

Dear Editor:

The Winter Edition of *Focus* majoring on Reproductive Technology provided an excellent presentation of many of the complexities pertaining to this ethically difficult topic: the emotions, the hurts, the innate drives, technology driving forward without a pre-existing ethical and theological framework, the “natural” options versus the medically-assisted “artificial” options, the notion of submission to less-than-favourable circumstances, politics of adoption, the sanctity of life, the conundrums of “life on ice”, embryo adoption, single parenthood, reproductive “rights”, homologous versus heterologous IVF, God’s sovereignty, the miracle of childbirth. And there are yet many other issues.

Having been involved in the CMDS Ethics Committee a couple of decades ago when we formulated Position Papers on several ethical issues, including one on Reproductive Technology (which differs relatively little from the Catholic view so well presented by Cataudella and Wolfs, but which has been put back into the cupboard), I would make a couple of remarks.

First, a question: *Why* did the Sovereign God prescribe the sexual act to be restricted to one man and one woman united lovingly and respectfully in the bond of marriage? If we can think through to clarity on this question, it surely must then give insight into the boundaries that should prevail regarding Reproductive Technology. Spousal fidelity, security and belonging on the part of the offspring, balanced role-modeling, ideal environment for nurture, self-sacrifice, a clear sense of genealogy, prevention of disease all come into focus among other insights.

Second, a comment. We live in a world order that is so remotely different from God’s intended “garden living” in fellowship with Him that all our emotions and perspectives are tainted and distorted. Sometimes what we would regard as normative is not so from God’s viewpoint! Concepts such as rights, entitlement, desire, privilege, obligation, accountability, responsibility, submission to adversity all call out their competing claim for attention in a confusingly noisy ethical environment. We need to take measured time in solitude and prayer to determine which of these is influencing our thinking and how it relates to God’s best intention for our lives.

Dan Reilly’s admonition is timely: “In every moment our goal should be to build God’s kingdom by moving our heart and the hearts of others closer to the heart of Christ.” This should be imprinted in colour and capital letters on our minds as we seek to clarify all our ethical challenges, personal and academic. And a sprinkle of grace and humility is wise since perfection is going to be difficult to achieve!

John E. Kraulis  
General Surgeon

Dear Editor:

I am writing in regards to the study questions found at the end of the last Focus issue. I am one of those women who are single and approaching the end of her “shelf life” in regards to being able to have children. I appreciate the desire to have children that motivated the questions listed there. It is hard when the Church generally looks favourably on families over singles, however, that isn’t the way God looks at us. God values everyone. ( Luke 12:6-7 <sup>6</sup>Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. <sup>7</sup>Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.)

That being said, God, not the Church, has provided parameters for the formation of families. We see the pattern in scripture that a man and woman marry and they have children – usually. Suffering comes with infertility because this isn’t the usual pattern. It is the usual pattern for a single woman not to have children biologically. However, God sees that this is a form of suffering for single women and there are promises in the Bible for “barren” women – be they married or single. In the New King James Version, Psalm 133:9a is translated like this: “He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children”. and in the NASB “Like” is replaced with “as”. I particularly like these translations of this verse because God never promised that every woman would be a mother. However, He gives all women opportunities to be “like” or “as” mothers. In the case of single women this may mean “mothering” children of friends or nieces and nephews or other ways. Consider the example of Amy Carmichael who rescued and cared for destitute children in India.

I have had many non-Christians encourage me to consider artificial means to have children apart from being married. My usual response is that I want to have a family in the fashion that God has “prescribed” in the Bible. Children deserve a chance to have both a mom and a dad. Certainly, families get broken in various ways – death, divorce, infidelity, abuse, etc – however, choosing to be a single parent is a big difference from becoming one via circumstances which usually are outside one’s control. I have had friends who have considered adoption, though not reproductive technologies, as these questions suggest. I have discouraged them from becoming single parents and encouraged them to wait on God to provide a husband first instead of seeking to become mothers independently. I think IVF is something married couples need to be very careful and wise about as Nathan and Christina Wanner demonstrated in their story. I don’t think IVF or artificial insemination is an option for single women because the outcome is really the same as sexual intercourse if a child is conceived. Taking away the physical aspect of sexual intercourse doesn’t make it right to have the same outcome. We have to be careful of giving in to the Western attitude that we can do whatever we want to if it is possible technologically. God has provided parameters and we need to respect these parameters. Questions I would bring to single women considering becoming mother independently are these: Are there ways you could be more involved in the lives of children who are in your life already? What service to the Lord are you uniquely able to do because you are single and have no dependents?

I think one has to temper one's desire to have children with remembering that God is sovereign over every aspect of our lives (Jeremiah 29:11). Single women can trust that their current situation is the best situation that God has for them right now (Romans 8:28). Instead of thinking about and acting to becoming mothers independently, I suggest single women need to consider that God may have something else for them to do whether that is temporarily or for the rest of their life. I hope that God will provide a husband for me before my "shelf life" runs out, but I can attest as I'm one year away from the big 4-0, that God has made me "like a joyful mother of children" though I have none to call my own. Psalm 27:14 – "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart. Wait I say on the Lord".

In Christ,  
Michelle Korvemaker