

ELIZABETH R. SCHILTZ

Should Bearing the Child Mean Bearing All the Cost?

A Catholic Perspective on the Sacrifice of Motherhood and the Common Good

THE SINGLE MOST COMMON sacrifice that the majority of us will make in our lifetimes is the sacrifice of raising children. It is, of course, indisputable that the spiritual and psychic rewards of raising a child are real, concrete, and incalculable. But it is equally indisputable that child raising also entails sacrifice. On a practical level, raising children involves sacrifice of sleep, privacy, space, free time, and freedom, and sometimes a degree of one's sanity—sacrifices that are, like the rewards, real, concrete, and incalculable. Raising children, however, also involves financial sacrifices that are actually quite calculable.

But the calculable financial sacrifice of raising children is not borne equally by those of us with children. The calculable financial sacrifice of raising children is borne, to an overwhelmingly disproportionate degree, by *women* who are raising children. Here in the United States, for those who have never had children, young women (between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-three) make 98 cents for every dollar men make.¹ In contrast, the wage gap between all men and all women—including working mothers this time—is an astonishing 59 cents to the dollar. Even if we take out all the women who work part time, and compare the wages of men and women

working fulltime—and again include working mothers—we still find women's earnings are 77 percent of men's.² In contrast, having children seems to have no effect, and may even have a positive effect, on men's income.³ And that's just the United States.⁴

It is a simple, tragic fact that throughout the globe significantly more women and children live in poverty than do men. Mary Ann Glendon recently reminded the United Nations that

three-quarters of the world's poverty population today is composed of women and children. In the developing world, hundreds of millions of women and children lack adequate nutrition, sanitation and basic health care. And even in affluent societies, the faces of the poor are predominantly those of women and children, for . . . there is a strong correlation between family breakdown and the feminization of poverty. The costs of rapid increases in divorce and single-parenthood have fallen heavily on women, and most heavily of all on those women who have made personal sacrifices to care for children and other family members.⁵

Across the globe, without exception, and really without exaggerating, it is legitimate to say that raising children generally impoverishes women financially.

As Catholics, how are we to react to the stark reality of this concrete financial sacrifice? How can Catholic teachings help us sort through the complex and tangled web of the issues involved in securing mothers' access to financial security? Tackling this issue as a Catholic legal academic requires grappling with two bodies of thought that are about as different in perspective from one another as they could conceivably be—the Catholic Church's teachings on the role of women and the law-journal articles and books of feminist legal scholars. The most interesting discovery for me in beginning this endeavor has been finding surprisingly Catholic ideas woven into the feminist arguments, and surprisingly feminist ideas woven into the Catholic teachings.

In this article, I will explain the ways in which I believe these two bodies of thought are compatible. I will argue that this compatibility suggests a number of ways in which Catholic thought could contribute to the development of a theory of justice that is compatible with both Catholic and feminist theorist agendas. I will also argue that this compatibility suggests a potentially helpful way to begin the difficult work of translating Church teachings on this topic into concrete policy proposals—namely, focusing carefully on the precise nature of the “common good” that women’s sacrifice of child raising is ultimately considered to be fostering.

Over the last couple of decades, feminist theorists have been struggling with the inadequacy of the image of the autonomous individual on which “the liberal theory that dominates contemporary American thought” is based.⁶ The image of the autonomous, independent actor reflects “the social role historically assigned to men rather than women, and . . . ignores dependents’ need for care.”⁷ Feminist theorists such as Martha Fineman, Eva Feder Kittay, Joan Tronto, Robin West, and Joan Williams, to name just a few, have argued for, to borrow from Robin West’s book title, a “re-imagining” of our notion of justice to incorporate the “inevitability and normality of dependency” and the need for dependency care.⁸ (I will refer to these feminist theorists as the “dependency theorists.”) Alasdair MacIntyre acknowledged his debt to these feminist pioneers when he applied this insight to general systems of moral philosophy in *Dependent Rational Animals*.⁹

