

Module 8 Questions, Class Slides and Notes

Module 8: Gender Issues and Sex Roles

Some Discussion Questions for Module 8

1. It is obvious that men and women differ. How deep and broad are those differences? Is limiting the innate differences between men and women to the biological a symptom of a kind of Cartesian dualism which fails to appreciate properly our nature as embodied persons?
2. What is the source of these differences? Are they unlearned (i.e., present from conception/birth or at least inevitably emergent—such as in secondary sex characteristics at puberty)? Are they learned (culture, experience)? To what extent? Can they be changed?
3. In the light of the “societies” of great apes and human evolution, is the widespread patriarchal and hierarchical organization of human societies innate and/or cultural?
4. How should we evaluate gender differences/similarities? Consider also intersexuality and sexual orientation. Are they part of the diversity of God's good creation? Are they a reflection of brokenness, sinfulness, or even the general "incompleteness" of creation? If so, to what extent?
5. Is Eph 5:21-33 (and other similar New Testament passages) sexist? Can we still look at such passages as the inspired Word of God today? Which interpretation do you prefer and why: traditional Christian, feminist/revisionist, progressive/mutual submission? What do you think is important regarding the roles/responsibilities of husbands / fathers and wives / mothers?
6. Were the Jewish and early Christian exclusively male priesthoods countercultural? What is the significance, if any, of the facts of Jesus being a male human being and choosing twelve male apostles? Should these be interpreted as part of God's eternal infinitely wise plan or accommodations to the culture of the time? Should the Catholic and Orthodox Churches follow other churches in ordaining women (note that many Protestant churches do not have priests or bishops) as priests and bishops? Has Pope John Paul II definitively settled the matter for the Catholic Church?
7. What are some of the contributions of feminism, of Christian feminist theologians? With regard to different kinds of feminism (e.g., some who promote complete egalitarianism vs. some who think true liberation appreciates the differences of men and women), what views do you see as compatible or incompatible with Christianity? What can change and what cannot change or should not change with regard to Christianity? By what criteria?
8. Can neuroscience help to settle theological controversies with regard to the roles of men and women or help to mediate between them?
9. Is Christian teaching regarding lifetime monogamous marriage supported by neuroscientific findings?
10. In the light of some very serious divisions within Christianity regarding gender / sexual issues and roles, how can we contribute to the unity of Christians for which Jesus prayed (see Jn 17:21)?

Class Slides and Notes for Module 8 on Sex, Gender Issues and Sex Roles

Please watch the following videos: 1) Differences Between Men and Women's Brains: First Science TV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoCPDvQBG5Y&t=22s> (1:45); 2) The Science: Male Brain vs. Female Brain <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTEi2-FAEZE> (6:26); and 3) The Female and Male Brains in Psychiatry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKW4-FJZS3A&t=512s> (for this course **watch only the first 8 min.** of 28 min.).

Please read at this time if you have not already done so the required reading, "The Sex Difference" by Heather Pringle in the Course pack. You will be asked to read the other required readings for Module 8 later.

Heather Looy's Slides adapted by Paul Flaman:

Slide 1) Science of Sex and Gender

1. How should we study sex and gender?

- **Are the categories of male and female, masculine and feminine, clear cut or continua or something between? Consider, e.g., Androgenous Insensitivity Syndrome, Androgenital Syndrome, Transsexuals ...**

Consider, for example, Androgenous Insensitivity Syndrome which is a condition of a human person who is genetically and hormonally male but has a female body and feminized brain (there are various degrees of this) due to the body's insensitivity to male hormones beginning before birth. Such a person lacks ovaries, does not menstruate, is infertile and has internal testes. This occurs in about 1 in 20,000 women. Androgenital Syndrome involves females with a deficiency of the hormone cortisol and excessive adrenal androgens. They have a larger clitoris and partially fused labia (usually, and in varying degrees). They are generally tom-boys with little interest in maternity but within today's range of the female normal (see Pinel, *Biopsychology*, 10th Ed., 347). Transsexuals are human persons who feel they are of the wrong sex regarding their bodies. Some pursue sex change hormonal treatments and surgeries which if complete render them infertile.

- **assignment to categories: criteria?**

98% of the time we easily assign sex to human persons—even if we only see dots of certain parts of the body on a monitor of a man or woman moving. Suggested criteria include chromosomes (XX or XY), genes, hormones (testosterone, estrogen, progesterone), body form (morphology), genitalia... Are their brain differences in men and women?

- **"lenses of sex and gender"**

Are these biologically / brain based and/or culturally conditioned?

- **focus: similarity or difference?**

Regarding a focus on similarities between the sexes consider "unisex"; regarding a focus on differences consider sexual "stereotypes."

- **within and between groups variation: individual and general differences**

The following slide indicates some general sexual differences. Note: these are regarding statistically significant average differences. But within each sex the range of difference is generally greater than the average difference between the sexes. Consider mathematical, spatial and verbal skills. Regarding athletic abilities consider speed and strength—on average men are faster and stronger and the best men are better than the best women, but the best women are better than the average man regarding sports such as world champion women weightlifters who can lift more than the average man.

