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**FORMATION OF MORAL CONSCIENCE AS
POSSIBLE REMEDY FOR ITS RAMPANT RISE OF
SINGLE PARENTHOOD IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF
NAIROBI-KENYA**

Supervisor

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**A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
Of the Requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of
Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology**

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All source have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor

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Supervisor: Rev. Sr. Dr. Florence Kabala

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This endeavor is dedicated to acknowledging the unwavering dedication of single parents whose tireless efforts shape the lives of their children. Additionally, I extend this dedication to my parents, friends, and siblings as a token of appreciation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AL	<i>Amoris Laetia</i>
AM	<i>Africa Munus</i>
CC	<i>Casti Connubii</i>
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCL	Code of Canon Law
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EA	<i>Ecclesiae Africae</i>
EC	Episcopal Conference
Ed	Editor
EG	<i>Exempli Gratia</i> , for example
FC	<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
HV	<i>Humanae Vitae</i>
Ibid	Ibidem-in the aforementioned place
MEP	Mission Experience Program
MHM	Mill Hill Missionary
NAB	New African Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, marriage has held a paramount significance, serving as a cornerstone of societal and generational continuity. It stands as a cherished institution, essential for the progression of human existence from one era to the next. Seen from the perspective of the Catholic Church, marriage is considered a divinely ordained union, a permanent and sacred bond created out of love between a man and a woman. It is seen as a God-established institution with the purpose of collaboratively creating life. Consequently, no human possesses the authority to alter the divine plan inherent in such a sacred institution. From this perspective, this research paper aims to address the concerning proliferation of single parenthood. It is crucial to acknowledge that this phenomenon is not a recent development in human history; rather, it has been present since time immemorial. In contemporary Nairobi, however, single parenthood has taken on a certain trend, almost becoming a societal norm. Despite its apparent acceptance, the repercussions of this trend are palpable across various institutions.

While some instances of single parenthood may result from natural calamities such as death, a significant majority can be attributed to human choices. Causes include factors such as

domestic violence, unfulfilled personal desires, a distorted understanding of women's emancipation, regressive cultural norms, adultery, and so forth.

This paper aims to investigate and assess the diverse factors contributing to the widespread occurrence of single parenthood, elucidating its extensive impact on various societal institutions. The phenomenon has resulted in heightened repercussions across social, economic, religious, and cultural dimensions, including challenges such as diminished sense of identity, financial strain, vocational crises, and sacramental implications within the Catholic Church. Consequently, this research endeavors to propose the cultivation of a conscientious formation as a potential solution to address this societal issue effectively.

1. The Purpose/Aim of the Study

The primary goal of this prestigious study is to raise awareness about an impending threat to the institution of marriage, akin to a time bomb, which has the potential to significantly impact future generations. While this metaphorical time bomb has already been set, the imperative lies in disarming it through a profound cultivation of conscience. Thus, the study aims to enlighten and instill awareness within society, the church, and all entities responsible for safeguarding the sanctity of the institution, urging them to be vigilant and take proactive measures.

Additionally, this study aims to shed light on the fundamental reasons behind single parenthood. By delving into the core of this phenomenon, the research seeks to provide an objective perspective on the issue. The investigation will examine various factors such as social, political, economic, cultural, and modernity, among others, to uncover the root causes. The goal is to foster an unbiased awareness that avoids prejudiced or biased judgments of the reality at hand.

In addition to raising awareness, the research aims to provide valuable insights for pastors, government officials, civil societies, and other organizations on effective approaches to addressing

or supporting individuals who have already fallen victim to the detrimental impact of this vice, which appears to undermine the sanctity of the institution of marriage.

Certainly, the investigation aims to elucidate the role of conscience formation in mitigating the identified issue. This can be effectively implemented within educational institutions such as schools and higher learning establishments, as well as in religious settings like churches and mosques. By incorporating conscientious development strategies in these diverse contexts, the research endeavors to contribute towards the overarching objective of the study.

2. Personal Motivation

The escalating prevalence of single parenthood necessitates a rigorous examination of its root causes, seeking to unravel the intricate web of factors that have precipitated this societal shift. This research endeavors to shed light on the multifaceted nature of single parenthood, with a primary focus on cultivating a heightened awareness that can catalyze a more empathetic and supportive societal outlook.

