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WOMEN AND WORK: THE RADICAL PAPAL TEACHING

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> The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different.
>
> (*Mulieris dignitatem*, 10)

INTRODUCTION

The topic of women and work is one that should interest all women, as they are continuously working. Most of women's work however goes unrecognised — the work in the home which is mostly only seen when not done; the work with children from pregnancy through breast-feeding through rearing of infants through adolescence, the work women do in all sectors of paid work; and lastly, the work of women in the developing world which entails "house-work" in the broadest possible sense, viz. the work on the land, tilling the soil, gathering wood for cooking, while at the same time looking after numerous children. In other words, the world of work is thoroughly familiar to most women.

The question assigned for this paper is: "given the increased female participation in the labour market and therefore the growth of dual-worker units, does the Church's social teaching need to shift from a pre-occupation with "male breadwinner" and "motherhood" to elaborate the moral and political requirements of responsible parenting?". In the following I will discuss the situation of women who are also mothers with regard to work inside and outside the home. The discussion is thus limited to mothers, although some of the analysis also relates to the general situation of women in work-life. I realise that although the discussion here is centred on women who are mothers in families, there are many other variations — there are many women who not only work outside the home but who are also

mothers, especially in dual-income families — there are single mothers as well as widows. It goes without saying that their situation is even more difficult than that of women who have husbands.

While it seems that much of the social teaching on work and its relationship to the family has been written with the traditional model of the "male breadwinner" and the "housewife" in mind, I do not find that this is of central importance in social teaching itself. In it consideration is also given to what should apply when one spouse works outside the home as well as allowance being given to both spouses doing so. There is no insistence that women's "natural" place is to work in the home, but rather an appreciation of the importance of this work if she chooses it, and a strong denunciation of all discrimination against women who so do. Within the overall "hierarchy" of work, the primacy afforded to motherhood as something specific to women is clear, and with it the call for both special respect and practical measures for women who work outside the home in order to make motherhood realistically compatible with a professional career. *Thus, the Church's social teaching contains the principles necessary for developing two "options" for women and work: work in the home, and work outside the home.*

The Church should not in any way abandon the fight for the political and social recognition of the importance of motherhood, which in my experience is the most important form of work and one which is also specific to women. What is needed, is to elaborate the current implications of social teaching with regard to work in the home and work outside home based on the following premises. Firstly, women's work as mothers is more important than men's work as fathers, at least in the first years of childhood, including pregnancy and nursing; but fathers' work with children and in the home must be increased and employers must also recognise this. Secondly, that women's work and role as mothers must also be recognised by the state and by employers when they work outside the home: this role, again specific to them, gives rise to the right to be treated differently from men, without this leading to any kind of discrimination in the work sphere. In sum, what I will argue below is that social teaching on women and work is in no need of revision — it is in fact *much more radical* than is most "equity" feminism and current political thinking on women and work because it goes to the roots of the anthropological question about what femininity is and what rights it gives rise to. What is needed is to draw out the implications of this teaching for women's two options regarding work. Firstly, how can the choice to work in the home become a realistic choice? Secondly, what is needed in terms of rights and recognition from both indirect and direct employer to make the choice to work outside the

home whilst also being a mother a "viable" option for women, and what is needed in terms of mens' work as fathers and as those who are co-responsible for the work in the home?

In Western countries women are now as well or often better educated than men, and they increasingly work outside the home. Yet work life largely continues to be organised as if women were not also mothers. Furthermore, although in a few instances fathers of small children have started to make demands on their employers that their professional roles be rendered compatible with that of fatherhood, in general work life is still organised as if fathers had no family obligations.

This is a particular problem for women because motherhood is more important than fatherhood in terms of the time and effort necessary to nurse and raise children, however much one tries in theory to equate mothers' and fathers' roles. In the 70s version of "equity" feminism, the aim was to show that women could perform as well as men in all spheres; but in this process women ended up imitating men and accepting men's terms for working life. This was perhaps unavoidable in order to gain access to traditionally "male" professions and to become accepted by men, but this cannot be but one step on the way to real equality for women. The essential aim for women is *to achieve recognition for their difference from men and to have this difference reflected in the way work life is organised.* Women are only now beginning to realise the great importance of this. So far they have "privatised" the cross-pressures of family work and professional work, having to pretend that their roles as mothers are irrelevant to their professional work, and often having to argue that they are fully able to work like "men", i.e. that their motherhood is no "liability" in the work place. Professional standards in work life are of course the same for both men and women, but conditions for women workers who are also mothers must reflect the fact that they are often needed at home when children are sick, when they are very small, etc. Women should not have to "feel guilty" about this; however most of us who live with this "cross-pressure" know that this is the situation more often than not. It is "dangerous" to pay too much attention to one's children if one wants to be taken seriously in professional terms.

In the phase of her life when a woman finishes her education and starts a professional life she also has children. This is a critical time in her life which entails great pressures that are difficult if not impossible to handle if relegated to the private sphere alone. If this is not reflected in policies and attitudinal changes, she may be at a disadvantage professionally which could be of fundamental importance for the rest of her life. In today's Western world *the real choice is often one of having children or of having a career.*

Women still largely have to relegate their roles as mothers to the very periphery of their lives when they apply or compete for jobs; thus accepting, in essence, that men still set the terms for their work. Existing policies, attitudes, and conditions for womens' work in the West remain very far from true equality — i.e. one which respects and accommodates the difference between the sexes.