Slide 2) Science of Sex and Gender

2. Sex / Gender differences identified:

***most robust and consistent**

Advantage Men

***mental rotation**
***target-directed motor skills**
mathematical reasoning
bird's eye navigational maps
***talk more in public settings**
***physical aggression**
***independent play**
morality: abstract, context-independent
value youth, attractiveness in mates

Advantage Women

perceptual speed
ideational/verbal fluencies
mathematical calculation
landmark navigational maps
talk more in private settings
verbal aggression
cooperative play
morality: context, relationship depend.
value status, wealth, intelligence in mates

The average differences regarding navigational maps is certainly the case with my wife and I (she is much stronger than me in navigating by landmarks whereas for a new location I can study a map and then drive there better than she can). Males on average also tend to be more competitive in play. With regard to morality Laurence Kohlberg studied boys and young men and moral development and found that very young boys and criminals were “me” focused; school age boys generally were more “other” focused and more mature men focused on moral principles and justice. Carol Gilligan studied women and found they tended to focus on relationships with more mature women being more caring. Regarding mate preferences we can note that some men do marry older women so it is important to keep in mind that there are exceptions to the above average generalizations.

Slide 3) Science of Sex and Gender

3. Embodiment of sex / gender differences?

- **See Pringle article (in the course pack) for some details**
- **structural and functional differences in the brain**
 - **Average brain and body sizes**

On average men are 8% taller than women and their brains are on average 10% larger but their overall intelligence is the same.

- **SDN (sexually dimorphic nucleus) of the hypothalamus**

This is the same size in males and females at birth but sometime after birth becomes larger in males (this is also the case with other mammal species).

- **isthmus and overall size of the corpus callosum**

There are more neurons connecting the two sides of women's brains—women tend to be less specialized but have more integrated thinking (compare women's intuition).

- **developmental dynamics and differences of brain structure**

Some of this is related to hormones; some develop earlier by several years on average in males (e.g., mechanical and spatial reasoning and visual targeting) and females (e.g., verbal fluency, handwriting and recognizing familiar faces).

- **greater density of neurons in the female prefrontal cortex by 15%**
- **amygdala's connection to other brain regions**

In men's brains the amygdala communicates more with parts of the brain related to engaging in and responding to the external environment such as the visual cortex (cf. men as hunters / defenders). In women's brains the amygdala communicates more with other parts of the brain such as the insular cortex and hypothalamus which control aspects of the environment within the body (cf. pregnancy). (see *Science Daily*, April 2006)

- **gray and white brain matter**

Men have more gray matter related to general intelligence than women (average 6.5X as much)—gray matter regarding information processing centres helps explain why men tend to do better on tasks requiring more localized processing such as math. Women have more white matter (average nearly 10X as much) related to intelligence regarding networking the processing centres—this helps explain why women generally are better at integrating and assimilating information from distributed gray matter regions of the brain which aids language skills... (see *Health SciTech*, Jan. 2005).

- **only males activate the left hippocampus when navigating**
- **only women activate both sides of the brain when listening**
- **there are also some differences regarding the senses including the eye retina, hearing and smelling**

In the eye retina males have more cells to detect motion; females have more cells related to colour and texture (cf. men as hunters and women as gatherers for tens of thousands of years). With regard to hearing, girls and women hear certain sounds better than men on average. Women of child bearing age are many times more sensitive to certain smells than men. My wife certainly has a better sense of smell than I do.

- **hormonal differences:**
 - **estrogen / androgen ratios**
 - **cyclic versus non-cyclic patterns**

Although men do not have menstrual cycles like women of child bearing age, men's hormonal levels are not always the same but they are not cyclical in the same way as for women.

Slide 4) Science of Sex and Gender

4. Regarding the sources of difference? Philosophical interpretations include:

a) **essentialism**: there exists an essential female or male nature

- **universal, stable**
- **e.g., women's and men's ways of knowing and responding**
- **this approach focuses on evolutionary processes, biology and sometimes revelation**

From an evolutionary perspective human brains have not changed significantly in 50,000 years or more. Then men were hunters of large animals and defenders of the community; women were gatherers and involved in taking care of the young. Consider survival advantages with such specialization of tasks / roles.

Regarding revelation some Christians believe God made men and women different and complementary although equal in dignity.

b) **constructionism**: gender is a linguistic construct that cannot be understood apart from historical, social and cultural contexts

- **fluid meanings, not objectively-defined realities**
- **focus on socialization, variation / diversity and sometimes revelation**

Regarding socialization consider especially some traditional societies regarding play, work and the roles of men and women. Regarding revelation, some who take this approach highlight Gal 3:28 which says there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, we are all one in Christ Jesus, Children of God through faith (we are all justified by faith in Christ and are meant to have the same eternal destiny).