According to a Pan-African study conducted by two Canadian sociologists, it was discovered that Kenya, particularly in Nairobi, exhibits one of the highest rates of out-of-wedlock births. The research revealed that each Kenyan woman faces a 59.5 percent probability of becoming a single mother by the age of 45. Additionally, the study highlighted that 30 percent of women in Kenya give birth before entering into marriage. As a prospective spiritual leader, I find this trend concerning, posing a potential threat to both the church and the ethical upbringing of future generations.

After residing in Nairobi for five years and engaging with individuals in diverse pastoral settings, I've observed a prevalent perception that marriage holds little value, with some considering it akin to a self-imposed imprisonment. Many assert that marriage is a fraudulent

concept. This led me to contemplate life's realities, particularly witnessing concerning behaviors among single mothers and fathers. Consequently, I am motivated to contribute to societal well-being by emphasizing the importance of conscientious decision-making to counteract the problematic trend of single parenthood and shape a positive future for generations to come.

3. Problem of the Statement

Mother Carla Barnhill, a writer for Christianity Today, expresses concern about the church's tendency to place an excessive amount of emphasis on the family unit, which she believes is inconsistent with the gospel's overall message.¹ Outside of the Catholic Church, heteronormative marriages are given more weight than single people because Christian theology generally accords singles relatively little importance. Within this religious framework, singular individuals are frequently viewed through a prism of inherent imperfection and a sense of incompleteness. It is rare to find women being encouraged to embrace singledom as a divine calling. Because they are perceived as "incomplete" or as having a "broken home," single parents are frequently viewed as lacking. Churches frequently steer clear of discussing single parenthood at all.

Single parents may find it challenging to integrate into established church groups such as married or Bible study groups. Similarly, designated ministries for singles or young adults may not adequately accommodate the needs of single parents. A notable example is Christ Church Cathedral within the Diocese of Texas, a group of young adults in their "20s and 30s" organizes evening events without childcare support, often extending late into the night. This situation

¹ Carla Barnhill, *The Myth of the Perfect Mother: Rethinking the Spirituality of Women* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004), 15.

highlights the difficulty single parents' face in participating in church activities tailored for specific demographics.²

The aforementioned provocative analysis prompts contemplation on whether the church and the society adequately addresses the root causes of the escalating phenomenon of single parenthood. This research endeavors to comprehend the underlying causes and propose practical solutions to the prevalent surge in single parenting. By unveiling these issues, individuals may become more conscious, particularly regarding ministering to and assisting those ensnared in such predicaments. Historically, the Catholic Church staunchly upheld the traditional family structure encompassing both parents and children, defending it fervently. However, the 21st century has witnessed a significant surge in single parenting. Does this reality necessitate a reevaluation of societal and ecclesiastical perspectives on marriage, prompting a reconsideration of pastoral approaches? Could the church serve as a sanctuary for those marginalized by society due to their single parenting status? This quandary underscores the complex interplay between the church and society.

4. Objective of the Essay

- This research paper seeks to look for the root cause of the rampant increase of the single parenthood. In raising the awareness, many people will change their perspective towards the victims
- The paper also aims to understand the church's (Catholic Church) view of the church. This will include the theological development of the family and how it seeks to address the reality

² Cathedral 20s & 30s, *Christ Church Cathedral 20s & 30s*, "Christ Church Cathedral, Available from, <http://www.christchurchcathedral.org/cathedral-20s-30s/>. Accessed on 20 January, 2024.

- Furthermore, the paper will show how the formation of the conscience can be the possible remedy to the current reality in the society and the church. This I believe will bring a curb to the phenomenon and also will bring tolerance to those perceiving this particular group

5. Research Questions

This research paper will be guided by some questions: what are the root cause of the single parenthood? What has been the church's teaching on family and its response to the prevalence situations? And what are the possible remedies for the single parenthood especially in Nairobi metropolitan Archdiocese?

6. Scope and limitation of the study

This research is limited to the rise of single parenthood in some parts of the world but specifically focused in the archdiocese of Nairobi-Kenya.

7. Methodology

The researcher tend to use his *MEP* experience in the archdiocese of Nairobi and perhaps gives a theological reflections on the matter.