This statement depends on two premises; one, that women are different from men and have specific roles in being mothers; and two, that this difference must be reflected in the organisation of work life for women. It is thus not a private matter, but a matter where both the state and the employer has duties. Having myself experienced the discrimination inherent in the 70s model of equality between the sexes — of being considered, for all practical purposes, a "man" in terms of professional life, I am deeply convinced that women have to fight for this true equality based on difference that is the basis of Catholic social teaching on women and work.

The major flaw of "equity" feminism was its *lack of anthropology*: it focussed on gaining power — the power wielded by men, and argued that women should share in this power. This was necessary, but now it is definitely time to reflect on the *differences* between the sexes and the burden of work that motherhood entails. By pretending that this work is unimportant and even non-existent, women have accepted the need to imitate men's roles in work life and have "privatised" their roles as mothers. It must also be added that the champions of "equity" feminism have usually disregarded or even attacked motherhood: their model of the women as professional was one in which the difficult balance between motherhood and professional work did *not* feature.

It is only now, when the hegemony of such feminists is largely over, and younger women choose to have several children, while at the same time being professionals on a par with any man, that the time has come to develop and implement a policy of true equality. In this respect the papal teaching is very radical indeed. It goes to the root of the anthropological question of the difference between men and women and insists that women as mothers have a special obligation and a heavy work-load for which men cannot replace them. This means, *inter alia*, that their professional life must be protected against discrimination stemming from a lack of recognition of this difference. The difference between men and women must be acknowledged, and women as mothers be entitled to other conditions in their professional life than men. This is a truly radical point of departure, and one that many men will not welcome.

Second, the work of motherhood is itself not only a "full-time" occuptation, but one that is more important than any other to society.

Women should therefore be able to choose to work as mothers, in the home, and the state should make this a real possibility. This is also an extremely radical statement, for today this is a non-option in most Western countries, and women who "do not work", who are "just" at home, are ridiculed, looked upon with condescension, and thought of as being backward. Not only this, but they are outside social security schemes — they do not get sick leave; they do not get paid maternity leaves like their "working" sisters, their work is not counted in the GNP, and they get only the very lowest public pension if any pension at all. Thus, the option to work at home is largely non-existent in Western "advanced" states, and women who persist in being housewives are subject to the most negative attitudes, especially from other women. In this situation the Church seems to be the only voice defending the option to work at home, and not only that, the Church continues to insist that in the "hierarchy" of work, the work of motherhood — the physical work of giving birth, nursing and bringing up children — remains the noblest and most important of all work, and in much of this work a man cannot replace a women, but only complement her.

This is a "counter-cultural" statement if there ever was one; and one that angers many women as they think it means that they should "return to the kitchen", as the ineloquent slogan goes. However, this is a far more radical insight than they imagine. From my own experience with four small children in combination with professional work I know that women must insist that their work as mothers not only be recognised but also result in working conditions conducive to this combination, and that the Church's teaching on the primacy of motherhood is right: unless a mother is able to fulfil the tasks of the motherhood, she will not be a good professional in the longer run — the "cross-pressures" of work will overtake her, and the *Uneigentlighkeit* of always having to pretend that her role as mother is insignificant will take a toll. She has to be able to be herself, *qua* mother, before she can really be herself in the professional sphere. This is an insight that I have gained from my own experiences of accepting work on men's terms for a long time, and only gradually becoming strong enough and angry enough to demand that my work as a mother takes precedence and that I, as a woman, differ from men in this very important respect; and further, that my professional ability is as good as any man's, but that it needs the same amounts of time and quiet work hours for it to develop.

The point here is thus not only that practical conditions must accommodate the combination of motherhood and professional work, but that women themselves are *entfremdet* as long as they have to pretend that being a mother is something they are on the side, in their spare time, and

something that has no bearing on or consequences for their professional life. Once one dares to acknowledge the *primacy of motherhood in a personal existential sense*, it also become very clear why motherhood may induce many women to choose to work at home, and why this is an eminently important option, not only for children, but for all of society. The papal focus on the anthropological question is the key to the development of concrete political and social implications of the latter; without such a focus there is no substance to any feminism. Even if one were not Catholic, one would have to accept that it is only the Holy Father who seems to offer a coherent position on *why and how the sexes differ*, and what this difference should entail in terms of rights and obligations on the part of employers and society. Catholic social teaching offers the principles in this context, but the principles will naturally have to be implemented in different ways in different state structures and societies. Below I therefore only give some indications of how this teaching could be put into practise.