Slide 5) Science of Sex and Gender

Concerns:

a) re: *essentialism*:

- **believing we know fairly completely the form of that essential nature** can lead to unfair / too rigid stereotypes
 - **viewing those who do not fit as deviant or diseased; stigmatizing them**
- Consider “normal” and “abnormal” labels and judgments.

b) re: *constructionism*:

- **deeply relativistic: nothing normative except as defined by context**
 - **trivializes embodiment; bodies are culturally defined and shaped by context**
- Regarding the embodiment of human persons consider theologies of the body including that of Benedict Ashley, OP, and Saint Pope John Paul II.

c) Consider, e.g., also sexism, ideology, political correctness, sensitivity to different needs also re: education, etc.

Regarding sexism consider unfair discrimination regarding sex, e.g., men getting paid more for the same job or some jobs typically paying more although requiring comparable amounts of education (compare construction work which generally involves more men than service jobs such as day care and taking care of the elderly which generally involve more women, or engineers of which the majority are men and nurses of which the majority are women). Consider also the greater risks of some jobs.

Regarding “ideology” note how feminism has evolved—many now affirm that women do not need to be the same as men to be equal in dignity. Regarding “political correctness” consider how some have dismissed brain research regarding the brain differences of males and females, promoting ideological agendas rather than being open to the evidence, to empirical science.

Concerning sensitivity to different needs regarding education, due to average different rates of development on average of males and females, some advocate separate gendered classes at certain ages for certain subjects, e.g., girls and math or boys and reading and writing to avoid harm to their sense of self worth and ability to learn in the long run. I (Paul Flaman) would note that regarding this parents and educators need to be sensitive also to individual differences.

Many husbands and wives have found John Gray’s *Men are From Mars, Women are from Venus* to help them to understand and be more sensitive to their spouses. E.g., when the typical woman shares being upset with someone else she feels better by simply being listened to which another woman tends to do. On the other hand, when a woman expresses being upset to a man he typically will try to fix the problem which is often not what she wants him to do for her. On the other hand, when a man has a problem he tends to go into his cave and try to figure it out. He may ask for advice but he generally does not like being told to get help—consider many men not asking for directions when they are lost.

Do you have any comments and/or questions with regard to the experience / empirical science aspect of studying average gender / sex differences as well as individual differences?

Paul Flaman's Theology Slides:

Please read the related required reading from the course pack: from the Bible Eph 5:21-6:9 and related commentary including from Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* on the Dignity and Vocation of Women; and "The Second Reformation" by Richard N. Ostling; and Pope John Paul II's "Apostolic Letter on Ordination and Women" *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.

Slide 1: Gender / Sex Roles

- **Is Eph 5:21-33 sexist? Inspired by God?**

These are important questions with regard to interpreting and applying this passage of Scripture today.

- **Sexism involves unfair discrimination regarding sex**

Note that not all discrimination regarding sex is unfair. E.g., at the university there are separate men and women and individual washrooms and showers.

- **Some Christian authors' views re Eph 5:21-33...**

- **1) Traditional Christian: until the last few decades Christians generally understood loving (not "lording it over" but serving) patriarchy (which includes the primacy of authority of the husband and the voluntary submission of the wife modeled on Christ and the Church) as part of God's plan.**

Note that Jesus taught his disciples that among the Gentiles the rulers lord it over the others but that that is not to happen among them—the one who wants to be great is to serve the others (see Mt 20:24-26). Regarding the "voluntary" submission of the wife to her husband, he is not to try to "coerce" her—note that God / Christ does not coerce us to follow their will but invite us to do so. God's plan includes God's created order, the distortions of sin including when some humans try to lord it over other humans, and the liberating plan of God's Redemption from sin and all of its negative consequences through Jesus Christ. The medieval theologian St. Thomas Aquinas believed that in heaven there would be no need for different levels of human authority or sacraments (as is the case on earth) but that all created persons there would relate directly to God.

- **The better writings along these lines (e.g. John Chrysostom) affirmed the equal dignity of men and women and criticized abuses such as "lording it over." Pope Pius XI (1930) noted that the manner and degree of "submission" may vary according to different persons, places and times. If the husband is the "head" of the family, the woman is the "heart"...**
- **More recently some authors who defend this view include Stephen Clark and Germain Grisez who think that some distinction of authority is needed for unity in any society including the small society of the family.**
- **Paul Quay says the "headship of the husband" and the "submission of the wife" correspond to the deep needs of man and woman; Joseph and Lois Bird (married psychologists) in their *Freedom of Sexual Love* relate "headship" to the man's responsibility and "submission" to the woman's trusting respectful surrender—they think both are important for their sexual fulfillment (contrast the wife "emasculating" her husband which is not fulfilling for either of them).**
- **Gary Chapman (a Baptist Christian pastor) thinks spouses should ideally make decisions together unless a decision cannot wait.**

If a husband and wife do not agree on a decision Chapman thinks that most of the time the decision can wait—they should openly share what they think, each pray about it and hopefully they will come to agree with some time. If a decision cannot wait Chapman thinks the husband should listen very well to his wife and if they still do not agree he should decide according to what he thinks is best for them and their family. If it turns out that she was right and he was wrong he should acknowledge that to his wife.