Also the researcher will use the library materials from Tangaza University College. These includes the published books, church documents, internet sources and articles.

It also involve discussing with my fellow friends who are living single life and also students from my Mill Hill Society on the topic.

8. Significance of the Research

Firstly the research will enhance pastoral care within the church by providing a nuanced understanding of the root causes of single parenthood. Pastoral leaders can use this knowledge to tailor their support services, ensuring that the church becomes a compassionate and inclusive space that addresses the specific challenges faced by single parents.

The research will also inform the development of community outreach initiatives within the church, offering insights into the societal stigmas, economic hardships, and cultural shifts contributing to single parenthood. By designing targeted programs, the church actively works towards alleviating these challenges, fostering community responsibility and demonstrating a commitment to social justice and support for vulnerable members.

The research furthermore will serve as a catalyst for broader societal change by disseminating findings that raise awareness about the root causes of single parenthood. Through active engagement, the church becomes an advocate for empathy and acceptance, influencing attitudes beyond its walls. This contributes to the creation of a more understanding society that acknowledges the diverse circumstances leading to single parenthood.

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING AND HISTORY OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Introduction

This chapter endeavors to provide a comprehensive examination of moral consciousness, the dynamics of single parenting, the influence of African culture, and diverse perspectives on marriage within both Christian and secular contexts. Additionally, it will offer an alternative viewpoint on marital relationships. The discourse will include a sociological analysis of the institution of marriage in Nairobi, ultimately culminating in a concluding section.

1.1. Moral Conscience

Humans are the only creatures on earth with the ability to reason out of all those created by God. This explains why many academics refer to them as rational beings. This demonstrates that only humans possess the ability to make logical decisions devoid of strong instincts. Man can therefore decide morally what is generally right and wrong at the moment of creation. This agrees with Cajetan Cuddy, who believes Thomas Aquinas had a moral conscience. He claims that moral conscience mediates God's norms to humans performing specific actions by organizing

knowledge, some of which are particular and some of which are universal.³ This internal forum of human beings undoubtedly provides a means for them to continually assess every action they take and, in turn, make a thoughtful judgment based on the natural law that God has given.

1.2. Types of Moral Conscience

1.2.1. Upright Conscience

When someone has an internal sense of right and wrong that guides their behavior, they are said to have an upright conscience. Its foundations include common sense, introspection, and an innate, logical intuition. Those who have an upright conscience choose morality over selfish interests or inclinations, and they base their decisions on defensible ethical standards. It challenges someone to consider critically about who they are, their morals, and the ways in which their actions and choices impact the wider community. In the long run, though, an upright conscience aids people in making more moral decisions because moral decisions are not always simple and can lead to conflict with others or moral principles.⁴

This same passage highlights the significance of Catholic teachings as well as a natural law that each and every person possesses. A person's "upright conscience" is an innate moral sense that helps them assess their own behavior and respect the values and beliefs of others. To embrace love and take responsibility for their actions, people are invited by this innate ability.

³ Cajetan Cuddy, 'Conscience According to Major Figures and Traditions', *Christianity and the Law of Conscience*, Eds. Jeffrey B. Hammond and Helen M. Alvare, (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2021), 112- 116.

⁴ Robert J. Smith, *Conscience and Catholicism: The Nature and Function of Conscience in the Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology*(University Press of America: New York), 95

1.2.3. Erroneous Judgment

When someone has an incorrect moral judgment because of ignorance, conflicting allegiance, or a paradox, they are said to have an incorrect conscience. This could include acting in a way that they think is right but is actually wrong, either consciously or unconsciously. Humans could use reason to discern what was right and wrong, according to Aquinas' moral realism, but mistakes in judgment can still occur when people fail to recognize the moral implications of a given circumstance.

When a man has sex with a woman he believes to be his wife but who is actually her twin, it can be considered an instance of mistaken conscience. An inability to comprehend what happened is typically the reason for this kind of error. Aquinas claimed that this type of mistaken conscience would be classified as invincible ignorance, which absolves the person of moral responsibility in cases where specific conditions, like a mental illness, do not apply. Conversely, virtuous ignorance denotes a situation in which an individual is aware of their wrongdoing and still holds themselves responsible for it. Aquinas would not pardon the man in this instance because he knew that what he was doing was wrong.

