haubtmann was chosen. Haubtmann asked all of those involved in the work of the “Schema XIII” subcommission to send him notes and revisions, which he would compile into a re-drafted version of the document, to be discussed in Ariccia, a suburb of Rome, in the spring of 1965.

Wojtyła arrived at the Ariccia meeting with a “second Polish schema,” drafted in light of the previous criticisms on January 29th, 1965, which he presented to more than one hundred members of the various subcommittees of the subcommission. He was critical of the official draft for being “too optimistic” and insufficiently taking into account the concrete and attractive, but ultimately false answers, offered by communist and capitalist societies as a response to the modern person’s questions. Among other presentations, he collaborated with Fr. Jean Daniélou, S.J., in presenting a discussion of Christian anthropology and the Church’s service to the vocation of each human person. It was necessary to answer the questions of the modern world with a specifically Christian humanism and in light of the vocation of the human person to participate in the intimate life of God.³¹

Häring was generally impressed by Wojtyła’s participation and noted that Wojtyła spoke on ecclesiology, atheism, humanism, and on marriage and chastity. He noted, however, a few elements that he disliked about Wojtyła’s draft, including a discussion of:

periodic continence connected with the ethical dignity of the person. He [Wojtyła] did not want a discourse on the dignity of the person in itself, but on the dignity founded on virtue. He spoke on how the order of nature can be understood by both believers and unbelievers, and that it was necessary to guard energetically against concupiscence and “carnal love.”³²

Häring’s critiques notwithstanding, the Dominican Master General, Aniceto Fernandez Alonso, O.P., affirmed that Wojtyła’s draft and his critiques were much better than any previous drafts of Schema XIII,

³⁰ See Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 4, 520.

³¹ Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, vol. 4, 284. Bishop Gerard Philips, the secretary of the meeting, notes that the origin of the officially-approved “Chapter Four” of the final version of *Gaudium et Spes* emerged from this meeting under the authorship of Yves Congar, O.P., and K. Wojtyła. See Grootaers, *Actes et Acteurs à Vatican II*, 119.

³² See Häring, “La mia partecipazione al concilio Vaticano II,” 180.

and “most fathers welcomed it as a ‘basis for discussion.’”³³ They remained divided, however, since it was not prepared “officially” under the specific order of the Mixed Commission. Nevertheless, they decided to correct Haubtmann’s official version in light of Wojtyła’s schema and his criticisms.³⁴

According to the accounts of these participants in the Ariccia meeting during the third intersession, which would produce the final draft of Schema XIII, it is clear that, by this time, Wojtyła was widely recognized as an authoritative theologian, leader, and bishop who brought his pastoral experience from the Church behind the Iron Curtain to bear on the teachings of the universal Church. Jan Grootaers summarizes that Wojtyła was able to disrupt the general tendency of the Council, which had been to articulate the “order for the day” in primarily “western” terms. His pastoral and theological experience from the “East” gave him authority to pronounce on many questions offered by contemporary philosophy, such as Marxist humanism. His contacts in Poland with a broad range of Catholic intellectuals and adult laity provided insight into the experience of the faithful who daily experienced a violation of the most basic human rights. His feelings of responsibility for an exceptionally difficult pastoral situation and a regime that limited religious freedom and opinion impelled him to articulate a position that could promote human freedom in genuine dialogue. His amicable relations with other bishops, both within the Polish episcopate and internationally, established him as an increasingly significant conciliar father.³⁵ The final intersession provided an opportunity for Wojtyła to “make himself known and appreciated,”³⁶ and even Häring reflected that Wojtyła’s work on *Gaudium et Spes* confirmed for many his ability to lead and that without this commitment to the drafting of this document, “John Paul II would not have been elected.”³⁷ In his journal, Yves Congar, O.P., noted, “Wojtyła made a remarkable impression. His personality dominates. Some kind of animation is present in this person, a magnetic power, prophetic strength, full of peace, and impossible to resist.”³⁸

The Written Intervention on Marriage

While Wojtyła emerged during the Ariccia phase of the drafting of *Gaudium et Spes* as an able leader and recognized pastor, who largely

³³ Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, vol. 4, 525.

³⁴ Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, vol. 4, 525.

³⁵ See Grootaers, *Actes et Acteurs à Vatican II*, 130. We have already mentioned that both de Lubac and Congar recognized the extraordinary weight of his participation in the latter period of the Council, and particularly at the Ariccia meeting.

³⁶ Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, vol. 4, 639.

³⁷ Häring, “La mia partecipazione al concilio Vaticano II,” 181.