In my Chrtc 351 Sex, Love and Marriage course I have had several female Evangelical Christian students defend this traditional Christian view in their research and reflection papers.

Slide 2: Gender / Sex Roles

- **Some Christian authors' views re Eph 5:21-33 continued:**
 - **2) Revisionist / Feminist Christian:** these authors generally see patriarchy as a consequence of sin (cf. Gen 3 speaks of the wife's husband as ruling over her as one of the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin) and passages such as Eph 5 as sexist. In their view submission is contrary to the equal dignity of men and women as created and redeemed by God:
 - **Lisa Sowle Cahill:** advocates a "canon within the canon" approach to the Bible—she thinks some passages of the Bible are enlightened (e.g. re mutual love, equal dignity, justice) but some other passages (e.g., that advocate patriarchy) reflect the sinful bias of the authors / their culture.
 - **Sandra Schneiders:** sees the domination of one person over another (e.g., the master/slave relationship) as the paradigm of sin.

According to her, patriarchy including the view of the "headship" of the husband and the "submission" of the wife is related to this paradigm of sin.

- **Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza says Jesus treated women equally; the early Church followed the Greco-Roman patriarchal household codes; the New Testament authors gave patriarchy theological support.**

She argues this in her book, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. The Greco-Roman household codes are also referred to in the short commentary on Eph 5 from the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* in the course pack. Schüssler-Fiorenza thinks passages such as Eph 5 give patriarchy theological support which for her makes things worse.

- **Other significant authors include Rosemary Radford Reuther; Catherine Mowry LaCugna; et al. Feminist authors generally focus on the experience of women and oppressed people; and emphasize the equal dignity of all, justice and mutuality in relationships... Many do not like to speak of "hierarchy" or even our "submission to God"...**

Many of these authors consider even human "submission" to God as degrading. They affirm mutuality in our relationship with God as liberating.

Slide 3: Gender / Sex Roles

- **Some Christian authors' views of Eph 5:21 ff. continued:**
 - **3) Progressive / Mutual Submission, e.g.:**
 - **The Catholic bishops at Vatican II (1965; GS, Chapter on Marriage and the Family) do not specifically address this passage or theme but speak of married couples deciding jointly before God regarding responsible parenthood / procreation and raising children**

that is, neither one or the other should decide on such matters by him or herself but both spouses should decide together.

- **Edward Schillebeeckx: the Eph author's affirming loving / being "head" as Christ (who served all and laid down his life) is very liberating in the Roman context; he does not see the passage as affirming patriarchy; some others say Christian love first transformed then overcame the institution of slavery and can do the same regarding patriarchy.**

Regarding Schillebeeckx not seeing Eph 5 as affirming patriarchy contrast both positions above which see Eph 5 as affirming patriarchy: 1 above considers patriarchy on earth to be part of God's plan; and 2 above sees the passage as affirming patriarchy but considers this to be the author's bias rather than God's plan. Regarding the Roman context, the father of a family was like a little king or dictator who could even reject a newborn child of his wife. Regarding the institution of slavery and Eph 6 (follows Eph 5 in the course reading), the author puts both masters and slave on an equal footing before God telling slave masters that they and their slaves "have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality."

- **Pope John Paul II (see the required reading from *Mulieris Dignitatem*): emphasizes verse 21, mutual submission out of reverence for Christ; loving as Christ; "submission" as the Church to Christ means nothing other than submission to the requirements of *truth* and love; this is not arbitrary or contrary to our dignity as persons.**

Since the nature of God is a mystery of infinite truth and love, even God submits to the requirements of truth and love and this is not contrary to the dignity of God.

What do you think of these different interpretations of Eph 5 and related views? What is your view (see Discussion Question, n. 5 above)? I (Paul Flaman) like Pope John Paul II's approach which takes an integral approach to the canon of the Bible (accepting the entire Bible as God's Word and not picking and choosing parts of it according to one's preferences). He also explains the deeper meaning of the passage in relation to the whole text including verse 21 and our relationship with God in a way that fully respects the dignity of human persons, both men and women. With regard to Gary Chapman's view I agree that ideally a husband and wife should decide in unity. An example from my marriage was when my wife and I went to buy a couch, etc., from wedding gift money, I shared the view that I liked a certain set and my wife said we should get it. She later shared with me that she did not really like it but wanted to please me at the time. I think it would have been better if she had said so at the time and we could have kept looking then until we found something we both liked. On another occasion we were camping on the far side of Vancouver Island. Our three-year old daughter threw a good sized stone up in the air and it landed on her head above her eye giving her a black eye. My wife with her nursing background knew exactly what to do. She shone a flashlight in our daughter's eyes and concluded that she did not have a concussion and we did not need to drive across the island to take her to the hospital in Nanaimo. I trusted her expertise in this area and our daughter indeed was fine.