Summing up, the papal teaching on women and work is far more advanced than the 70s "equity" vision which effectively rested on an anthropology which sees men and women as equal in professional terms — which they are — but which totally neglected womens' work as mothers due to a superficial analysis of work in the home as being a thing of the past and repressive to women. But today the anthropological question imposes itself as the most important one for womens' identity — one experiences that one is unhappy with work on mens' terms and the inability to have perhaps only one or even any children. *The idea that women should have to choose between children and a profession is absurd in a time when women often are better educated than men, and women are now waking up to this insight. After all, no one expects men to choose between being fathers and having a profession. It is equally absurd to think of work outside the home as more important than work with children at home; in fact, increasingly women come to recognise that their work as mothers is of tremendous societal importance, but neither male politicians not the few women who have made it to the political top are sufficiently interested in this matter. It will entail a major cost to recognise that womens' work in the home "counts".*

This paper first presents the papal teaching on women and work, then discusses the two options in this regard, work inside the home or work in the home combined with work outside the home; and what these two options should entail in terms of obligations on the part of both direct and indirect employers. I also look briefly at the empirical status of these options in Europe and conclude that the better part of this work is still remains to be done.

Women and Work: The Social Teaching

According to Catholic social teaching, women and men alike have a right as well as an obligation to work. Work is necessary for human development, and it is often arduous. But work is also self-fulfillment: "for when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches. Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race and allow people as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfil it" (*Gaudium et spes*, 35).[1] In *Laborem exercens* (LE)[2] we learn that one develops one's humanity though work: "Work is a good thing for man — a good thing for his humanity, because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed in a sense becomes a 'more human being'" (40). Industriousness is therefore a virtue.

Work is a "fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth" (LE, 12) and is defined as "any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature and circumstances" (LE, preamble). It is a duty because it is necessary for others — the family and society — but as a rule always entails suffering and toil: "The Christian finds in human work a small part of the cross of Christ and accepts it in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his cross for us" (LE, 129). In a Christian perspective, there is no contradiction between work as suffering or sacrifice and work as fulfilment: the intention is to use one's talents fruitfully, whatever they be; but this does not exclude toil or sacrifice in one's work. Work is, in this sense, only rightly ordered when it aims at self-giving, which is what "deploying" one's given talents in work must mean.

The Family and Work

Human beings have to work to be able to form and sustain their families, indeed, "work constitutes the foundation for the formation of family life" (LE, 42), but also work *within* the family is essential to its proper functioning: "Work and industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family, for, the very reason that everyone

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[1] *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 7.12, 1965, Second Vatican Council.

[2] *Laborem exercens*, Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, 14.9.1981.

'becomes a human being' through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education" (LE, 42).

Assuming one "breadwinner" for each family, the social teaching outlines the duties of the state (the indirect employer) as well as those of the direct employer towards workers, which include *inter alia* a just wage — in this case enough to support a family; as well as social and unemployment benefits where applicable: "Just remuneration of the work of an adult who is responsible for a family means remuneration which will suffice for establishing and properly maintaining a family and for providing security for its future. Such remuneration can be given either through what is called a family wage; that is, a single salary given to the head of the family without the other spouse having to take up gainful employment outside the home" (90). Thus, the duties of both indirect and direct employers as outlined in *Laborem excercens* are far-reaching: Wages (and in the absence of it, social and unemployment benefits) are to be sufficient to support not only workers, but also their families.

The emphasis on the "worker and his family" reflects, no doubt, an empirical fact in the world: most families are supported by one "breadwinner", usually the man. However, increasingly — especially in the West — families have two parents who work outside the home. What does the social teaching say about this situation? I want to quote two paragraphs from LE in full with regard to this question, because they state what I refer to as the "radical papal teaching" in the title of this paper:

Firstly, the Holy Father states that the work of the mother must be recognised and valued by society:

> "Experience confirms that there must be a social revaluation of the mother's role, of the toil connected with it and of the need that children have for care, love and affection in order that they may develop into responsible, morally and religiously mature and psychologically stable persons. It will redound to the credit of society to make it possible for a mother — without inhibiting her freedom, without psychological or practical discrimination, and without penalising her as compared with other women — to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age. Having to abandon these tasks in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother" (LE, 91).

In this statement there are two important points; first, that society ought to value the work of mothers. After all, it is of crucial importance to any society. This implies that a women who chooses to work in the home, educating children, as her full-time job (which in any event is always is!)

should be able to do so. This implies not only that society should not discriminate against her (which it does in many Western states today) but also that she should not be "penalised as compared to other women". Here I believe that the salient point is that women who work at home usually fall outside the social security systems of modern states, thus making them in effect "right-less". Women gets the lowest public pension, if any at all, and when ill, receive no compensation. In short, all the benefits that wage-earners have negotiated politically do not include such women at all, since their work is not recognised as work by society.

Secondly, in this paragraph there is insistence that it is wrong if a mother is forced — obviously for economic reasons — to have to work outside the home if it means that she can no longer fulfil her tasks as a mother. Thus, the work of motherhood is of primary importance compared to other work. This is a point which of course will be highly contested by most feminists and by many politicians today who see women's liberation as being a question of the right to equality with men. Rather it is maintained here that true liberation for women must mean the right to be different from men and to have that right fully recognised by both the state and by the employer. This argument is laid out in detail below, but its essence is that mothers and fathers are *not* substitutable in all work with children, especially not in terms of pregnancy, nursing, and the early years of childhood; and that women who also pursue a profession or participate in politics and public life must insist on the right to have this difference reflected in work conditions and other conditions for their full participation. A corollary of this argument is that it simply will not do to have equal conditions for men's and women's work — this traps women into work conditions that imitate mens', and which ultimately lead them to "privatise" the near-to insurmountable problem of "cross-pressure". Changes in the direction of developing rights for women as mothers to work on *their* terms demand a *very radical rethinking of the relationship between family and the organisation of work life*, and this process is only now in its very beginning in some societies, such as my own, which have gone through the full phase of "equity feminism".