³⁸ Yves Congar, O.P., Unpublished *Diary*, as quoted in Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 168.

influenced the final drafting of the document, he also contributed increasingly to the debates *in sessio* [on the floor] before the worldwide episcopate. Wojtyła became widely respected for his oral contributions regarding religious freedom, the problem of atheism, and the role of the laity.³⁹ However, there is no significant treatment to this day (to my knowledge) of Wojtyła's vision of marriage and the family during the Council. Häring noted Wojtyła's treatment of these issues in his discussions of Schema XIII at the Ariccia meeting, and there are suggestions of the argument which Wojtyła would pursue in his written preparatory submission to Cardinal Tardini, in which he emphasized the need for a robust Christian personalism and the important role of the lay vocation. These themes are seen again in an oral intervention about atheism on September 28th, 1965. "All pastoral solicitude presupposes the human person as both a subject and as an object [of pastoral care]. For all pastoral attentiveness, every apostolate, whether priestly or of laymen, proceeds to the end that the human person, out of his own integral calling, might know and, in act, express the truth in every relationship: with himself, with other persons, with the world."⁴⁰ It was within this intellectual trajectory that Wojtyła submitted his fairly critical intervention on marriage during the fourth session:

1. The chapter "On Marriage and the Family" does not appear altogether adequate from a pastoral perspective. None of the difficult questions which married persons ask of us, who are their pastors, appear in it, nor does it attempt to respond to them. *The issue is not the content of doctrine, but the manner of speaking*, which in this matter ought to take on the manner of a dialogue. A dialogue certainly consists in providing answers to questions, not only for the purpose of making clear a norm, or a teaching, but also to present the reason, or argument, on which the norm is based. Thus the manner of speaking here is essential, since questions pertaining to marriage are not only of a moral nature, but also touch upon the human person in his most concrete existence and most personal vocation. It is therefore necessary to *begin a dialogue not with "marriage" in the abstract, but with all those who are married*, whose pastoral care belongs to us; marriages in the Church, and the world, since marriage as a sacrament of the Church presupposes marriage as a sacrament of nature.

2. There are many opinions and suggestions regarding the moral dilemmas of marriage during the time of this Council. In these opinions, there can exist a particular danger, namely, that the solutions

³⁹ See Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 166-169; Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 174-180.

⁴⁰ *AS*, 4:II, 12. The translation is Williams's, as cited in *The Mind of John Paul II*, 178.

to these most personal and natural problems are offered in a rather artificial manner. The question concerns the use of marriage, *where the union of the persons, the husband and wife, is truly achieved in a personal way, when each of them has respect for the order of nature in the other*. For this personal union and respect for the order of nature to be real, true virtue is needed. This virtue is charity, which combines within itself continence and due tenderness. Never can knowledge of the rules of natural fertility or the aspects of sexual life form by themselves a morally perfect exercise of marriage without mutual practice of the virtues. This awareness gives rise to the possibility of the use of marriage in a prudent and conscientious manner, which also most greatly corresponds to the dignity of the human person. It is important to note the voice of reason, of which His Eminence Cardinal Suenens spoke, since knowledge makes virtue easier, on the condition that this knowledge is incorporated into the virtue.

3. We are taking part in this Council as pastors of souls. We ought to speak about marriages both inside and outside of the Church in a pastoral manner and language. As pastors, we are aware of various difficulties, which are characteristic of married life, just as St. Paul was already aware of them (cf. 1 Cor.). We should therefore proclaim the full meaning of married life and its sacred character that results from the grace of the sacrament. We should also proclaim the solidarity which, among the people of God, in the human family, unites us to all who are living in the married state. *The responsibility which falls to them, is a fundamental responsibility* for the life and dignity of the human person, since marriage and the family create the environment/milieu *in which the human person is loved*. It is a school of love and charity. The Council must make clear precisely this love and charity, and not only doctrine. In a spirit of pastoral love let us also clearly name those natural and supernatural virtues, which govern men and women in marriage. We have the responsibility to explain, *in what manner the good use of marriage* corresponds to the good use of intellect, will, and the heart, and in what manner it corresponds to the *good* use of sacramental grace. Increasingly, our brothers and sisters in marriage are confronted with a certain despair as a result of their specific moral questions, the result of which is a weakening of their faith, at least in practice. The effect of the chapter on "Marriage and the Family" should build up faith and hope.⁴¹

Wojtyła thus divides his treatment of marriage, chastity, and the family in this conciliar intervention into three short themes. First, he severely criticizes any approach to marriage which does not take seriously into account the experience(s) of those who live the "most personal vocation" of marriage. It is not enough for the Church in the modern world to simply re-affirm traditional doctrine without showing how the doctrine both corresponds to, and is the fruit of, the

⁴¹ See *AS*, 4:III, 242-243. The translation is mine.

truth about the good of the human person's vocation to love.⁴² A true dialogue cannot take place if the Church either imposes its norms in a rigid manner or the married couple is unwilling to examine the manner in which they might be living according to, or failing to keep, the "rule" of authentic love. In order to fully and adequately understand conjugal love, the Church must be willing to enter into the daily challenges, struggles, and sufferings that married couples can face and must also be aware of the difficulty in living out the vocation to sacramental marriage.