Most of the energy of the dependency theorists has been directed toward addressing the practical issue of the increased marginalization of the world’s dependency work—primarily raising children, but also caring for the old and the infirm.¹⁰ This marginalization is reflected in the statistics I offered earlier about women’s pay and poverty, but it is even more directly on display in the formula for the world’s basic economic tool for measuring national wealth—the gross domestic product. On a global level, the only forms of labor we acknowledge as contributing to the wealth of a nation are *mon-*

etary transactions.¹¹ The unpaid care work of women in their homes simply doesn't count, economically, because it is not paid labor. The work of the dependency theorists can be best understood by situating it in the larger context of feminist theories about how to address this general problem.

The various feminist theorists' approaches to the issue of the marginalization of care work can be crudely sorted out into two camps. One camp says we should change the fact that women do most of this unpaid care work. The other camp says we should change the fact that this care work is not accorded any economic value. For those who fall within the first camp, the solution lies in either encouraging men to do more unpaid care work or in discouraging women from doing unpaid care work.¹² If men and women equally shared the burden of unpaid labor—or if neither men nor women engaged in it at all—then all we would need to do to ensure financial equality between men and women is to ensure formal equality for men and women in the paid labor force, enacting laws making it illegal to discriminate in any way between men and women.

This first camp is rapidly losing ground, both practically and theoretically. Some writers, like Eva Feder Kittay, argue that it isn't getting anywhere because women are refusing to give up the care work—recognizing the value of dependency care and the sterility of the male world that doesn't recognize this value—even when it costs them. Kittay writes,

The call for sexual equality has been with us for a long time. But until relatively recently, the demands of even the most foresightful women have assumed very traditional and gendered arrangements of dependency work. Radical visions in which dependency work is taken out of the family have left many women cold—largely, I suggest, because they have failed to respect the importance of the dependency relationship. A view of society as consisting of nested dependencies, so constituted as to provide all with the means to achieve

functioning that respects the freedom and relatedness of all citizens, is a view that can only emerge now, as women taste the fruits of an equality fashioned by men—and find it wanting. This equality has not left room for love’s labor and love’s laborers. It is time to shape a new vision by creating new legal theories and forging the requisite political will. We need to revise our social and political commitment to ourselves as dependents and as dependency workers. Only through these efforts may we come to see what it means for men and women to share the world in equality.¹³

Other writers argue convincingly that the feminist theorists who argue against “repronormativity”—that is, the feminists who argue for policies aimed at *discouraging* women from bearing and rearing children—are essentially elitist, racist, and cruel.¹⁴ They end up having to propose things like purposely impoverishing women who choose to have children (and, necessarily, their children), or importing immigrants to do our nation’s care work.¹⁵ And almost everyone who thinks about this seriously is forced to concede that, practically, in the real world in which we live, women do, in fact, do most of the parenting: “the traditions of femininity have proven remarkably persistent.”¹⁶

The camp that is gaining ground, I think, is the camp of the feminist theorists who accept—either reluctantly or not—that women do, in fact, do most of the dependency work and seek to accord this kind of work its proper economic value. This camp advocates for changes to public structures to reflect the value of care work. The specific proposals run the gamut of the things that the Catholic Church calls for, consistently and insistently, in its teachings.¹⁷ In *Laborem Exercens*, the Church offers three prescriptions for society’s devaluation of care work. First, it calls for economic compensation for this important work, either in the form of a family wage sufficient to support the needs of the entire family or other forms of financial support for mothers who devote themselves exclusively to their families. Second, it calls for a reevaluation of the work of

mothers in preserving families, to ensure that women who do not work outside the home are not penalized for dedicating their energy to a function so vital for social development. Third, the Church calls for a restructuring of the workplace to ensure that women are not penalized on the job market for the work they do within the family.¹⁸