The second paragraph I would like to quote in full elaborates the difference between men and women and the implications this ought to have for conditions in work life:

"It is a fact that in many societies women work in nearly every sector of life. But it is fitting that they should be able to fulfil their tasks in accordance with their nature, without being discriminated against and without being excluded from jobs for which they are capable, but also without lack of respect for their family aspirations and for their specific role in contributing, together with men, for the

good of society. *The true advancement of women requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role*" (LE, 92, my emphasis).

The negation of the latter statement; viz. that women as mothers have an *irreplaceable* role in the family, is the basis of the traditional feminist movement known as "equity" feminism. The argument then — in the 70s — was against the idea that women should stay at home while men should work outside the home. However, accepting that women as mothers have a special task in which men cannot replace them need not and should not mean this. The fallacy of equity feminism was its attack on motherhood and the family and the concomitant exclusive concentration on achieving equal terms with men in paid work. I am not suggesting that this struggle was unimportant — women have always and are usually still discriminated against in professional life — *but that it was a major mistake to neglect and even attack women as mothers*. The political and social result of this was that women could formally work on equal terms with men, but in reality the real "cross-pressure" of motherhood and professional work was "privatised". This ought to have worried feminists if they were really concerned with mothers, which most women in fact are. However, their concern was undoubtedly with down-playing the importance of motherhood and of making it impossible to work in the home: being a house-wife was definitely not going to be an option, but a relic of the past. In the Scandinavian context there was such a massive campaign against house-wives that they feared telling anyone that they were "only" house-wives, i.e. that they were not "working". This attack, by other women, was followed by changes in the tax regime so that it became economically impossible for women to work in the home.

In the above paragraph we read that *not only should women be able to work outside the home while also being mothers, without discrimination in the work place; but work life itself should be structured so that women should be able to advance and compete without this having negative consequences for their roles as mothers*. This is the very opposite of "privatising" the "cross-pressures" of mothering and professional work which typifies womens' work conditions today. It is a call not for only explicit recognition of the "right to be different" for women, but *also a demand that this difference forms the basis for the restructuring of work conditions*.

The practical implications of this difference with regard to women and work is summed up in *Familiaris consortio* (FC),[3] which criticizes the

[3] *Familiaris consortio*, Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, 22.11.1981.

traditionally dominant attitude that a woman's place is in the home: "one cannot but observe that in the specific area of family life a widespread social and cultural tradition has considered women's role to be exclusively that of wife and mother, without adequate access to public functions, which have generally been reserved for men" (FC, 23). Thus, women must be ensured rights and possibilities to work and to participate in public and political life, where they have been discriminated against throughout the ages. But this access must not be at the expense of their roles as mothers: "the true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public roles and other professions. Furthermore, these roles and professions should be *harmoniously combined*" (FC, 23, our emphasis). The Church should ceaselessly insist on the value of the work of the mother, who currently is severely discriminated against in many states: "the mentality that honours women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family must be overcome. This requires that society should create and develop conditions favouring work in the home" (*Ibid.*).

Further, when women work outside the home, this "must not mean for women a renunciation of their femininity or an imitation of the male role" (*Ibid.*) Women should contribute more to politics, public and professional life, but have so far been barred from this too in Western cultures. The papal "Letter to Women" (LW)[4] published prior to the Beijing World Conference for Women in September 1995 underlines this theme very strongly: women have not only been discriminated against historically, but are also still very far indeed from true equality. Traditional attitudes about women's roles have not been abandoned, "we are heirs to a history that has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women" (LW, 3). Women have been *entfremdet* — not been able to be themselves, and are only at this moment in history really starting to wield influence in public, political, and professional life. The Holy Father continues: women have been and are treated as sex objects instead of being respected for their intelligence, skills, professionalism, and competence; their contribution in human history has been largely ignored, and the pioneers of the feminist movement were often ridiculed. As a woman I nod in agreement to all these points — they ring true because most of us have experienced them. It is only relatively recently that women achieved the suffrage in the most "advanced" Western states, that girls were educated in a like manner with boys, and we still face a very

[4] *Letter to Women* from Pope John Paul II, 10.7.1995.

many obstacles to true equality in the West, not to speak of the situation in the rest of the world. Women continue to be underpaid, overworked, underestimated and repressed by attitudes as well as by societal structures. These factors must be overcome, as the Holy Father continues in his letter, because the contribution of women is needed in all spheres of society. This is not only because she has a right to use her skills and professional abilities, but — and this is truly a radical statement — because she has something *specific* to contribute which humankind needs. Her contribution will be different because she is different, but hitherto this contribution has been undervalued and women have not been able to make it because they have not played much part in professional and public life.