Secondly, Wojtyła recognizes the difficulty entailed in the married vocation and, specifically, in the responsible parenthood to which spouses are called through the natural ordering of their love. True interpersonal love, and its expression through the conjugal act, can only occur when the act corresponds to, and is in keeping with, the order of nature. There can be no true interpersonal union when either of the spouses rejects the totality of the other's gift. This moral norm, however, requires that couples live out responsible parenthood, which might require marital continence. Such continence, however, cannot be seen as simply a burden but, like all virtues, as a habit that requires practice over time and so shapes the character of spousal love. The virtue is not only a part of temperance, however, but must be governed by charity, which properly orders and fosters the tenderness that ought to be a natural part of marital love. The Church ought therefore to develop a way of articulating the traditional doctrine that focuses less on the language of "ends or purposes" but places emphasis on charity and tenderness, without juxtaposing these against the order of nature.⁴³

Finally, this vision, while recognizing the real difficulties entailed within it, can be truly sustained through the grace of the sacrament, which forms married couples into witnesses to the Gospel through their vocation to love. "Marriage and the family therefore constitute for them the proper sphere in which the human person is loved. It is a school of love and charity. It is necessary that such love and charity—not only doctrine—be made clear on the part of the Council." He encourages the pastors of the Church to promote marriage and family life in a manner that does not adopt a "gradualness of the law," but which encourages couples to live according to the virtues of faith,

⁴² In our own day, we see an echo of this idea in Pope Francis's *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 59: "Our teaching on marriage and the family cannot fail to be inspired and transformed by this message of love and tenderness; otherwise, it becomes nothing more than the defense of a dry and lifeless doctrine."

⁴³ Again Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 28: "Against this backdrop of love so central to the Christian experience of marriage and the family, another virtue stands out, one often overlooked in our world of frenetic and superficial relationships. It is tenderness."

hope, and charity, in the desire that the living of the virtues makes obedience to the law less difficult.⁴⁴

Those familiar with *Love and Responsibility* will recognize the striking similarities between Wojtyła's conciliar intervention and the main themes of the book, which he had published five years prior.⁴⁵ Married love is spoken of in terms of charity. Wojtyła argues that only the kind of love that respects the order of nature can also truly respect the dignity of the other person and thus lead to an authentic interpersonal union. "Betrothed love"—the highest form of love in *Love and Responsibility*—requires the practice of virtue, and the integration of the sexual urge into the full meaning of interpersonal love.

The immediate effect of Wojtyła's written intervention upon the final form of the section on marriage in *Gaudium et Spes* remains unclear. However, it is clear that many of the Council fathers were not pleased with the form presented for a vote, which received the most *non placet* votes of any section of *Gaudium et Spes*.⁴⁶ Although the text did receive the necessary votes for approval by the Council on November 16th, 1965, the final text was nevertheless further modified through a direct intervention by Paul VI. Paul included four *modi*, which emphasized more strongly the Church's need to propose chastity as an essential component for growth in married love, certainly a theme that resembles the main trajectories of Wojtyła's written intervention and early thought.⁴⁷ The themes of virtue, marital chastity, and the grace to live out the sacrament, proposed by Wojtyła to the council fathers during the fourth session, would remain central to Wojtyła in his own work as archbishop and emerge in their most developed form during his subsequent pontificate.

DRAWING UPON THE KRAKÓW EXPERIENCES

In contrast to the often haphazard or rash ways in which many of the fruits of the Council were implemented in western Europe, the Council took longer to implement in Poland. Not least among the reasons was the continued repression of the Church under a communist regime, but a further reason was the desire to prudently apply its insights in a deeply traditional Catholic country by carefully studying the texts and understanding their claims. To this end, upon returning to his archdiocese after the conclusion of the Council,

⁴⁴ In *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 206, Pope Francis articulates a similar vision: "The importance of the virtues needs to be included. Among these, chastity proves invaluable for the genuine growth of love between persons."

⁴⁵ See especially Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 73-140, on various kinds of "love" and their relationship to instinct and freedom.

⁴⁶ Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 5, 404.

⁴⁷ For an account of the "last minute" modifications of the text, see Komonchak and Alberigo, *History of Vatican II*, Vol. 5, 408-419.

Wojtyła engaged immediately in a campaign to explore and apply the conciliar teachings in a comprehensive manner and was elected as vice-president of the conference of the Polish episcopate in 1969. As a way of furthering the insights of the Council on the tenth anniversary of its opening, he published *Sources of Renewal (U Podstaw Odnowy)* in 1972 and became one of the only Council fathers to write a systematic work analyzing the main themes of the Council's documents. Wojtyła proposes that his book is a *vademecum* for the study of the texts, in order to form attitudes and more deeply adopt the Council's teachings.⁴⁸ The vision of marriage and the family articulated in the work continues the thoughts he offered to the Council fathers.