In this respect, it seems to me that the Church sounds remarkably feminist and some of the feminist theorists sound remarkably Catholic. Many of the specific proposals espoused by the feminist theorists are consistent with these demands of our Church—changes to our welfare policies and our tax policies to directly subsidize unpaid child-care work by mothers, paid maternity leaves and guarantees of job protection while on maternity leave, and more radical proposals to restructure the workplace itself to permit mothers (and, incidentally, also fathers) to spend significant time caring for their families without undue penalties in career advancement.¹⁹ What every one of these proposals has in common is that each shifts some of the cost—and thus some of the sacrifice—of child raising from individual parents to society as a whole. Interestingly, the feminist theorists making these proposals seem to struggle the hardest with a point that the Church has the least trouble with—articulating a convincing rationale for making *everyone* in society share the cost of raising children, regardless of whether they themselves need such support in raising their children, or whether they have children.

Two rationales have been offered by the feminist theorists. The first is that children are a “public good.” The unpaid work of raising children benefits the whole of society, by ensuring new generations of capable workers, citizens, and taxpayers. Under the current situation in which mothers pay the disproportionate cost of this benefit, our market institutions, as well as men in general and even childless women, “are ‘free-riders,’ appropriating the labor of the caretaker for their own purposes.”²⁰ But the problem with this rationale is that it only supports half of the reform agenda outlined

above. It only provides a rationale for subsidizing child raising. It does not support any sort of accommodations for mothers in the workplace. Under this rationale, employers could arguably fulfill their social responsibilities to properly value child raising by encouraging women with children to quit work and providing bonuses to men with children; the government could arguably fulfill its social responsibilities by increasing direct and indirect subsidies for child-care work in the home.

Such positions are only reinforced by a dedication to “formal equality” in the workplace and a refusal to accept any gender-based differences that might be relevant to job performance in any way. If the best argument we can present for workplace restructuring is based on equality, it is hard to make any sort of “business case” for the costs associated with such restructuring. Why not just pay women who become pregnant to stay home? Why pay more, why restructure the workplace dramatically, to keep mothers on the job, if all they offer the workplace is exactly the same as what men offer?

I suggest that this might be the reason some feminist theorists have embarked on the more ambitious project of reimagining justice, of replacing the traditional equality-based notion of justice. This alternative notion of justice incorporates the imperative that society properly value the services of caregivers, but instead of harnessing that notion with the demand of strict equality of treatment, it attempts to place that idea into a construct that accommodates generosity in treatment of people based on the needs of their dependents.²¹ That would permit us, as a society, to say to an employer that it *does* have a more compelling reason to accommodate a request for a flexible work schedule from a mother raising young children than, to borrow an example from one of the “anti-repro-normativity” feminists, a request for a flexible work schedule from a woman who wants to spend more time engaging in the “study of the history of feminism.”²² Under a dependency-based theory of justice, the rationale for treating the two requests differently would

be our consensus, as a society, first, that child raising is a public good and second, that we are justified in making accommodations that recognize the reality that “children are human beings in need who are not capable of supporting themselves.”²³

Let me now turn to the intellectual resources of the Catholic Church, and the ways in which I believe the Church could contribute to the debate of the feminists in furthering some common goals. The Church supports its calls for changing policies and workplaces to accommodate motherhood with two somewhat paradoxical arguments, reflecting some real tension. One argument is that the preservation of the family is crucial to solving many of contemporary society’s most critical problems, and that the work of preserving the family—primarily the work of mothers—needs to be properly valued by society. For the Church, the family plays a vital role in preserving and transmitting the truth about the human person—that all are created in the image and likeness of God. That truth is the “main thread and . . . the guiding principle of . . . *all of the Church’s social doctrine*.”²⁴ The Church understands the preservation of the family to be key to the development of society. In *Familiaris Consortio*, the family is identified as having “vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually. . . . It is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and the development of society itself.”²⁵ The Church notes that

faced with a society that is running the risk of becoming more and more depersonalized and standardized and therefore inhuman and dehumanizing, with the negative results of many forms of escapism—such as alcoholism, drugs and even terrorism—the family possesses and continues still to release formidable energies capable of taking man out of his anonymity, keeping him conscious of his personal dignity, enriching him with deep humanity and actively placing him, in his uniqueness and unrepeatability, within the fabric of society.²⁶

That is an argument that Catholic scholars like Mary Ann Glendon and Helen Alvaré are developing with research and scholarship on the efficacy of the traditional family structure in addressing hosts of social problems.²⁷ This is one concrete way in which Catholic teachings and Catholic scholars can contribute to this debate, supporting the feminist theorists' arguments that child raising is, indeed, a public good.