What does this mean? Will women not be just as aggressive and egoistic as men once they have power? The Holy Father insists that women will be different, or perhaps one should rather say that women have the ability and talents to be different: "a greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable, for it will help to manifest the contradictions present when society is organised solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity and it will force systems to be redesigned in a way which favours the processes of humanization which mark the 'civilisation of love'" (LW, 4). This ability to "humanise" is a consequence of motherhood in its widest and also non-existential, sense. Elsewhere[5] he argues that women are better peace-makers than men because of their natural talents for empathy, their experience as mothers and their ability to care for others. This is indeed a radical message that has not yet been fully developed much, and which naturally is ignored by the type of feminists who scorn motherhood (many of the hard-liners for the 70s), as well as by the modern "gender" feminists who base their anthropology on social constructionism and who are therefore absolutely opposed to the postulate of innate natural differences between the sexes.

However, the experience of most ordinary men and women is exactly this: that there are such innate and natural differences, and that women and men complement each other as mother and father. This does *not* mean that so-called "sex roles" — stereotypes like "the woman's place is naturally in the home" are not socially constructed and thus subject to change. Womens' talents are as differently distributed as are mens', but being a mother is nonetheless as specific to a woman as being a father is specific to a man. The various professional roles undertaken by women have evolved despite discrimination over the centuries. But the natural qualities of

[5] World Day of Peace Message, 1995.

masculinity and femininity are nonetheless ontological: we are different because we were created thus. Because men dominated so much of history, they defined women's role, depriving her of abilities to contribute in public and professional life: women were not equal with men. In this period such an equality is slowly being achieved, but there is a need to develop the anthropological implications of femininity for women themselves, as well as for men, politicians, and employers. One of the major problems today in the advanced West is that women in work and public life are forced to imitate men and accept men's conditions. Thus, the radical implications of the Pope's teaching have not yet been developed: the fact that women are different from men must mean that they should not accept men's terms for their work life, that motherhood and work in the home should be valued, and that femininity should flourish, enrich, and change all spheres of social, political, and professional life.

The papal teaching on women and work can be summarised thus:

1. Women are ontologically different from men. Motherhood, which is what is specific to women, means that men cannot substitute for them in much of the work implicit in nursing and child rearing. Men and women are complementary as mother and father.

This does *not* mean that women's "natural" place is in the home, or that men should not assume their roles as fathers and share in child-rearing and house-work. If both spouses work outside the home, this is a necessity. It means that women, whose talents are as variously distributed as are men's, should have a choice of how and where to use these talents. But motherhood is the most important work of all.

2. Women should not be forced to work outside the home for economic reasons. A just family wage means that one "bread-winner" should earn enough for the whole family's needs. Women who choose to work at home should not be discriminated against, and the state should make such a choice possible.

3. Women who choose to work outside the home should have conditions that allow them to fulfil the tasks of motherhood at the same time. Motherhood is of another order than work, and is of primary importance not only to children and society, but also to women themselves. They should not be discriminated against in their professional career because they are mothers.

4. Women have talents and qualities that men do not have, and which are gravely needed in professional, public, and political life. These talents stem from their experience as mothers, which in its widest sense is what constitutes the feminine. Women will "humanise" society, and their contri-

bution is therefore of vital importance. After centuries of discrimination, it is only at this time that women really are in a position to make this contribution. Conditions must therefore be right so that women, who are also mothers, are able to partake fully in public life.

These four points stand in marked contrast to the much "weaker" version of "equity" — feminism which proceeds from the implicit assumption that liberation means treatment like men in the professional sphere — a "level playing field". This, I argue, leads to discrimination against women who are also mothers, and lets men retain the structural power over politics and professional conditions for work.

Below I will discuss some of the more salient points relating to women's possibility of motherhood and work. The remarks are confined to the Western European situation with regard to the analysis of specific policy measures that serve as examples of how one might implement improvements in today's situation.

Women and Work: The Right to be Treated Differently

The feminism of the 70s, so-called "equity" feminism, argued that equality could only be had once women enter all spheres of men's work. I think this was a basically sound idea in terms of gaining power, but it also led to the implication that once a woman can hold all positions that men hold, she is liberated and free. But liberation did not result from this — women did not become happier once they were truck drivers, deep coal miners, or commando soldiers. It was important to show that women can do what men can do at the time, but once this access to all positions in work life has been obtained, what difference does it make? Most women do not choose these types of professions, and in gaining access to them women did not demand that work life should be on their terms, but accepted men's terms. Often the result was not to create something new and different, but simply to imitate men. I think this has been one of the major errors in the development of 70s feminism — it has simply substituted women for men in many professions, but these women have accepted men's terms.

Some years ago a female professor at one of the best American universities suggested that there should be two career tracks, the A and the B track. The A track should be for women who did not have children and who thus could work much longer hours and who did not "interfere" with claims for maternity leave, etc. The important jobs would be in the A track; in the B track would be the lesser important jobs where the women who were also mothers would find themselves. In this way work life could

continue to be organised on men's terms, and women could participate, but only if they accepted men's terms. Needless to say the person suggesting this had no children herself. *This type of thinking is absolutely wrong*: women must develop demands for the organisation of work life on their own terms.

Today women get as good an education as men in the Western world. This is not so in the developing world, where girls often are discriminated against if there is any educational opportunity at all available. However, in our educational institutions there are now often a majority of women. But even given this, there are few women professors or women in leading positions. In my own country women make up a large share of the government and parliament, but are conspicuously absent from e.g. business life where the "old boys network" reigns unchallenged. Some even say that since political life has become so penetrated by women, men then leave it, taking the power with them.