While the Council is now a thing of the past, he argues it is "spiritually still in being," and it is his task as a bishop, indebted to the Holy Spirit for the Council's work, to "introduce and initiate into the reality of the Council itself."⁴⁹ Wojtyła provides a rich discussion of *Gaudium et Spes*, which he identifies as teaching "in particular how the redemption of man by Christ brings out the value of the human community in the multiform activities of man in the world."⁵⁰ Marriage and family life must therefore be understood in relation to the redemption of humanity by Christ, and several key themes emerge in Wojtyła's assessment of the conciliar treatment of marriage.

First, marriage and family life is a fundamentally important vocation that must be governed by charity. Wojtyła introduces the importance of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience to answer how charity grows and what specific demands it makes upon married couples. "The evangelical counsels, even more than the commandments, should serve and promote charity. Charity is the essence of holiness in a Christian, and his progress towards sanctity is measured by the increase of his charity."⁵¹ Marriage, governed by charity and strengthened by the evangelical counsels, is an "intimately personal vocation," which "must be realized in communion with other men."⁵² Drawing upon the insights of *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24, he argues that marriage is a real participation in and image of the divine *communio personarum*.⁵³ This is why the Council

⁴⁸ Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, trans. P.S. Falla (California: Harper and Row, 1980), iii-v.

⁴⁹ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 11.

⁵⁰ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 81.

⁵¹ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 194.

⁵² Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 117.

⁵³ See *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24, "Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, 'that all may be one...as we are one' (John 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that

fathers placed a discussion of marriage at the beginning of the chapter on the Christian's responsibility in the modern world. "It is worth re-reading the whole of this Chapter of the pastoral Constitution, which, in light of its introductory note on marriage and the family in the modern world, emphasizes the sanctity of marriage and the family, their place in the divine plan of salvation, and the true meaning of married love in relation to procreation."⁵⁴

Secondly, marriage is not only an earthly image of the divine *communio personarum*, but it is also a means by which the couple "bears witness to Christ" and His love and by which husband and wife are for their family and their children "cooperators of grace and witnesses of faith."⁵⁵ Their union therefore takes on a prophetic character and "proclaims aloud both the present power of the Kingdom of God and the hope of the blessed life."⁵⁶ In addition to witnessing to the love of Christ and teaching the Church and the world this love and its practical effects on society, a couple also builds up the Church and the world by fostering Christian living in their home, which is an "outstanding school for the lay apostolate."⁵⁷ For this reason, the Council itself, Wojtyła notes, draws on the "lively tradition of the primitive Church and on the rich experience of the Church in our own day," in which it is clear that the family constitutes the "first, fundamental community of lay Christians."⁵⁸ Again, we see here Wojtyła's emphasis on the importance of the lay vocation, which he had already expressed in his response sent to the conciliar antepreparatory commission.

Pastoral Experience and the Vision of Marriage

It is often claimed that John Paul II's "contacts with women were limited by the exclusively male context of the Curia and his personal staff."⁵⁹ While this might be true for many priests formed in the 1940's, such an assessment cannot apply to Wojtyła. From an early point in his priestly ministry, he was often surrounded by both female and male university students and young professionals, with whom he developed a special relationship, especially during his assignment as

man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."

⁵⁴ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 117.

⁵⁵ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 212.

⁵⁶ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 248. Wojtyła is quoting *Lumen Gentium*, no. 35.

⁵⁷ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 393. He is again quoting *Lumen Gentium*, no. 35.

⁵⁸ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 392.

⁵⁹ See Susan Rakoczy, I.H.M., "Mixed Messages: John Paul II's Writings on Women," in *The Pastoral Vision of John Paul II*, ed. Joan Bland, SND de N (Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 177.

parochial vicar at St. Florian's Church in Kraków.⁶⁰ An informal group of students began to form around Wojtyła, which eventually took upon itself the name "*Środowisko*," ("milieu" or "environment") and whose members called their chaplain *wujek*, or "uncle," as it was illegal for any priest under the regime to carry out ministries outside of a church.⁶¹ In 1953, the first of many outdoor excursions was organized, accompanied by Wojtyła, who would serve as a chaplain and a spiritual director. These excursions would become a yearly event, in which recreation was combined with a focus on communal prayer and the liturgy. Wojtyła's interactions with this group, composed of engineers, physicists, philosophers, and young adults from diverse fields of study allowed him to gain invaluable insight into the daily lives of lay persons, as well as an opportunity to "test ideas" through retreats. Among themes he articulated was the unity of life in relation to the truth, the universal call to holiness leading to concrete action, the humanity of Christ, and the beauty of human love.⁶²

By his own account, this pastoral experience helped Wojtyła understand and perceive the need to articulate the beauty of human love in God's plan:

It is this vocation to love that naturally allows us to draw close to the young. As a priest I realized this very early. I felt almost an inner call in this direction. It is necessary to prepare young people for marriage, it is necessary to *teach them love*. Love is not something that is learned, and yet there is nothing more important to learn! *As a young priest I learned to love human love*. This has been one of the most fundamental themes of my priesthood...If one loves human love, there naturally arises the need to commit oneself to the service of "fair love," because love is fair, it is beautiful.⁶³

One of the most important lay persons whom Wojtyła met through the excursions of the *Środowisko* was (now Venerable) Jerzy Ciesielski, a young and accomplished engineer from Kraków and outdoor enthusiast who felt a deep call to the vocation of marriage. In addition to being a founding member and organizer of the *Środowisko*, Jerzy also became a model of spirituality for the group. He would make use of these trips to experience moments of solitude and personal prayer, from which he was reinvigorated to meet the demands of the academic, professional life in an urban setting.