1.3. Single Parenthood and Brief History

A person who has a child or children but lacks a spouse or live-in partner to help with the child's upbringing and support is known as a single parent. One can become a single parent for a variety of reasons, such as single-person adoption, domestic violence, rape, divorce, breakup, and abandonment, widowhood, or single-person childbirth. A family led by a single parent that has children is known as a single parent family⁵. Thus, the ability to assume the responsibility of raising

⁵ Ashton Chapman, "Single Parent Families," in *The Social History of the American Family*, ed. Marilyn J. Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014), 1–10.1

a child on one's own constitutes single parenthood. It entails providing a child or children with all of their basic, physiological, psychological, and emotional needs by one person.

The problem of single parenthood dates back to the time of the Bible. It rose sharply between the 17th and the 19th centuries for a variety of reasons, such as maternal mortality, work-related accidents, homicides, diseases, and conflicts. Research has shown that in French, English, and Spanish villages, at least one-third of the children had lost a parent before reaching adulthood. About half of all children in Milan in the 1800s had lost one or both of their parents by the time they were twenty years old. And by the time they were fifteen, nearly one-third of Chinese boys from the 19th century had lost one or both of their parents.⁶

In the twenty-first century, extreme feminists' human rights activism and a surge in women's empowerment have led to an increase in single parenthood in some nations. Among the African countries that have witnessed a sharp increase in this phenomenon are South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. But it's important to remember that historically, this kind of parenting was frequently short-lived due to high remarriage rates.

1.4. Type of Single Parenthood

There are various types of single parenthood. This section discusses them one by one.

1.4.1. Divorced Single Parenthood

Parenting after a legal separation results in one parent being awarded primary custody of the child, both legally and physically. This is known as divorced single parenthood. Managing a

⁶ Dupaquier, Jean, Elizabeth Helin, Peter Laslett, and Massimo Livi-Bacci. *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past.* (London: Academic Press, 1981), 8

child in this manner can present difficulties and conflicts that the custodial parent and child must deal with.

1.4.2. Death of a Parent Single Parenthood

When a parent dies and the surviving parent is left to support the family alone, the situation is known as single parenthood. Individuals who become single parents due to death may find this to be an emotionally and financially taxing period, and they frequently need extra help to get through it.

1.4.3. Teenage Pregnancy Single Parenthood

When one partner in a relationship chooses to be the child's primary caregiver after an adolescent partner gives birth, this situation is known as single parenthood. Given that they might not have the means or maturity to raise a child, this is a difficult situation for the adolescent and their partner.

1.4.4. Adoptive Single Parenthood

When a single person decides to pursue adoption as a single parent instead of in a partnership, this is known as adoptive single parenthood. To give their adopted child a secure and loving home, the adoptive parent must be resolute and committed to this.

1.4.5. Surrogacy Single Parenthood

The status of being a single parent of a child born through surrogacy is known as single parenthood. In these situations, assuming full parental rights over the child requires the parent to

go through a drawn-out process of paperwork and formal agreements. Thus, based on the foregoing, we can divide single parenthood into two categories: single by choice and single by circumstance.

1.4.6. Single by Circumstance

Man and woman are always very happy when they unite and start a family. Finding a compatible life partner is even more crucial for men and women. But as they say, nobody can foresee the future or know what will happen tomorrow. Without a doubt, the unexpected is evident in today's society, where certain situations force a person to remain single. Jeane, Craigie, and Waldogel state that an unintended pregnancy outside of marriage is frequently the cause of circumstantial single parenthood. In most cases, the mother, father, and child have an unstable relationship and the father is not fully involved in the situation. Additionally, they frequently lack resources like cash and human capital.⁷

In many of these families, the father expresses interest in being involved in his child's upbringing; however, most fathers drop out after the child is born. Just one third of fathers who choose to remain in their roles end up raising their children as circumstantial single parents. This is frequently the consequence of challenging circumstances like destitution, abuse, or abandonment. In the Maasai community, this is especially true because a young girl may be abandoned by her partner. The family eventually finds themselves in a financial bind that lingers long after the child has grown up. Comparably, big slums like Kibera exhibit single parenting as well. Here, young girls become pregnant and the father essentially vanishes, leaving the mother to raise her child by herself without any help or resources. Circumstantial single parenting is