Slide 4: Gender / Sexual Roles

- **A few things I (Paul Flaman) consider important regarding the roles of husbands-fathers and wives-mothers:**
 - **Regarding the Bible / Jesus implicitly teaches that all our "roles" and responsibilities are to be subordinate (understood and lived) to:**

- **a properly ordered love / respect of persons (including God);**

Compare Mt 22:37-40 which reports Jesus as teaching that all of the law and the prophets (consider also specific moral imperatives) hang on (depend on) the great commandments of loving God with all one's heart, soul and mind, and loving one's neighbor as oneself.

- **and values (e.g., equal dignity not only of men and women, but also of children including the unborn, truth, fairness, self-giving and faithful love ...) which are rooted in the nature of God and ourselves created in God's image;**

These are the values of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed. As the great Christian ethicist Dietrich von Hildebrand points out these values are rooted in the nature of God who is a mystery of infinite truth, justice, self-giving and faithful love ... and of ourselves created in God's image. To find true fulfillment and communion we need to always respect these values (that is, always respect God and our true selves) in every situation.

- **and responding to the real needs (biological, psychological, moral, spiritual ...) of children, one's spouse, oneself, the elderly ...;**

Christian agape love is not just a nice idea—we need to roll up our sleeves to respond to the real concrete needs of human beings. In the Parable of the Last Judgment (see Mt 25:31-46) Jesus strongly teaches that to experience eternal life we need to respond to the real needs of people including feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, taking care of the sick, and so forth. What we do for others including the “least,” Jesus says we do to him. Also, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (see Lk 10:25-37) Jesus presents an example of true love of neighbor, a Samaritan, who for a while sets aside his own plans to tend to the real needs of a man who was severely beaten up; he also does not abandon the man but leaves him in the care of someone else until he can return.

Infants and young children are very dependent—their needs (not only physical, but also psychological, moral and spiritual) call their parents to a great sacrificial self-giving love (compare the way Jesus has loved us and calls us to love one another in his new commandment (see Jn 13 and 15). Regarding the needs of oneself and one's spouse consider the need for a healthy balance of work, recreation and prayer. If one of the spouses stays home to raise children it is important that she/he has enough time with other adults.

- **Jesus also teaches us to make fruitful use of our talents (see Mt 25:14-30).**

This should be considered by both spouses and parents with regard to work both within and outside the home.

- **Good loving communication (both listening and honest sharing) is important to know each person's needs, values, preferences and expectations; it is important that both spouses feel their arrangement is fair; flexibility is also important today since situations can change.**

With regard to the needs of each person in the family, among other things, consider the developmental and education needs of boys and girls taking into account general brain and individual differences.

Consider the last part of discussion question , n. 5, above: “What do you think is important regarding the roles / responsibilities of husbands / fathers and wives / mothers?”

Slide 5: Gender / Sex Roles

If you are a member of a Christian church, does your church ordain women as pastors, priests, bishops or to other ministries? If you have not already done so, please read the related required

readings in the Custom Courseware by Richard Ostling, “The Second Reformation;” (Pope) John Paul II, “*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* Apostolic Letter on Ordination and Women;” and Ronda Chervin, “A Creed for Christian Women.” In the slides below we will consider some of the main arguments raised both against and for ordaining women, as well as some other related points.

- **Some Arguments Raised Against Ordaining Women:**

Although many Protestant denominations in the last few decades have been ordaining women as pastors (note that many Protestant denominations do not have priests and bishops, either men or women), some Protestant denominations have not followed suit such as the more Conservative branch of the Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod, now in Canada called the Lutheran Church of Canada, and some Baptist denominations.

- **Some Protestants (the Bible is God’s Word) re Ordained Pastors:**

Women are not to speak in Church or have authority over men; bishops and deacons were men (see 1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tm 2:9-3:13) ...

Conservative Protestants who do not ordain women as pastors generally take the Bible very seriously as God’s written Word. 1 Cor 14:34 reads: “[W]omen should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says.” 1 Tm 2:9-3:13 reads:

⁹ ... [T]he women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. ¹² I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

3:1 The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. ² Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way— ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil. ⁸ Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; ⁹ they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; ¹³ for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Related to the above passages some Protestants do not see how a woman can exercise public leadership and authority in church (cf. ordained pastors) if they are not to speak in churches and not allowed to have authority over men. Also, in 1 Tm it is some “men” who hold the offices of bishops and deacons. An Evangelical Christian pastor Stuart Appenheimer (who grew up near where I grew up in Saskatchewan) and his wife Anne do not favor women in positions of authority in church since they think women are more easily tempted by the devil (see the text above from 1 Cor re Adam and Eve). Anne’s mother was a feminist but this did not favorably impress Anne who has not followed suit.

- **Catholic and Orthodox Churches re Bishops and Priests:**

In the Catholic and Orthodox Churches ordination is understood as a sacrament that pertains to

the roles of bishops, priests and deacons. In these Churches only an ordained priest (and bishop) can consecrate the Eucharist in mass and absolve sins in the sacrament of reconciliation; only a bishop can ordain priests and deacons. Only bishops, priests and ordained deacons can officially preach (give a homily), although at some para-liturgies led by a lay man or woman, the latter may share reflections on the biblical readings. In the Catholic Church women can serve in any other position including in many forms of Christian ministry. Of interest in the Catholic Church about 80 percent of Campus ministers and hospital chaplains are women. Ironically, some are concerned about how to involve more men in Church.