But the other argument the Church makes with respect to women is equally important, and I think is sometimes neglected—certainly by popular accounts of the Church's stand on women, but I think also sometimes by Catholics, perhaps because people are uncomfortable with the way in which it does stand in tension with the first argument. That is the argument that women have unique contributions to make in solving many of contemporary society's most critical problems and that women must have access to the public sphere in order to make these contributions. In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul the Great's apostolic letter "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," the Church sets out a powerful argument for the need to ensure women's participation in the full panoply of endeavors that constitute humanity's task to "fill the earth and subdue it."²⁸ The Church argues that women have a capacity for developing a special sensitivity to the fact that humans exist *to be loved*, a special awareness that each and every human is entrusted to each and every other human being. This "feminine genius" consists of a special ability to appreciate each human being's obligation to love each other human being, arising out of the truth that we are all loved by God, that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. And that is no small thing. Remember, that is the truth that is the "main thread and . . . the guiding principle of . . . *all of the Church's social doctrine*"—the same truth that the Church maintains the family structure is so good at preserving and transmitting.²⁹

Nevertheless, as is powerfully illustrated in *Mulieris Dignitatem*'s discussion of Jesus Christ's relationships with the women in his life, this feminine genius has applications outside of the family, as well

as within it. And this genius has to be respected as an intellectual as well as an emotional capacity; it cannot be reduced to the idea that women are better than men at physical nurturing. Remember, as Pope John Paul the Great pointed out, Jesus rebuked Martha for her “preoccupation with domestic matters,” saying that her sister, Mary, who was listening to Jesus’s teachings rather than helping out with the physical nurturing of the guests, “. . . has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it” (Lk 10:38–41).³⁰ This special genius is what allowed the women in Jesus’s life—Mary, Mary Magdalene, Martha—to understand and accept (in some cases before the male apostles understood or accepted) some of the most profound religious truths of his ministry.³¹ It is also what gave them the courage to act on these truths—to act in the public sphere, through acts of witness and proclamation *outside* of their families.

Mulieris Dignitatem reminds us, “Women were in the forefront at the foot of the Cross . . . John was the only Apostle who remained faithful, but there were many faithful women. . . . In this most arduous test of faith and fidelity the women proved stronger than the Apostles. In this moment of danger, those who love much succeed in overcoming their fear.”³² And women were the “first witnesses of the resurrection.” “The women *are the first at the tomb*. They are the first to find it empty. They are the first to hear: ‘He is not here. *He has risen*, as he said.’ . . . They are the first to embrace his feet. . . . They are also the first to be called to announce this truth to the Apostles.”³³

The Church calls upon contemporary women to do the same thing—to apply their genius to the most pressing contemporary social issues—in myriad ways. From his Letter to Women (1990), Pope John Paul II writes,

Women will increasingly play a part in the solution of the serious problems of the future: . . . euthanasia, drugs, health care, the ecology, etc. In all these areas a greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable, for it will help to

manifest the contradictions present when society is organized solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity, and it will force systems to be redesigned in a way which favors the processes of humanization which mark the “civilization of love.”³⁴

And in his earlier apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, he states,

In our own time, the successes of science and technology make it possible to attain material well-being to a degree hitherto unknown. While this favors some, it pushes others to the margins of society. In this way, unilateral progress can also lead to a gradual loss of sensitivity for man, that is, for what is essentially human. In this sense, our time in particular awaits the manifestation of that “genius” which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance: because they are human!—and because “the greatest of these is love.”³⁵