⁷ Waldfogel, Jane, Terry-Ann Craigie, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. "Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing." *The Future of Children* 20, no. 2 (2010): 87-112. Accessed September 05, 2023. doi:10.1353/foc.2010.0002.

obviously not a desirable situation; rather, it is the outcome of regrettable and unavoidable circumstances that persist after the child is born.⁸

1.4.7. Single by Choice

A person who is single by choice is one who has chosen to remain single consciously, as opposed to being unlucky or unprepared. This expression is frequently employed to depict individuals who have made the decision to stay single or unmarried, either permanently or for a prolonged duration. It can also refer to someone who is about to end a long-term partnership or relationship. The idea of being single voluntarily has gained popularity in recent years as more people choose to put their independence and personal growth ahead of relationships.

Studies have indicated that a significant number of economically empowered women in the twenty-first century intentionally opt to be single mothers. This is frequently brought on by a desire for freedom, the chance to follow one's career, and other objectives. In addition, there are a variety of other common reasons why people decide to become single parents, including not finding the right partner with whom to raise their children and the desire to have biological children before it's too late.⁹

1.5. Understanding of Marriage

For each person, marriage can mean something different. Marriage is perceived as a union of two souls and as a religious or spiritual commitment in certain cultures. In certain societies, matrimony is perceived as a pragmatic agreement founded on financial factors and offering

⁸ Sara McLanahan, "Fragile Families and the Reproduction of Poverty," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621, no. 1 (2009): 111–131, doi: 10.1177/0002716208324862.

⁹Hertz, Rosanna. *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women are Choosing Parenthood without Marriage and Creating the New American Family*. (Oxford: University Press, 2006), 2-8.

security and safety to both spouses and their offspring. In still other cultures, getting married is regarded as a way to establish and strengthen social and political ties. Regardless of one's interpretation, marriage plays a significant role in many cultures.

The idea of marriage has been interpreted differently for many years. This diverges from specific cultural beliefs, Christian doctrines or other religious beliefs, and the secular world.

1.5.1. Christian Understanding of Marriage

Marriage has been viewed as a permanently arranged, monogamous, and covenantal union by Christians since the dawn of time. Fascinatingly, while many Christians may accept the conventional definition, different countries and Christian denominations have different terminology and theological perspectives regarding marriage over time.

Christian doctrine holds that a marriage is a covenant made by two individuals and God. It is meant to be a monogamous, self-giving, and mutually loving relationship that lasts a lifetime. A spiritual union is formed during a marriage in addition to a physical or emotional one. It is designed to represent the good news of Jesus Christ, including His dedication to the church and His selfless, dependable, and unwavering love. The Bible tells us that God created marriage as an institution so that husband and wife could have security, happiness, and companionship.¹⁰

The significance of marriage as a holy institution with personal and societal implications is emphasized in *Gaudium et Spes* 48. It emphasizes the twofold goals of marriage, the importance of love and support for one another, and the duty of couples to make moral choices for their

¹⁰ *Christian Understanding of Marriage.*” Bible Gateway, Available from, <https://www.bibleway.com/resources/christian-living/marriage>. Accessed on 14, September 2023.

families. This document's ultimate goal is to see marriage as a source of love, human dignity, and social progress.¹¹

A man and a woman form a lifelong partnership through marriage, which is described as a sacred covenant in Canon 1055 of the Code of Canon Law. It highlights the Catholic Church's view of marriage as sacred and sacramental. As one of the seven sacraments of the Church, it declares that marriage is a covenant, which is interpreted as a serious and binding agreement.

Additionally, it refers to marriage as a lifetime partnership, implying that it is a lifetime commitment rather than a transient or conditional arrangement. This suggests that partners are called to experience all aspects of life together, including happiness and sadness, difficulties and accomplishments. Moreover, marriage is defined by the canon as involving a man and a woman. This represents the conventional view of marriage in the Catholic Church, which maintains that it is a partnership between a husband and a wife. Likewise, the Law maintains the indissoluble nature of marriage and its unity, which calls for an unbreakable and long-lasting marital bond. A lawfully contracted marriage is regarded as binding until death in Catholic teaching, and divorce is not recognized.¹²

Consequently, to put it briefly, Canon 1055 of the Code of Canon Law emphasizes the sacrosanct and eternal character of marriage in the Catholic Church, stressing that it is an unbreakable and sacramental covenant between a man and a woman. The fundamental marriage-related teachings of the Church are reflected in this canon.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, “*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*” *Gaudium Et Spes*, 21 November, 1964,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975).