- **Jesus was male and chose only men (males) for the Twelve. This was not conforming to culture since Jesus freely taught God’s ways without regard for human views (see Mt 22:16). Re this consider his correcting various Jewish traditions, e.g., even Moses’ teaching on divorce and remarriage.**

This is one of the main traditional Christian reasons for not ordaining women as bishops (they are understood as successors of the Twelve Apostles whom Jesus chose), priests and deacons (they are understood as close collaborators of bishops). This is one of the reasons given by Pope John Paul II in his *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (part of the related required reading). An earlier document *Inter Insigniores* approved by Pope Paul VI points out that the Old Testament Jewish practice of ordaining only men as priests and the early Christian Church’s ordaining only men as priests was not following the prevailing culture but was actually counter-cultural at the time. There were not only male priests but also women priestesses in the Canaanite (cf. the context of ancient Israel) and Roman (cf. cf. the context of early Christianity) cultures and religions of the time. For the Jews and early Christians not to follow suit, the document says they must have had the conviction that it was God’s will not to have women priestesses. An example of Jesus’ acting freely in spite of certain cultural taboos consider his talking to a Samaritan woman (his disciples were astonished at his doing this which was a taboo for Jewish men to do—see Jn 4:27).

- **The ministerial priesthood is a sacrament; cf. the “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9) of all Christians. There is still discussion re deacons (e.g., Rm 16:1 speaks of Phoebe as her, our sister and a deacon; before there were some deaconesses in the Church but their role did not include official preaching).**

In the past when there were female deaconesses in the Church their ministry was one of service and did not include the role of official preaching as does the role of ordained male deacons. At present there are no female deaconesses in the Catholic Church.

- **The Church is called to be faithful to Christ’s example and choice of sacramental signs/symbols (natural and historical). Cf. the Eucharist ...**

At the Last Supper, the original celebration of the Eucharist, Jesus chose bread and wine (staples of the Jewish supper meal; the Last Supper of Jesus was also celebrated in the context of the Jewish Passover) to symbolize his body and blood, which are “food” for our souls (cf. Jn 6 where Jesus speaks of himself as the Bread of Life). The Church today and any priest presiding at Mass today must follow this example and has no authority whatsoever to substitute other symbols, e.g., pizza and coke, to try to be more relevant with young people, although a priest with an alcohol problem can use wine with very little or no alcohol in it.

- **Arguments (not logical proofs) for the fittingness of God’s actions / wise plan include: Re the God/human relationship, Jesus (God incarnate, male) is the Bridegroom of his Bride, the Church (female imagery; cf.**

also Mary). Bishops and priests represent Jesus as the Bridegroom, Shepherd and Head. Some authors (e.g., L. Bouyer, A. Speyr, H.U. von Balthasar, P. Quay, R. Chervin, V. Harrison) develop this sexual / marriage symbolism / analogy.

Regarding many theological arguments not being logical proofs consider the Trinity—Christians generally accept that God revealed to us through Jesus and the New Testament that God is Triune, a communion of three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Mt 28:19, e.g.). Theology of the Trinity does not logically prove the Trinity but among other things explains the “fittingness” of God not being a solitary person but a communion of persons in perfect mutual love and unity, and the source and model of human communion of persons. As Christians we are to humbly accept what God has revealed including in the actions of Jesus which includes his choosing 12 “men” to be Apostles, the first bishops of His Church. For this too we are to try to understand the fittingness and wisdom of God’s actions in Jesus. The New Testament presents the Church as the Bride of Jesus Christ the Bridegroom. A number of theologians have offered various “reasons” for the fittingness of Jesus being male and of his choosing only men in the role of Apostles (cf. their successors the bishops and their close collaborators, priests and deacons). E.g., Louis Bouyer in his book *Woman in the Church* asks first why God created us sexual, as men and women. God could have created us asexual like some forms of life but in his wisdom he created us as male and female. This provides not only a better method of reproduction but also according to Bouyer a basis for the sexual / marital / nuptial symbolism in the Bible beginning in the Old Testament with God as a “husband” of his “wife,” the People of God of Israel and continued with Jesus and the Church (the universal People of God). Heterosexual intercourse is different for a man and a woman—in a real sense a man “enters into” a woman who receives him “into herself”. If his sperm joins her ovum this bears fruit in new life which her body nourishes during pregnancy and lactation. Compare God through the male Jesus entering into humanity who ought to receive God in Jesus into “herself” (humanity is symbolized by the female images of “wife” and “bride” in the Bible). If we accept Jesus into ourselves the divine life which he is will take root and grow within us (cf. a child growing within its mother’s womb).

Ronda Chervin (noted in the reading by Ostling) thinks it would be incongruous for a man to play the role of Mary in a reenactment of the Nativity; similarly she thinks it would be incongruous for a woman to play the role of Jesus in the reenactment of the Last Supper in the Eucharist / Mass.