Internationally the picture is much the same: *Women are as well-educated as men, yet their ascent to the top stops short.* There are many reasons for this: the lack of good family and social policies so that women leave working life once they have children; the mechanisms in the work place whereby men choose men like themselves and keep women beneath the so-called "glass-ceiling" that separates them from the top jobs; the lack of good maternity policies, and many old attitudes that die hard.

Women still earn less than men and are the ones who are asked about their private lives at job interviews. If you are young and have no children, the prospective employer wonders whether you will soon have several; if you are older and have postponed child-bearing he wonders whether you will soon have children, too; and if you already have children he wonders whether you have the time for another job. Those who have postponed having children so as to get a job now face unemployment because it is thought that they will hurry to have children since they are "late"! Men are usually never asked these questions. *It is not exaggeration to say that many young women face a real choice between getting a job and having children.* This is an even more disturbing situation in contemporary Europe, with its record high unemployment for young people.

Although the level of public support and state intervention varies throughout Western society, it is probably the case that this has to be a political task, not a task that the market will undertake, i.e. to ensure that a mother does not loose her job when she has a child, that she has a maternity leave which allows her to breast-feed her child, and that she or the father can stay at home when the child is ill, etc. The social policies for working parents are good in the region of Europe I come from, and this has un-

doubtedly contributed to more job security for women. I could never have been working while having four children in five years had it not been possible to take maternity leaves and to have relatively flexible working conditions. A very natural matter like the need for the child to be breast-fed becomes possible in today's world only if there are policies that encourage this. Needless to say, all such policies are long-term investments for any society, especially for the Western ones where the fertility rates are very low and decreasing.

Women and Work: Some Key Statistics

Before discussing the political implications of the social teaching on women and work it is useful to look at some key statistics in this area. They are drawn from the UN publication *The World's Women 1995. Trends and Statistics*, which in turn in based on input from all the major UN agencies. Addressing the global population of women, the publication summarises the situation for women as one in which women work more than men, but most of women's work is unpaid. Women in the developing world work in the informal sector and in the family, but have no access to credit, land ownership, or wages; women in general work in different jobs than men, which carry lower salaries and lower status, and they continue to have major responsibility for household work when they also have a paid job (*Ibid.*, p. 105).

In the West, women spend about 30 hours a week on house-work while men spend 10-15 hours. Women do all the traditional household chores; men perform the traditional male tasks. Yet, from 1970 to 1990 women's share in the labour force has increased globally. In the West it makes up around 40%.

Unemployment varies between men and women, albeit in different ways. In some European states women are very disadvantaged in terms of employment — in Spain, Belgium, Italy, and Germany where the number of unemployed women far exceeds that of men (chart 5.13, *ibid.* - 1992 figures) Likewise, in terms of *youth* unemployment, the rates for women are far higher than that of men in the same states, including France (chart 5.14, *ibid*).

Looking at types of occupation, there is, as expected, a predominance of women in the "clerical and service sector", but there is also a growing number of women in the professional and managerial category (chart 5.16, *ibid.*).

In Europe, women are much more likely to work part-time than men, and earn less than men despite equal pay laws (*ibid.*, p. 128). There is paid maternity leave in all European states; however the time length varies greatly, form one year with full pay in Norway to only some few weeks in other states.

The Social Teaching applied to Women's Work in Europe: An Assessment[6]

One option for a women should be to work in the home, educating children. Is this a viable option in Europe today?

I am not an economist, but continue to be puzzled by the seeming fact that when I was a child, it was not a problem to sustain a family on one income, whereas today it seems not to be possible for the average household anywhere. This naturally has much to do with the tax system and the lack of political support for the one-income family.

In the Scandinavian context, the explicit political goal since the 70s has been that women should have several children if they want to, yet they should not opt to stay at home. Therefore it has been economically impossible to live on one income. In other countries this is not so explicitly as a political goal yet it seems that two incomes are still necessary. Then comes the fact that more children require a better income.

When the Holy See participated in the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, one of the points made was that women should have a *choice between working at home and working outside the home.* This must have been about the only delegation promoting this option. This choice does not seem to exist in any European country today, assuming average income levels. In the Scandinavian countries, 70-80% of women with children under 5 years work outside the home. In France, Germany, and the UK the figure is between 45 and 64%. If we correct for children, i.e. look at all the women in these countries, the figures in Scandinavia actually *go up* when women are mothers, while they decline somewhat in the UK and Germany, and rise slightly in France.[7] Only in France and Germany

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[6] Parts of this section are based on a paper, presented to the Pontifical Council for the Family at the conference "Demography in Europe", October 1996; which is forthcoming in the Council's periodical *Familia et vita*, 1997. The paper gives a detailed analysis of the various types of economic and other support for mothers and families in Europe, as well as child and maternity leave arrangements.