⁶⁰ A simple Internet search reveals many photos of Bishop Wojtyła in civilian clothing surrounded by smiling young men and women, often on excursions in the mountains.

⁶¹ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 102-112.

⁶² Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 108.

⁶³ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 158.

In the context of these vigorous outings, Wojtyła and Ciesielski developed a deep friendship, common vocational understanding, and deep appreciation of God's beauty reflected in the natural world. "Everyone recognized, and accepted, the special bond between *Wujek* and Jurek Ciesielski."⁶⁴ They discussed many issues: the call to holiness in response to love; the married vocation; the priesthood; unity of life in the midst of professional and cultural challenges. This bond of friendship carried far beyond the mountains and kayaks and revealed the true complementarity of the vocation to marriage and the priesthood. In 1957, they co-wrote an article for *Homo Dei*, a Polish priests' magazine. Ciesielski wrote of the priest as one who ought to help "modern Catholics" look at their questions from a "different perspective" and to look at "all things in the Spirit of the Gospel."⁶⁵ For his part, Wojtyła recalled, "[The questions of] marriage and the family always occupied him . . . Discussions with Jerzy about this topic were for me a source of inspiration. My study *Love and Responsibility* arose among other things, as a result of these conversations."⁶⁶ On an August 1958 kayaking trip (just a few months prior to the submission of his written response to Cardinal Tardini), Wojtyła brought along a manuscript entitled *Love and Responsibility* and distributed fragments of it to the students to have a discussion about its themes and to solicit feedback.⁶⁷ It is thus safe to say, both from John Paul II's own accounts, and from those of the *Środowisko*, that Wojtyła's conversations with Ciesielski and other young Catholics helped him gain priceless insights into the nature of human love.⁶⁸

Emerging Vision of the Sacramentality and Spirituality of Marriage

In addition to *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyła wrote several short essays on the meaning of marriage and sacramental grace during the period of his ministry to the young lay Catholics. In an essay from Christmas 1957, entitled "Reflections on Matrimony," he distinguishes between two senses of "sacrament."⁶⁹ He argues that

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 103.

⁶⁵ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 104.

⁶⁶ Karol Wojtyła, "A Reflection about Jerzy Ciesielski," in *Aby Chrystus się nami posługiwał*. (Kraków, Poland: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2009), 107-114. The translation does not yet exist in English, and the one here is my own.

⁶⁷ See Jarosław Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 44.

⁶⁸ One might ponder whether Ciesielski and Wojtyła therefore may have had an indirect influence on *Humanae Vitae*, as according to Paul Johnson, Paul VI was reading a copy of the book while overseeing the final draft of the encyclical. See Paul Johnson, *Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Restoration* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1981), 32-33, as cited in Kupczak, *Destined for Liberty*, 44.

⁶⁹ See Karol Wojtyła, "Myśli o Małżeństwie," in *Aby Chrystus się nami posługiwał*, 442. The translation is mine.

marriage is a “sacrament” in a natural sense, as it is “a fertile communion of persons, which gives life, and inasmuch as it is the foundation of the family...is a reality that carries in itself the *sign* of God—Creator and Giver of life.”⁷⁰ Thus, the order of nature is already seen to be a sacramental reality, one in which nature and its ends already constitute a locus of encounter with God as creator. Marriage is of its nature a reflection of God’s mysterious working in creation. Of course, marriage is also a sacrament in the supernatural sense because the natural union between a man and a woman has been elevated by Christ to become the earthly representation of a divine reality. “The energies of...grace are hidden in the nature of the persons who are reciprocally united in matrimony...As regards the life of the couple...they *are near* to God as the loving communion of persons, man and woman, founded on the mystery of the Incarnation—the mystery of grace that penetrates and is poured out on the natural.”⁷¹

Two important themes emerge. First, Wojtyła is clear that natural human married love is already a sign of God in the world, insofar as God is the creator of all life.⁷² Second, conjugal love that is also sacramental (between baptized persons) is a real means of grace for the couple, who form in the sacrament an image of the mystery of the Triune God, in Whom Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwell eternally in a communion of reciprocal self-giving love.⁷³ As Wojtyła strikingly attests, one’s coming to terms with the reality of sacramental marriage is “capable of lifting up and illuminating, but also of upsetting and frightening, especially if it is confronted with the well-known weakness of human beings who become participants in that extraordinary nearness to God.”⁷⁴

Hence, couples are always placed at the center of two discordant forces: the loftiness of the vocation and the weakness due to sin. They are called to transform their weakness and fear into love by love. Both as a result of their natural human love and as a result of their nearness to God by virtue of the sacrament, they are obliged to grow in the covenant of love which they share. They are called to *become who they are* by means of sacramental grace. It is up to the couple to “draw out from the sacramental powers all that they contain and to make

⁷⁰ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Małżeństwie,” 446.