Of course, the exercise of that genius in the service of the vital task of preserving the family is clearly of paramount importance. The Church *constantly* challenges society to recognize the value of that particular exercise of the feminine genius. But that is not the only way that the Church envisions the feminine genius contributing to the progress of civilization. Nowhere in its numerous and consistent calls to women to express their feminine genius in the public sphere does the Church make exceptions for women who are mothers. I think the Church would desperately like to provide such an exception. But just as the Church clearly accepts that there are many mothers who have no choice but to work to financially support their families, I think it also recognizes that for some mothers, who economically have the choice to stay home, the “public sphere” might place a compelling claim on them as well. If there were no social evils left to be addressed in this world, clearly, the preference of the Church would be that every mother would choose to dedicate

herself fulltime to child raising, because no call to make the world a better place in any other way would ever be as compelling. But we are not there yet, and the Church recognizes that. And I think that is why our Church consistently calls upon society to make it more feasible for women who are mothers to fully respond to all of the aspects of their “complicated calling,” both with respect to their families and in the public sphere.³⁶

This is the aspect of Catholic thought that should compel us as Catholics to advocate for restructuring the workplace to accommodate mothering, not just to subsidize mothering in the home. And I also think it suggests to us, as Catholic scholars, a way to help develop the richer, dependency-based notion of justice that is being articulated by so many of the feminist theorists. After seeing what happened to Lawrence Summers, the former president of Harvard University, when he suggested the possibility of gender-based distinctions in capabilities, I am a bit nervous about this suggestion. But, in the spirit of “Be not afraid!”—I persist.³⁷ Perhaps the dependency-based theory of justice does open the door to discussion of gender-based distinctions in capabilities that are relevant to the structure of the workplace, but do not inevitably lead to exclusion from the workplace for mothers. Maybe, if we’re just not as clumsy about it as Lawrence Summers was, we could contribute positively to a richer theory of justice with our Catholic convictions about the unique capabilities that mothers can bring to the workplace.

Which brings me, finally, to the notion of the common good. What exactly is the common good served by the sacrifices made by mothers? To reduce the Church’s teachings to the position that child raising per se is the common good that women are called to sacrifice for—to, in essence, equate the Church’s entire position with the secular arguments of child raising as a “public good”—would risk falling into the same quandary as the feminist theorists without the broader notion of justice. But to do that would be to also ignore half the Church’s teachings. Preserving the family isn’t the good per se, it is a means to a greater common good—the flourishing of

society, the realization of the kingdom of God here on earth. And enabling mothers to contribute their feminine genius to the public sphere is another means to that same, greater common good. That broader conception of the common good more honestly acknowledges the real tensions in the Church's teachings on this issue, and is consistent with the intellectual agenda of developing a richer notion of justice. Alasdair MacIntyre recognized this in *Dependent Rational Animals*, when, he argued for

a form of political society in which it is taken for granted that disability and dependence on others are something that all of us experience at certain times in our lives and this to unpredictable degrees, and that consequently our interest in how the needs of the disabled [and, I would add, dependent children] are adequately voiced and met is not a special interest, the interest of one particular group rather than of others, but rather the interest of the whole political society, an interest that is integral to their conception of their common good.³⁸

I believe that a focus on this broader conception of the common good, richly understood, should help us to recognize that child raising demands sacrifice of all—men and women, those with children and without—not merely the sacrifice of women with children.³⁹ And this, in turn, should compel us to strive for the radical restructuring of our public policies and our workplaces in ways that very well might entail some sacrifice by *all*, not just by working mothers.