[7] *Samhallets stød til barnfamiljerna i Europa*, vol. 1, Finansdepartementets ekseprtutredning, Ds 1996:49, Stockholm p. 37.

does it pay better if the husband increases his income, i.e. works more, than if the wife enters the labour market. In a comprehensive recent Swedish study of all forms of economic support for families in Scandinavia and France, Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands, *it is clear that European tax structures are such that they favour two incomes*. By increasing the family income by 75% in these countries, the tax regime favours both spouses working. Only in France and Germany is it slightly more beneficial that the husband increases his income.[8] In the Scandinavian countries there is a very strong incentive that both spouses work. For an average income family, it remains virtually impossible for only one party to work. Women here not only work outside the home while the children are small; they also tend to have full-time jobs all the time.

The sustained attack on work in the home that the feminism of the 70s launched has done a great amount of damage to the role of motherhood and all the work that it entails. No one who has small children can doubt that it means very much work indeed. It is a work that never finishes, for which few if any are grateful, and which is neglected by society; in fact, it is completely unappreciated by the state. *This invisible work is nonetheless the work that sustains and builds societies*. When the mother works outside the home, her "second shift" begins when she comes home. If she works in the home, no one thinks that she really works.

The clear yet sad conclusion to be drawn is that *if there is to be a realistic choice between work at home and outside the home, massive political changes must happen in advanced European welfare states*. First, the basis for taxation and social policies must be the family and not the individual. The concept of "family income" must be developed. Second, work in the home must be counted in the GNP and be given social recognition as work, e.g. count towards pension points and sickness benefits. States have no incentive to do this, as they incur more social obligations by doing so. Further, most women in politics do not see housework as important to the advancement of women, and thus try to make sure that this option is non-existent. For instance, in the Scandinavian states only women with a job outside the home get paid maternity leave.

What about the second option which women should have: the ability to combine professional work and motherhood in a, way that fully respects motherhood, i.e. is based on the "right to be different? Is this an real option in today's Europe?".

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[8] *Ibid.*, table 6.3. This study covers all economic aspects of child and family support in these countries.

Women today have children relatively late in their fertile age. Those who get an education have to wait until their late 20s for their first child. Once they finish their education, they have to, and want to, find a job. However, at the same time they ought to have their first child. Soon after they ought to have their second, third, and perhaps fourth child. This activity is roughly concentrated in the period between 30 and 40 years of age. It is this period, which I call the "life-phase squeeze" — the major parameters for the rest of one's life have to be laid down, in terms of family and professional life. In addition, this is the period of life when women also take care of ailing parents. Combining such family obligations with motherhood and work outside the home is a tall order indeed.

The situation for women *who work outside the home and have small children* is usually one of working at two jobs. The "second shift" constitutes a full job, but this is "invisible" work. In the egalitarian states of Scandinavia there is little possibility of hiring domestic help to do housework beyond cleaning and *au pair* positions. The requirement is to pay domestic workers a salary that equals that of e.g. an industrial worker. This means in effect that parents have to do the lion's share of all "home work" themselves.

Do men and women share equally in this third job? The answer is a very clear no. There is no exception to the conclusion that it is women who work most at home, regardless of their hours outside the home: "The contribution that women in dual-career house-holds made ... was still almost *three times* as great as the contribution made by men".[9] There is no major difference between state types and countries. On a global scale, this difference between men's and women's work is even greater. The Beijing conference on women highlighted the fact that women's work is unpaid and unrecognised — in the developing world men account for two thirds of all remunerated work. In the Western world this is a bit more balanced, yet women still only spend 34% of their working time on paid work whereas the male ratio is 66%.[10]

Further, *the reason why women work so much and men help so little lies in attitudes, not in political or economic incentives*. However great the latter, men everywhere are equally behind on domestic work-sharing. There are smaller variations in time spent on domestic work between European

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[9] Dorne-Huiskes, A. v. (1997), "The Unpaid Work of Mothers and House-Wives in the Different Types of Welfare States", forthcoming in A. Føllesdal and P. Koslowski (eds.), *Restructuring the Welfare State: Ethical Issues of Social Policy in an International Perspective*, Berlin: Springer Verlag.

[10] Human Development Report, UN, 1995.

countries, but the overall trend is consistent. This invites the conclusion that *women are fairly exhausted during the period in which they have small children, which is also the period when they compete with men in their professions*. They are "squeezed" not only by having a job outside the home and one inside the home, but also by the lack of real work sharing with their husbands.

Thus, a very important improvement for women is the gradual change of mentality with regard to men's roles as fathers. Younger men in Norway now increasingly demand work terms that are compatible with their responsibilities as fathers, and I think that this helps enormously in bringing about a needed attitudinal change in work life. Women alone cannot and should not bring about this change — men are also responsible for sharing their time between family and outside work once children are beyond the infant stage.

Those who have a family know that there has to be a profound sense of complementarity if a modern family is going to work and be a place for harmonious development of all its members. On the practical level, two jobs outside the home and one inside the home make three. Unless the spouses really complement each other and work in true solidarity it is usually the woman who ends up doing two of these three jobs. Men need to change their attitude to this, and women today really need men who understand the importance of this.

The Christian view of the sexes is one of complementarity in equality. Men and women are fundamentally different, yet equal as human beings, in human dignity and in rights. There is in my experience a profound truth in the stress on this difference and on the complementarity. Since modern life is so stressful and hard pressed for time, parents have to be all the more solidary with each other in the daily work in the home and with the children. Having children means that the "second shift" starts after normal working hours, and it does not end until the children are grown up. Fathers can do most of the work with children as well as mothers, especially when they are beyond the breast-feeding stage, and fathers become, in my experience, much more mature as human beings when they assume practical responsibilities with the children. Also men must dare to tell their employers that they prefer not to travel or work over-time because they are fathers. Only a generation ago, fathers were generally not involved in direct work with children.