⁷¹ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Małżeństwie,” 447.

⁷² He will argue later as pope, in the “theology of the body,” that marriage in the order of nature is already a “primordial sacrament.” See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, Michael Waldstein, trans. (Massachusetts: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 19:3-4; 28:2.

⁷³ Recall the similarities between this language and that of the preparatory submission, written just two years later.

⁷⁴ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Małżeństwie,” 449.

them enter into their personal life.”⁷⁵ The two persons, bound together by virtue of the matrimonial graces, “are the direct instruments of God’s acting and, in a certain manner, also the conductors of the current of life which is in Him and of which they become participators through the sacrament.”⁷⁶

Wojtyła is therefore clear that marriage is an objective reality that exists by virtue of the freely consented choice made out of “betrothed” love. The wedding day becomes the beginning of an intimate partnership of love and life that is entrusted to them as an ethical obligation. This partnership will face many trials, tribulations, struggles, and challenges, both as a result of human weakness, and external pressures, and Wojtyła makes clear that it is “by no means an exaggerated affirmation” to suggest that the problem of conjugal life necessitates a certain “heroism.”⁷⁷ Arguing in the same manner as he would eight years later in the conciliar debates and the Ariccia meeting, Wojtyła recognizes that the call to heroism in marriage finds its source from the deep reserves of authentic virtue and love, flowing most especially from the suffering of Christ on the cross.

One cannot therefore understand Wojtyła’s notion of conjugal life in marriage without pointing to Christ’s cross. Married people face many daily challenges, some resulting from the culture and some by virtue of conjugal life itself, such as economic pressures, challenges in educating and disciplining children, difficulties living God’s plan in the sphere of sexual intimacy, loss of communication, conflict with extended families, and illness. However, these are the “crosses” that married people encounter and by which they are victorious in becoming more perfectly who they are called to be.⁷⁸

The Christocentric dimension of marriage is not one of simple representation or symbolic witness. Husband and wife are also, by virtue of their baptism and through the sacramental grace of marriage by which they are made “near” to God, called to imitate and participate in the virtues of Christ Himself, to “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).⁷⁹ While God’s plan for marriage may be difficult to accept and realize, the Church understands this but remains faithful to the words of the Lord

⁷⁵ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Małżeństwie,” 449.

⁷⁶ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Małżeństwie,” 449.

⁷⁷ Wojtyła, “Myśli o Małżeństwie,” 453.

⁷⁸ Over twenty years later, John Paul II will argue in *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 13, that spouses’ “belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church. Spouses are therefore the *permanent reminder to the Church* of what happened on the Cross; they are for one another and for the children witnesses to the salvation in which the sacrament makes them *sharers*.”

⁷⁹ For this reason, John Paul II will reflect on the many aspects of Christ’s life in both the *Letter to Families* and *Familiaris Consortio*—the Incarnation, the hidden life in Nazareth, the teaching ministry, and the Paschal Mystery, etc.

in her teachings.⁸⁰ Despite hardships, husband and wife are called witness to the real grace given in the sacramental encounter with Christ, and it is their ethical task to form a “culture of the person” within marriage, in which authentic love is fostered and cultivated and is accomplished by the freely given grace of God.

The “Rule” of Love

The grace of marriage invites a response from the spouses. Both individually and as a couple, they must answer the call to become more perfectly conformed to Christ by means of the married vocation. This call to participate in God’s love, however, places quite a demand on human love weakened by sin. The most authentic human love enjoins a certain responsibility, requiring guidance and maturing. But what kind of “rule” can command love?⁸¹ In his essay, “Love and the Moral Foundations of Marriage,” Bishop Wojtyła meditates on Christ’s injunction, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). He juxtaposes marriage and the so-called “state of perfection” (a traditional term referring to religious or consecrated life), which is marked by vows of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Without rejecting the Church’s traditional teaching on a superiority of the consecrated life, he nevertheless points to various exaggerations of this notion. A religious’s belonging to the “state of perfection” does not imply a moral superiority to a married couple. Similarly, although marriage is not a “state of perfection,” this is no reason to downplay the call to perfection in the conjugal state. “It appears that the teaching on [the universal call to] perfection may have been slightly obscured by the teaching on the *state* of perfection,” Wojtyła argues, “and consequently there was born a certain minimalism, almost programmed, in relation to the life of the married couple.”⁸² He discusses the negative impact of the manual tradition’s

⁸⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 307. “To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being.”