Verna Harrison, an Orthodox Christian theologian points out that in Orthodox Christian theology there are different ways that humans “image” God. During the liturgy the priest as an “icon” (note the important role of icons in Orthodox Christianity) images Jesus in a different way than men and women both image God. If a woman loves more she can “image” Christ in this way better than a man who loves less.

As another example, Paul Quay in his book, *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality*, develops male / female sexual symbolism in considerable detail explaining its profound significance.

Slide 6: Gender / Sex Roles

- **Some arguments for ordaining women:**
 - **It is unfair discrimination and sexism to exclude competent women from certain careers / jobs / roles / positions of authority whether in civil society or the Church. Women should be able to fully participate in the Church’s sacramental**

life, ministry and governance.

In the past men dominated certain careers such as politicians, firefighters, doctors and engineers and women dominated other careers such as nurses, elementary school teachers, care givers to the elderly in nursing homes and young children in daycare. Much has changed in recent decades with the criteria for these roles now being whether or not the person is capable of the role. E.g., if a given woman is able to meet all of the requirements including the physical demands of the profession of firefighter including being able to carry persons from a burning building she can be a firewoman. Likewise some argue that if a given woman is capable or competent to fulfill the role of a priest (or pastor or bishop) she should be allowed to serve in this way.

- **Excluding women from certain leadership roles is patriarchy, which is a consequence of sin (Sandra Schneiders).**

Schneiders is a biblical scholar. Compare her considering patriarchy in the family to be a sin above under my Slide 2.

- **Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza questions the historicity of the Twelve; she suggests Jesus was egalitarian but the early Church became patriarchal; she suggests that perhaps 12 male apostles was written into the Gospels to theologically support this.**

These suggestions in her feminist reconstruction of Christian origins are a very radical reinterpretation. Biblical scholar Joseph Fitzmeyer thinks it is important that the actual “text” of the Bible remains “normative” for us rather than some “imaginary reconstruction”. If the latter, then we can make Christianity into whatever we want it to be rather than as actually instituted by Jesus. The Second Vatican Council in its document on Scripture *Dei Verbum* affirms that the four canonical Gospels are historical—they tell us the truth about what Jesus really said and did, although some things are interpreted in the light of the Resurrection of Jesus.

- **Others: Jesus’ being male, choosing 12 male apostles, etc., can be explained by cultural / sociological factors and does not need to be seen as normative for all times.**
- **Daniel Maguire: the Church is unjust in not ordaining women who want to be. Some women say they feel ‘called’ by God.**

Does anyone, man or woman have a right to be a priest, a bishop? Traditionally, the ordained ministries of bishop, priest and deacon were understood as “charisms”—gifts for the good of the Christian community, the Church, and are not related to personal holiness. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, e.g., is understood as being holier than any of the 12 apostles but God did not choose her for that role. Traditionally, no man has a right to be a priest and therefore it is not an injustice if a bishop refuses to ordain a given man who wants to be a priest. From a traditional Christian perspective we Christians (all baptized men and all baptized women) are indeed called by God to some form of Christian ministry. The two sides of the question of the ordination of women thus involve some very different theological premises.

- **There is also a shortage of priests**

This is true in some parts of the world such as in the West but we can note that some countries such as Poland and India actually export priests. When this question was raised at fairly recent Vatican Synods discussing this issue in general they concluded that the problem of a shortage of priests is related to the crisis of faith. Some have also noted a positive of fewer priests in the West in that this has promoted the development of lay Christian vocations and ministries.

Slide 7: Gender / Sex Roles

The Ordaining Women Question Continued

- **Some feminists, however, have different views:**
 - **Some are not only against patriarchy but any hierarchy. Advocating women priests is buying into a clerical model of Church which they do not want. They advocate a church of equal partnerships.**

A “clerical” model of Church includes the “ordained” versus the “non-ordained.” Some informally act on an “equal partnerships” model, e.g., taking turns presiding and playing the role of Jesus in celebrating the Last Supper or altogether in “circles” saying the words of consecration, “This is my body ...” This raises the question: Did Jesus establish a democratic egalitarian church or a hierarchical church with some having more authority than others. We can note that the Gospels present not only Jesus choosing the Twelve, but also among these being closer to three of them—Peter, James and John—and giving Peter special authority—Jesus changes Simon’s name to Peter which means “rock” and says he will build his Church on this rock and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (see Mt 16:13-20). As well, after Peter denies Jesus three times Jesus tells Peter that he has prayed for him that his faith will not fail and that it will be his role to strengthen the others (see Lk 22:32—cf. Catholic teaching regarding the role of the successors of Peter, the popes, to teach with authority on matters of faith and morality). Besides the Twelve in the Gospels there was also a larger group of 72 disciples among those who listened to Jesus.

- **Some post-Christian feminists (e.g., Daly and Malone) see Christianity with its male Savior as irredeemable and have turned to religions with goddesses, witchcraft ...**

Some women including Mary Daly and Mary Malone were once Christians, but they later considered Christianity an irredeemable religion since even if we had women bishops and popes, the founder and Savior of Christianity, Jesus, is unchangeably male. Some of these women have remained “religious” but turned to religions not only with male “gods” but also female “goddesses” or to witchcraft where women have special powers.

