

Lord, Make Us Ordinary

Carrie Gress
Friday, July 5, 2024

I was stopped in my tracks recently by details of the latest rape/murder of a 12-year-old girl in Texas by two Venezuelan men. Perhaps it is because I have daughters nearly the same as this child, but the depth of its vileness sunk in deep.

Upon reflection, what is surprising is that such things should still surprise us. **Faith and family have been surgically removed right under our noses and replaced with practical atheism and the endless pursuit of pleasure. No one should be surprised by the results of a culture so distracted, disinterested, and disengaged.**

In the 1940s, Archbishop Fulton Sheen presciently warned us of what we ought to expect. **“Divine ecstasy brings about an elevation of the being, of creative and formative power; the demonic ecstasy brings about weakening of being, disintegration and decay.”** We are living in the filth of this diabolical disintegration and decay right now.

The ideology behind this development, few people know, was outlined in the 1930s by Marxist thinker Wilhelm Reich in his book called *The Sexual Revolution*. A blend of Freud and Marx, **it promoted the idea of radical individualism, self-expression, and self-discovery pursuant to any sort of sexual desire.** The revolution that turned everything upside down wasn't just some accidental concoction of too many drugs, too much free love, and too much societal upheaval. It was planned three decades prior. The net effect has been clear, as my colleague, Noelle Mering, has said: **“The ideology of the**

sexual revolution makes men soft, women hard, and children unprotected.”

But how?

Men are naturally going to become morally soft when they have no purpose to pursue, or anyone to provide for or protect. The free love long promoted by feminism made women available sexually, with contraception and abortion voiding its consequences. Who needed a wife? And yet without her and the naturally resulting children, vision evaporates, porn beckons, moral softness ensues.

What about tough women? The hookup culture has made women merely one among many. In such an environment, it seems a luxury few can afford to think that any man might love and cherish her forever. Apps like Tinder and the goal of high body counts packed off the notion of courtship like a mothballed museum piece.

Feminism offers women a protective layer to steel the female heart against vulnerability. With enough cunning, women try to play the game better than men do. It looks like offense, but it is really defense against being hurt and cast aside. No expectations means that one's expectations can never be dashed.

The toughness doesn't end there. **The fierceness women previously displayed to protect their children now has a new “child” to project; many women can be stirred up instantly not because of some existential threat to her offspring, but to the existential threat to her capacity to kill her offspring.**

And children are paying the price. **Those not lost to abortion enter life with a myriad of previously unthinkable issues, generally focused on a type of sexual grooming and abuse: incest, child pornography, human trafficking, and transitioning bodies. The abuse of**

children has long existed, but the current scale and social acceptance is unrivaled.

It is hard to speak of these three groups – weak men, tough women, and unprotected children – in a cohesive way. They no longer resemble a family but walking wounded. Order has been obliterated.

As Catholics, we speak little about divine ecstasy, associating it with a limited handful of unapproachable saints, like Bernini's St. Theresa frozen in white marble. The divine ecstasy, then, of which Archbishop Sheen speaks seems foreign. But perhaps it is not so far from our grasp?

The word ecstasy comes first from the Greek *ekstasis*, or “standing outside of oneself.” Divine ecstasy, then, is simple. We are pulled outside of ourselves in sacrifice for others. It is our daily call in whatever vocational form it may take. This is why the fruit is “an elevation of the being, of creative and formative power.” This definition makes it much easier to see the role of the family living out a Godly kind of ecstasy in mundane and daily tasks.

But can family really happen in today's world? Can there really be such a thing as a faithful man, a loving wife, and their beloved child(ren)? It is a difficult thing to pull off. After all, which comes first: the faithful man or the un-bitter woman? Many are looking high and low to find these gems amid the sea of miserable human beings. There are plenty who hide their true colors well; but most swim in the swill simply because they don't know any different.

Sometimes this coupling happens from the start where a good man and a good woman meet. **Sometimes it happens mid-relationship, where one leads the other – usually initiated by some crisis – into seeing things differently.** And sometimes it happens when both start to see things together, gradually, noticing that if x changes, then y must change as well.

And when it happens, **when the good man and the good woman sacrifice together, everything is different. She knows she can rely upon this man; and he knows he can rely upon her; and the children they have together know that both are reliable. And they all rely on God.** Certainly, no family is perfect or without suffering, but even getting through the suffering and trials is different in this type of family. The three (or four or five or six. . .) are stronger together than apart.

It is hard to live in a world animated by the demonic, but its ugliness and despair offer us a resolute clarity as to the kind of ecstasy that we ought to seek. And we now know, with G.K. Chesterton, perhaps better than any civilization before: “The most extraordinary thing in the world is an ordinary man and an ordinary woman and their ordinary children.”

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Article printed from The Catholic Thing: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org>

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