⁸¹ Recall, again, that in his submission to the antepreparatory session, Wojtyła speaks of the relationship between charity and its “rules.”

⁸² See Karol Wojtyła, “Miłość jest moralnym fundamentem małżeństwa,” in *Teksty poznańskie*, ed. M. Jędraszewski (Poznań, Poland: Ks. Św. Wojciecha, 1986), 49-61. He will return to this theme in *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 78:2-3, “Marriage and celibacy do not divide the Christian community into ‘two camps’ [as if there were] those who are ‘perfect’ because of continence and those who are ‘imperfect’ or ‘less perfect’ because of the reality of married life;” and later, “The perfection of Christian life is measured, rather, by the measure of love. It follows that a person who does not live in the ‘state of perfection’ or in a religious institute, but in the ‘world,’ can *de facto* reach a higher degree of perfection—the measure of which is love—than a person who lives in the ‘state of perfection’ with a lesser degree of love...Such a

focus on those acts prohibited in marriage, rather than on the ethos of holiness underlying the conjugal ethic. In contrast, Wojtyła proclaims: “The sacramental grace of matrimony is not a theory.”⁸³ If at various times in the history of the Church the call to perfection within marriage has not been sufficiently appreciated, it is necessary to call to mind that marriage is a “reality of God, as one of the terrains on which not only the human being with his concupiscence and fallen nature, but also the *Lord and His grace*, play a role.”⁸⁴ The “dramatic moment” that determines the entire structure of a couple’s conjugal life is their acceptance or rejection of the strenuous effort which the call to perfection will require. The sacramental grace of matrimony is precisely what sustains that effort.

This effort to perfect themselves, in response to and guided by marital grace, requires *ascesis*, for both the individual spouses and their life as a couple. Wojtyła insists that the ascetical life is absolutely indispensable to the sanctification of a marriage. Husband and wife must devote themselves to “a progressive education in self-control of the will, of sentiments, of emotions, which must be developed from the simplest gestures, in which it is relatively easy to put the inner decision into practice.”⁸⁵ More specifically, a husband and wife must contemplate and apply in their communal lives the spirit of the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity, and obedience. The evangelical counsels, though not vowed by the married couple, must nevertheless provide the foundation for an authentic conjugal spirituality.

Wojtyła’s insistence on the evangelical counsels as a means by which to sustain conjugal charity and a conjugal spirituality is seen in his book *Sources of Renewal* and in his conciliar interventions. He sought to lay further the foundations for the development of such a spirituality in 1968, shortly after the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, when he wrote a “Rule for *Humanae Vitae* Groups of Married Couples.”⁸⁶ This short rule of six points advocates the formation of groups of married couples who can assist one another in fidelity to the life of grace and confront together the challenges to marriage and

perfection is possible and accessible to every human being, whether in a ‘religious institute’ or in the ‘world.’”

⁸³ Karol Wojtyła, “Miłość jest moralnym fundamentem małżeństwa,” in *Bellezza e spiritualità dell’amore coniugale*, eds. S. Grygiel, L. Grygiel, and P. Kwiatkowski (Siena, Italy: Edizione Cantagalli, 2009), 59.

⁸⁴ Wojtyła, “Miłość jest moralnym fundamentem małżeństwa,” 55.

⁸⁵ He develops these thoughts as John Paul II in *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 128:1. The theology of the body, though delivered during the years of his pontificate, was written prior to his ascent to the papacy and stands in continuity with his previous thoughts on marriage, as is clearly evident here.

⁸⁶ For this recently re-discovered “rule,” see S. Grygiel, L. Grygiel, P. Kwiatkowski, *Bellezza e spiritualità dell’amore coniugale* (Siena, Italy: Edizione Cantagalli, 2009).

family in the modern world through formation, discussion and fellowship. Wojtyła addressed the *Rule* to couples (and not to husband or wife individually) and argues that it is “not enough to simply observe the letter of the Church’s laws pertaining to conjugal life.” To truly live the Christian married vocation requires a proper spirituality—the interior life—which is only achieved by constant effort. “Such a spirituality does not exist in a ready-made form, such as the spirituality of various religious orders, but it ought to be constantly worked out.” To counter a consumerist culture, a married couple lives the evangelical counsel of poverty; they live the counsel of obedience out of mutual submission to Christ to counter the scattered allegiances of modernity; they live the counsel of chastity to testify to the power of free, total, faithful, and fruitful love in a “culture of indifference and the temporary.”⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

Several lessons can be learned from our analysis of Wojtyła’s preconciliar, conciliar, and postconciliar work, especially regarding marriage and the family. First, over a half century after the Council, there remains much work to be done in studying the origins of the conciliar texts, understanding key figures, and adequately assessing their role and influence on the modern Church. Many texts remain untranslated, understudied, and, therefore, underappreciated for the role they played in the Second Vatican Council. Since John Paul II’s influence on contemporary Catholic moral theology is undeniable, from *Veritatis Splendor* to the countless magisterial documents on marriage and the family issued during his pontificate, it is crucial to understand and assess his thought accurately. One important way of providing such an appraisal is to show the development, continuity, and consistency of his thought from its early stages when he was a priest, to its mature form in the pontifical teachings. While much of his early work remains inaccessible to those in the English-speaking academy, it is an indispensable source from which to gain an accurate appreciation for his work. Indeed, an accurate assessment of his early career will help illuminate his papal corpus in new ways, on issues ranging from suffering, the role of the laity, the tasks of moral theology, and other areas about which he wrote and taught.