Notes

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1. Ann Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), 87 and n. 1. Crittenden cites a calculation by economist June O'Neill, using data

- from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, who compares wages of women between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-three who had never had children with wages of men.
2. *Ibid.*, 93. See also Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers, *Families that Work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 36, 45–48, who document gender inequalities in employment experienced by mothers relative to both men and childless women; Mary Becker, “Care and Feminists,” *Wisconsin Women’s Law Journal* 17, no. 57 (2002): 103; Joan Williams, “‘It’s Snowing Down South’: How to Help Mothers and Avoid Recycling the Sameness/Difference Debate,” *Columbia Law Review* 102, no. 812 (2002): 827.
 3. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *Creating a Life* (New York: Talk Miramax Books, 2002), 141. Hewlett suggests the existence of a “family premium” for men’s wages, meaning that married men with children out-earn other men by 10 to 40 percent. See Gornick and Meyers, *Families*, 47–49. But see also Crittenden, *Price*, 99, who suggests that having a working wife depresses male incomes by almost 20 percent, citing Tamar Lewin, “Fathers Whose Wives Stay Home Earn More and Get Ahead,” *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1994.
 4. There are countries where the wage gap between working mothers and childless working women is not as pronounced as it is in the United States, and other countries where it is more pronounced. See Crittenden, *Price*, 90, who claims that the earnings differential between working mothers and childless working women in France is only 8 to 10 percent, compared to 20 percent in the United States and 50 percent in Great Britain and Germany. See also Gornick and Meyers, *Families*, 63–64, who documents similar findings with respect to women’s part-time wages.
 5. Mary Ann Glendon, Address to Economic and Social Council Commission on the Status of Women, March 7, 2005. Sadly, and inexcusably, poverty rates for women and children in the United States are higher, relative to poverty rates for men, than they are in many industrialized countries. See also Becker, “Care,” 104–5, who compares poverty rates for women and children with poverty rates for men in nine industrialized countries, including the United States. As Gornick and Meyers have remarked and documented, “The U.S. poverty rate among families with children is exceptional in cross-national terms” (*Families*, 73–75).
 6. Maxine Eichner, “Review Essay: Dependency and the Liberal Polity: On Martha Fineman’s *The Autonomy Myth*,” *California Law Review* 93, no. 1285 (2005): 1288.
 7. *Ibid.*, 1289.
 8. Martha Albertson Fineman, *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency* (New York: New Press, 2004); Eva Feder Kittay, *Love’s Labor* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Robin L. West, *Re-Imagining Justice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); Joan Williams, *Unbending Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For the “inevitability and normality of dependency,” see Eichner’s “Review,” 1286.

9. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 3–4.
10. Gornick and Meyers, *Families*, 25–31, provide an interesting historical account of the transformation of the social and economic organization of the family from an agrarian model in which all family members—men, women, and children—participated equally in the household economy, to the current model, with its stark gender-based distribution of labor resulting in the economic marginalization of the predominantly female care work.
11. Crittenden, *Price*, 66.
12. Examples of these arguments can be found in Katherine Franke, “Theorizing Yes: An Essay on Feminism, Law and Desire,” *Columbia Law Review* 101, no. 181 (2001); Mary Ann Case, “How High the Apple Pie? A Few Troubling Questions about Where, Why, and How the Burden of Care for Children Should be Shifted,” *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 76, no. 1753 (2001); and Vickie Schultz, “Life’s Work,” *Columbia Law Review* 100, no. 1881 (2000).
13. Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 188. Becker also cites studies emphasizing the rewarding nature of motherhood (“Care,” 57).
14. The term “repronormativity” appears to have been coined by Katherine Franke:

Notwithstanding the prevalence of both childlessness and lesbianism, somehow reproduction continues to be regarded as more inevitable and natural than heterosexuality. That is to say, repronormativity remains in the closet even while heteronormativity has stepped more into the light of the theoretical and political day. Reproduction has been so taken for granted that only women who are *not* parents are regarded as having made a choice—a choice that is constructed as nontraditional, nonconventional, and for some, non-natural. (“Theorizing,” 185)
15. Becker, “Care,” 69–70, 91–92.
16. Williams, “Snowing,” 828 (2002); Becker writes,

There is no known society in all of human history in which carework went from being woman’s work to equally divided between the sexes. . . . Perhaps an equal division of carework might be possible in the future. Who can say? Even if it is, however, we need alternative strategies for the short term, ways in which women’s well being can be improved and inequality lessened even though women continue to do most care-taking work. (“Care,” 93)