¹² *Code of Canon Law: The Only English Edition Updated with M.P. Omnium in Mentem*. (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013).

Based on the aforementioned, it can be said that Christian denominations concur that marriage is a divine institution with divine roots that is meant to promote love and create life. Therefore, it is crucial that humanity protect this institution from harm. Consequently, a Christian marriage is a union of two individuals that is approved by the church and witnessed by a representative of a recognized religious body, such as the clergy or a registered denomination in the nation. It is frequently interpreted as an indication of one's dedication to the Christian faith and confidence in God's marital plan.

1.5.2. Secular Understanding of Marriage

Without spiritual or religious principles at its core, a secular interpretation of marriage is one that lacks foundation. The commitment between two people and the legal rights and obligations that come with that relationship are the main topics of the union instead. A number of things could be involved in this, including trust, loyalty, financial and material support, communication, honesty, and respect for one another.

A lawful marriage is a partnership between two consenting adults of different genders that lasts for the duration of the partnership or until the marriage is formally dissolved. The legal perspective is considered in the secular marriage. This implies that it may be a temporary contract. It also implies that it can dissolve at any moment. As a result, the permanent covenant concept is out of sight in religion. It is an agreement between a man and a woman in civil law. As a result, this agreement modifies each party's legal status and grants husband and wife new responsibilities.¹³.

¹³ John Bouvier, *A Law Dictionary, Adapted to the Constitution and Laws of the United States*, "Secular Marriage." Available from, <https://www/legal dictionary/the free dictionary.com/>. Accessed 10 September, 2023.

Since civil marriages are approved by the state and provide a degree of legal recognition not available to traditional religious wedding ceremonies, they are becoming more and more common in secular societies today. Civil marriage offers same-sex couples a way to obtain the advantages and rights that come with being legally wed. Regardless of gender or sexual orientation, the legal transformation offered by a civil marriage can be transformative for couples who want to commit to one another.

1.5.3. African Understanding of Marriage

African communities and cultures have a strong cultural foundation for marriage. Marriage is viewed as a means of securing the succession of generations, advancing gender equality, and fortifying ties within families. Marriage is a social contract that unites two people by pledging to share resources, duties, and values. It is not always about passionate love. Due to the expectation that partners will contribute money and resources to support their new family, African marriages frequently have both a symbolic and financial component. Strong connections to one's ancestors and their values are another benefit of marriage. African societies place a high importance on monogamy, fidelity, and respect for the family; marriage usually signifies the union of two families or tribes.

Matrimony is highly regarded and regarded as a necessary aspect of life in the majority of African cultures. The bride price is paid as part of a social process that heavily involves a family and the community. Being a virgin carries significant value as well as respect and a larger dowry. Due to the strong ties between families and the importance of spouses' and any children's well-being, marriages in Africa are considered permanent, and divorce is uncommon. In Africa, marriage is viewed as a means of securing a society's lineage, and in cases of infertility, different

approaches are taken. For example, in Luo tradition, if a woman is infertile, she chooses another woman to bear her child. These kids become hers, and they make the family cohesive.

Set customs like gift-giving between families, feasts, and dancing to music are all part of most African wedding rituals. In certain locations, these events may last for several days, so they can be fairly long. Items like clothing, jewelry, beads, and food are frequently given as gifts. The customary foods of the community are served during feasts. To commemorate the union, music is typically played along with folk tunes. Different traditions may have different customs depending on the culture and location. For instance, one bride may choose to wear a traditional costume and shave her head, while another bride may choose to wear a bright wedding dress in the western style.¹⁴ Accordingly, African traditional marriage is highly revered among the Masaai, especially the Puriko clan, where couples make solemn vows to treat their spouse with respect in front of the elders. These kinds of unions are only accepted once the bride's family receives a dowry, a procedure that is supervised and controlled by the community's elders.