- **Note also responses to certain arguments**
 - **E.g., Sr. Donna Gaernhart: some women who have had bad experiences with men find it liberating that Jesus our Redeemer was / is male. They have experienced perfect love through Jesus and healing of their relationships with men.**

Sister Donna taught at St. Joseph’s College when I began here. Soon afterwards she was hired to work for the Canadian Catholic Bishops. At a conference I heard her share in response to post-Christian feminists that other women including those who have had bad experiences with men as fathers or husbands or boyfriends have encountered the perfect man and healing in Jesus and they are glad that Jesus our Redeemer was and remains male. Jesus has helped them too to have better relationships with other men who are not perfect.

- **This issue raises fundamental questions regarding the nature of God / Jesus (e.g., does God evolve / change or not; cf. Mal. 3:6 and Heb 13:8-9; process philosophy; Thomism ...) and Christianity: what is from God, what is merely human tradition or only has temporary value?**

Heb 13 teaches that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. In Mal 3 God says that I, Yahweh, do not change. In process philosophy and theology God evolves and changes along with the rest of reality. In Thomism and traditional Christianity, however, God, who is infinite

and contains every perfection, cannot really evolve or change like the rest of finite Creation. Related to Christianity feminism raises some very fundamental questions with regard to what cannot change and we should not try to change it, and what can change and if so who has authority to change it and under what circumstances.

- **What do you think of the various views?**

Consider discussion questions 6, 7 and 8 at the beginning of this module. Regarding discussion question 3 above, we can note that before agriculture for tens of thousands of years humans lived in tribes with men as hunters and defenders of the community and women as gatherers and caregivers to young children and the frail elderly. Women did not tend to be organized as hierarchically as the men. Is this relevant or not to the question of hierarchy and patriarchy in the Church today? Also in the experiential “science” part of this module above note the different general approaches to morality of men and women according to the findings of Kohlberg and Gilligan. Teaching of the Magisterium (of popes and bishops united to the popes) on faith and moral issues tends to focus on the objective including universal moral principles, whereas many women in Christian ministry tend to focus more on the subjective and relational aspects. Some writers on Christian women and men’s spiritualities (e.g., Ronda Chervin and Joseph West) note that negative character traits (vices) are found among both women and men—they advocate both women and men growing in positive character traits (virtues).

Slide 8: Gender / Sex Roles

Ordination of Women Question Continued:

- **Consider the values related to the various arguments:**

Appreciating what each side values can help us to appreciate better what is important to them.

- **For ordaining women arguments tend to highlight the equal dignity of the sexes; fairness; the opportunity for all Christians, both women and men, to use their gifts fully; and the Church as a partnership of equals.**
- **Against ordaining women arguments emphasize complete fidelity to God’s Revelation and Jesus including his example and choice of sacramental signs; the value of biblical sexual symbolism, being male and female is good, and symbolizes our intimacy, “nuptial” relationship with God.**
- **Note: those who are against say they also value the values of those who are for; those who are for say they would understand values such as fidelity to Jesus differently.**

- **A Divisive Issue and Ecumenism (Christian unity):**

- **Consider also “Inclusive” Language (re humans and God ...)**

Some biblical translations today use “inclusive” language for human beings, e.g., instead of translating Gen 1:27 as God created men, male and female, they translate it as God created human beings, male and female. The Canadian Catholic bishops have approved the NRSV translation of the Bible which uses “inclusive” language for human beings for the Canadian Catholic liturgy. They have said that if it does not really change the meaning why offend some people unnecessarily. Regarding God some, e.g., would attempt to change the traditional Christian baptismal formula from “I baptize you, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” to something like, “I baptize you in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier.” Would such a baptism be valid? Jesus taught us to pray to “Our Father in Heaven”. Is it okay to pray to God as our “Mother”? Note that traditional Christianity has understood Mary, the Mother of Jesus to also be our spiritual mother (when dying on the Cross Jesus gave

his mother to be the mother of his beloved disciple John). Even though the Bible never refers to God as “Mother” by name we can note, however, that it does present some analogies of God’s faithful tender love with the typically faithful tender love of a mother.

- **Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples (Jn 17:21), calls us to love one another as he loves us (Jn 13 and 15), and promised to be in the midst of two or more who meet in his name.**

The questions of the ordination of women and inclusive language in the Church have been quite divisive in some parts of the Church today. We can note that many Christians including many Christian leaders including popes have promoted working for and praying for the unity that Jesus prayed for his disciples (see Jn 17:21). One lay Christian woman leader, Chiara Lubich in particular has promoted the unity for which Jesus prayed. Among other things, she highlights the importance of each us trying to love each other as Jesus loves us and has commanded us to love each other. If we do this we can also experience the presence of Jesus spiritually in our midst as he promised (see Mt 18:20). She speaks of Jesus in our midst not only as the Light but also as the greatest theologian—He can help us to understand each other and the truth better.