⁸⁷ See Pope Francis, “Meeting with Young People of Umbria,” October 4, 2013, w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131004_giovani-assisi.html; Pope Francis, “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace,” January 1, 2016, w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20151208_messaggio-xlix-giornata-mondiale-pace-2016.html#_ftn3.

Here, we have provided at least one area, marriage and the family, in which Wojtyła's early vision both shaped subsequent Church teaching through the debates and interventions at the Second Vatican Council, while itself being shaped by the lay people he encountered throughout his life. Wojtyła's pastoral experience with lay married persons, and those discerning the sacrament of marriage, led him to articulate an account of married love that takes into account both the doctrinal tradition of the Church as well as the lived experience of this doctrine by those who are called to the married vocation. Wojtyła always encouraged the exponents of the former to speak to the experience of the latter and the latter to conform their lives according to the rule of faith.

Secondly, much of contemporary moral theology of marriage and the family, even after the publication of Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia*, has focused on moral norms, particularly those governing the reception of the Eucharist by couples who find themselves in "irregular" situations and pastoral ministry to "difficult" situations.⁸⁸ Yet, much work remains to be done in moral theology in reflecting upon the sacramentality of marriage and the development of a specifically conjugal spirituality. Rather than focusing on moral norms, though important, it seems that Wojtyła's thought requires a deeper reflection upon the "shape" of the Christian married life. One of the important and key emphases in Wojtyła's early work (which later re-emerged in the "theology of the body") was that the vocation to sacramental marriage brought with it the task of working out a spirituality in keeping with the vocation. By this, Wojtyła did not mean that a spouse might join a "third order," such as the Secular Franciscans, Benedictine Oblates, or Dominican tertiaries. While certainly a spouse may follow this calling, this does not encompass the specifically married life, their common life as a couple, in which they signify in a real way the love of God, and who have been conformed to Christ's sacrificial love by their sacrament. Throughout his early work that led up to the Second Vatican Council and in his careful implementation of the Council, Wojtyła articulated a vision of marriage which took into account the deep riches of the human experiences of love and sought to relate these to the supernatural calling of Christians to participate in the intimate love of the Triune God. This vision trusts radically in the ability of sacramental grace to overcome human weakness. Shaped by the practice of the virtues, which are further specified by the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, a couple is able to live their marriage as a gift and a task entrusted to them. A task requires certain rules, or modes of life,

⁸⁸ I am not downplaying the importance of the questions raised by chapter eight of this document. However, by focusing on the controversies surrounding this chapter, many have lost sight of the rest of the document's beautiful insights.

central to the very dynamic of the marital relationship itself, and conjugal maturity is particularly achieved through the practice of *ascesis*. Their joint ascetical endeavors, both individually and as a couple, conform them more perfectly to the cross of Christ and enable them to become witnesses to their family and community of the self-emptying love of God. Although such a vision of marriage is difficult, it is in fact possible when the couple “leans into” the grace of Christ and lives according to the truth about human love.⁸⁹

Finally, a greater familiarity with the kind of “conjugal spirituality,” especially an extensive reflection on the specific role of the evangelical counsels in marriage, which Wojtyła himself did not provide, can help illuminate and deepen one of Pope Francis’s key insights in *Amoris Laetitia*. In chapter nine, Pope Francis proposes a “spirituality of marriage and the family,” which is based on the fact that husband and wife, called individually as members of Christ’s body but even more so as a couple, are invited into Trinitarian communion by virtue of their sacrament.⁹⁰ Theirs is a task of “daily sanctification and mystical growth” (*Amoris Laetitia*, no. 316). While these parallels between Francis’s newest document on the family and Wojtyła’s insights on marriage and the family from over sixty years ago should by now be clear, more work remains to be done in tracing the development and further developing the contours of a specifically conjugal spirituality which, while allowing for contingent social and cultural realities, remains a sure path by which spouses can, in their families and in their homes, go together rejoicing to the house of the Lord. **M**

⁸⁹ See Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 317: “Gradually, ‘with the grace of the Holy Spirit, [the spouses] grow in holiness through married life, also by sharing in the mystery of Christ’s cross, which transforms difficulties and sufferings into an offering of love.’” I am grateful to Marie Reimers for the image of “leaning into” the grace of Christ.

⁹⁰ See Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 314.