Also of direct relevance here is the almost *total lack of an extended family*. Western women have few or no relatives around to step in and help with baby-sitting, or be of assistance in case of illness or absence. The tremendous resource that women in the developing world have in this

respect makes it much easier to have many children. My African colleague in the Holy See's Beijing delegation has four children like me, but unlike me she could rely on relatives to look after them while she was away — an unheard of luxury for someone coming from a society where families have become dependent on the state rather than on relatives.

The cross-pressures of motherhood and professional work is highest in the period when women have children, and political measures are needed in most societies to make sure that a woman is not discriminated against by her employer when she gets pregnant, such as losing her job. Depending on the state structure and other factors, *maternity policies* will necessarily differ. However, some factors are in my view important: maternity leave ought to be a paid one, it has to entail a guarantee of job security, and it has to be long enough so that the mother can avoid the stress of "double" — work as long as she breast-feeds, often up to 9 months. It is beyond all doubt that breast-feeding is very important to the child, and also to the bonding between mother and child.

The choice to have children is immensely easier to make if there is maternity leave that is *independent of the employer*. A woman who has one, perhaps two children may "get by" without criticism from her employer — this is after all still the "normal" family. But the woman who is pregnant for the third and fourth time always feels that she somehow lets the employer down — she has children all the time. Thus, when a woman goes against the current and has several children, she must at least not be directly and formally dependent on her employer, who should not be able to put pressure on her. This requires that the employer does not pay her maternity leave and that she has a formal right to retain her job after her absence. This said, it must be added that the reality in Europe in this regard today is a far cry from the above: in most states women have a short maternity leave; often they have no legal job guarantee, and there are many cases of women who lose their jobs once pregnant. In the current state of high structural unemployment in Europe, women are at a disadvantage, both in applying for jobs — the employer "fears" that she will have children — and in retaining her job if she has children.

Finally there is the issue of *attitudes* — employers' attitudes, men's attitudes, and the attitudes of society at large. Work life and political life in the West is largely still organised on men's terms. By this I mean that children are non-existent in this scheme of organisation. The reason why mothers with young children virtually have *no place in political life* and thus no political power is that they cannot justify sitting in meetings till midnight or to travel much of the year. Women in political life are those who either have no children or have grown-up children. They usually do not speakout

for motherhood. Male politicians are not generally interested in this issue, and even if they are, nevertheless women have defined "women's issues" as something that only pertain to them. When there are female ministers in a government, they are usually in charge of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Family, or Equality — ministries with which men are seldom charged.

In work life the situation is similar: only some few women are powerful enough to question the structures of work life itself and to demand that it be better organised for parents of small children. Very few men follow suit. Usually men regard motherhood as a "female problem" from the standpoint of professional work, and few are the men who take full responsibility for their fatherhood in their professional sphere. If both spouses work outside the home, the "home work" and the care for the children requires that the father also says to his employer that he has to stay home with a sick child or pick up the child from school. Only if and when men assume their equal share of family responsibility will it be possible to effect real changes in the attitudes of employers and in the organisation of work life. With modern technology, much can be done in terms of working more from home and working flexible hours.

However, the fact remains that the family with small children needs to have sufficient time for children. This probably means that *both spouses should work less* than other people during this period of life. This issue is a political and public one, because having children is extremely important for any society. The state therefore should actively support families, in its own self-interest.

Conclusions

The reflection on what implementation of the papal teaching about women and work would entail resulted in a call for a reorganisation for work life to accommodate and facilitate the combination of motherhood and professional work without detriment to the mother. This must mean one, that she will be assured the option to be pregnant, give birth and breast-feed the infant without loosing her job, and later, that she is able to take care of children without being discriminated against in the work place. The employer — both the state as indirect employer, as well as the direct employer, have important obligations in this respect. The papal teaching states very clearly that women should not be professionally worse off because they are mothers. While the role of the father is important; the role of the mother remains the central one when the children are infants. This is something that many women hotly contest, but which many others recognise to be true once they have children themselves.

Similarly, a women should be able to work at home. This is something that society and by implication the state should encourage. The papal teaching is very clear on the need for major changes here, both in terms of attitudes and in terms of concrete measures, stating that it is a political task to make it possible for women to work at home. This option is not available in most of today's Europe — work with children and in the house remains hidden, unrecognised, and uncounted in official statistics.

But the most important contribution of the papal teaching on women is the anthropological one, which although not the topic of this analysis, remains the basis for it. Modern feminism has been activist, has accomplished much, and has come far in a short time despite its many errors and problems, but it has completely failed to problematise the *Entfremdung* of women in a largely male-dominated world in the deepest sense, viz. the anthropological one. Being "oneself", in such a deep sense, is necessary before we can be anything for others, in social, professional, and political life. Catholicism insists on the over-arching importance of motherhood — physical and non-physical — as the essence of femininity. This is deep truth that many women only discover when they themselves become mothers, and one that few women so far have introduced into public and political debate.