Fineman writes,

We must reject the notion that the problem of work/family conflict should be cast as the problem of lack of equal sharing between women and men of domestic burdens within the family. We have gone down that road and it is a dead end. Our arguments for reform must now acknowledge that the societally constructed role of mother continues to exact unique costs for women. (“Autonomy,” 171)

17. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work, 1981), no. 19:

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 fulfill their tasks *in accordance with their own 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, to the good of society. The *true advancement of women* requires that labor 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.

- John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (On The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, 1981), no. 22:

There is no doubt that the equal dignity and responsibility of men and women fully justifies women's access to public functions. On the other hand 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 all other professions. Furthermore, these roles and professions should be harmoniously combined, if we wish the evolution of society and culture to be truly and fully human.

- John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, 1995), no. 90:

There needs to be set in place social and political initiatives capable of guaranteeing conditions of true freedom of choice in matters of parenthood. It is also necessary to rethink labor, urban, residential and social service policies so as to harmonize working schedules with time available for the family, so that it becomes effectively possible to take care of children and the elderly.

18. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 19.
19. Crittenden, *Price*, 115–18; 262–63; and 265–67 (criticizing U.S. tax policy) 186–201; 258–59 (paid maternity leave); 260–61 (proportionate pay and benefits for part-time work; 262–67 (criticizing welfare policy); Becker, “Care,” 79–83 (flexible work schedules); 105–9 (proposing family allowances, as offered in France) and 117–32 (criticizing U.S. welfare “reform”). Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 133–40 (paid maternity leave); Williams, *Unbending*, 112, 274 (paid maternity leave); 111–16 (proposals for nonmarginalized alternative work schedules, instituting flextime or shorter work hours without career advancement penalties, for persons with caregiving responsibilities).
20. Fineman, “Autonomy,” xvii.
21. Citing West in *Re-Imagining*, Becker argues,
- West points out that a commitment to nurture based on needs, empathy, and feeling may also be less empty than a commitment to equality. An

abstract commitment to equality, understood as treating similarly those similarly situated, will do little to help eliminate real social inequalities, since those who are unequal (the rich and the poor, the able and the disabled, women who are caretakers as well as workers and men who are primarily workers) will not be similarly situated. On the other hand, a commitment to help those in need can translate into an obligation of those who are best off to help those in far different circumstances because of “shared fellow feeling.” To the extent that such empathy actually exists, there will be a commitment to doing something despite, indeed because of, differences. (“Care,” 60)

See also Mona Harrington, *Care and Equality: Inventing a New Family Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 48–49. In it, Harrington cites Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*:

The key idea for a new politics of family care . . . is to add care to the pantheon of national social values. That is, to assure good care to all members of the society should become a primarily principle of our common life, along with the assurances of liberty, equality, and justice.

We need to elevate care to this level of importance for the basic reason that it is essential to human health and balanced development. It is also crucial to developing human moral potential, to instilling and reinforcing in an individual a sense of positive connection with others. And it is this sense of connection that makes possible the whole range of mutual responsibilities that allow the people of a society to respect and work toward common goals. As political theorist Joan Tronto puts it, thinking about care seriously, recognizing that everyone at different times is both a giver and receiver of care, underscores for people the fact of their personal and social interdependence. And, she says, this insight can enhance a commitment to the responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

22. Case, “Apple Pie,” 768, who argues against requiring employers to provide accommodations based on parental status.
23. Becker, “Care,” 83.
24. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (On the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, 1991), no. 11, citing the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24 (italics added).
25. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (On The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, 1981), no. 42.
26. *Ibid.*, no. 43.
27. Mary Ann Glendon, *The Transformation of Family Law*, 306–11 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Helen Alvaré, “The Consistent Ethic of Life: A Proposal for Improving its Legislative Grasp,” *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* 2, no. 2 (2006): 332–40; Helen Alvaré, “The Role of the Family in the Social Order,” remarks presented at Plenary Panel Session, The Call to Justice: The Legacy of *Gaudium et Spes* 40 Years Later, Vatican City, March 18, 2005.

28. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), no. 7; *Laborem Exercens*, no. 4: “Each and every individual, to the proper extent and in an incalculable number of ways, takes part in the giant process whereby man ‘subdues the earth’ through his work.”
29. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 11 (emphasis added).
30. *Ibid.*
31. John Paul II, in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, characterizes Jesus’s conversation with Martha, the sister of Lazarus, as “one of the most important in the Gospel.”
- After the death of Lazarus . . . Martha is the one who talks to Christ, and the conversation concerns the most profound truths of revelation and faith: “Lord, if you had been there, my brother would not have died.” “Your brother will rise again.” “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God. . . .
- Christ speaks to women about the things of God, and they understand them; there is a true response of *mind and heart*, a response of faith. Jesus expresses an appreciation and admiration for this distinctly “feminine” response. (no. 15)
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, no. 16.
34. John Paul II, Letter to Women, no. 4.
35. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 30.
36. In her brilliant exposition on the theological implications of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Cathleen Kaveny speculates, “Is it possible that many a woman has a vocation with two distinct poles of concern, one directed toward her own family, the other more broadly toward the community? Is it possible that at least some of the inevitable difficulties of being both a mother and a job holder, the robbing Peter to pay Paul, the exhaustion—are rightly endured, because they are the side-effects of fidelity to a complicated calling?” Cathleen Kaveny, “What Women Want: ‘Buffy,’ the Pope and the New Feminists,” *Commonweal* 18, no. 24 (Nov. 7, 2003). I recently saw this same notion expressed by Pope John Paul the Great, in the television coverage in the hour after his death. I heard a reporter questioning the Holy Father sometime toward the beginning of his pontificate about his heavy travel schedule. They showed a clip of this reporter asking the Pope, as he strode past surrounded by his aides, “Is it possible you’re traveling too much? Some people are saying you should be spending more time in Rome, paying attention to some of your bureaucratic duties.” The Pope turned back to this reporter, grinning, and, wagging his finger at him, said, in his accented English, “Sometimes it is necessary to do some of what is too much.” The concept of the woman’s complex vocation has also been explored by Edith Stein. Sibylle Von Streng, *Woman’s Threefold Vocation*

According to Edith Stein, in *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism* 105 (Michele M. Schumacher, ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004]).

37. Lawrence H. Summers, president of Harvard University, caused no small furor in January 2005 at a conference on Diversifying the Science and Engineering Workforce, when he suggested as possible explanations for the persistence of women in “high-end scientific professions,” among other things, the relative unwillingness of women (compared to men) to provide “near total commitment to their work,” and possible biological differences in mathematical and scientific ability between men and women (remarks at National Bureau of Economic Research Conference on Diversifying the Science and Engineering Workforce, Jan. 14, 2005, transcript available at <http://www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2005/nber.html>). See listing of press coverage on this controversy at <http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/news/Summers.htm#Press>. While he initially tried to defend his comments, he eventually offered numerous public apologies for his remarks, pledged to listen more respectfully to his faculty (Sara Rimer and Patrick D. Healy, “Harvard President Vows to Temper His Style with Respect,” *New York Times* [Feb. 23, 2005]), established two task forces to “advance the causes of women on campus” (Piper Fogg, “Harvard President Issues Transcript of Controversial Remarks About Women in Science and Mathematics,” *Chronicle of Higher Educ.* [Feb. 18, 2005]) and eventually resigned. “Be not afraid!” was the theme of Pope John Paul the Great’s homily when inaugurated as pope, and was a constant refrain of his throughout his pontificate (George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* [New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999]).
38. MacIntyre, *Dependent*, 130.
39. This broader conception of the common good is also consistent with the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church’s reminder that, “the common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains ‘common,’ because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future” (paragraph 164 [2005]).