1.6. Sociological finding of Single Parenting in Nairobi

When the British colonial rulers in East Africa built the Uganda - Kenya Railway in 1899, Nairobi became a major railway hub. Eventually, the city became Kenya's capital.¹⁵ 4,397,073 people were living in the city proper as of the 2019 census.¹⁶ Nairobi's varied economic, social, and cultural environment has contributed to the rise in popularity of single parenting in the city. It can be challenging for families with shifting dynamics to provide for the material, emotional, and

¹⁴ Mitchell .P, "*The Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*," (Journal of the International African Institute: Africa 24 (1954) 149-156.

¹⁵ Roger S. Greenway, Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: missions' new frontier*, (Baker Book House: 1989) 163.

¹⁶ "2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census Volume I: *Population by County and Sub-County*". Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics. Archived from the original on 13 November 2019. Retrieved 11 September 2023.

social needs of both parents and kids. Due to the decline in the strength of traditional support networks, there may be a rise in the number of single parents in urban areas. In Nairobi, where poverty is on the rise in many areas, single parents frequently struggle to support their children and make ends meet. As a result, the number of single-parent homes in the city has increased. In addition, single-parent households deal with a number of difficulties, such as having access to high-quality healthcare and education.

According to an economic survey carried out by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the number of births registered by single mothers in Kenya has increased. The mother's marital status revealed that, between 2018 and 2022, there were more single mothers than married mothers. Over this time frame, the percentage of married women's registered births fell to 85.9 percent in 2022 from 85.9 percent in 2021, while the percentage of births by single mothers increased slightly to 13.9 percent from 13.5 percent in 2021. In addition, mothers who did not disclose their marital status accounted for 0.3% of registered births, widows for 0.1%, and divorced mothers for 0.1 percent.¹⁷ Consequently, it's clear that Nairobi, Kenya has witnessed a change in recent years from its traditional extended family structures to the more contemporary nuclear family setup.¹⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has covered a variety of topics, including single parenthood, the moral conscience, and various perspectives on marriage from traditional, religious, and secular viewpoints. The chapter includes a brief statistical analysis of marriage dynamics, with a particular emphasis on Nairobi, the primary research focus. The relationship between these ideas and their

¹⁷ Martha Wanjiru, "Kenya Registers Increased births by Single Mothers," Available from, <https://www.citizen.digital/news/kenya-registers-increased-births-by-single-mothers-n319161>. 12 September 2023.

¹⁸ Beier L., Hofaker D., Marchese E. and M. Rupp. 2010. *Family Structures and Family Forms: An Overview of Major Trends and Development*, Available from, www.familyplatform.eu. Accessed on 11, September 2023.

causes is what makes them intriguing. Consequently, the researcher will delve into comprehending the root causes of single parenthood in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER II

CAUSES AND THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Introduction

In this chapter I will dive to analyze the causes of single parenthood, which is natural, social, economic, and cultural. It will also look at the social effects of single.

2.1. Natural Causes

These are caused by the occurrence which is beyond human ability or control.

2.1.1. Death

In the past, the loss of a spouse often led to single parenthood, with illnesses and maternal deaths frequently leaving widows or widowers to care for their children. During times of war, many families also found themselves without one parent. Fortunately, advancements in sanitation and maternal healthcare have reduced the mortality rate among people of reproductive age, resulting in fewer cases of single parenthood due to the death of a partner. However it worth to note that death of spouses has left many people single.

2.1.2. Covid-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on societies worldwide, including family structures and dynamics. While it's true that the pandemic has created challenging circumstances for many families, leading to various stressors, it's important to note that it's not accurate to attribute a universally high rate of single parenthood to COVID-19¹⁹. Instead, COVID-19 has contributed to certain factors that may affect family structures and potentially lead to single parenthood in some cases. Firstly health Impact: COVID-19 has caused illness and death for many individuals, which may lead to the loss of a spouse or partner, resulting in single parenthood for the surviving parent. Economic Impact: The pandemic has led to job losses, economic instability, and financial hardship for many families. This financial stress can strain relationships and lead to separations or divorces.

2.2 Social Cause

2.2.1. Women Emancipation

Women's emancipation and single parenthood are not directly causally related. Women's emancipation refers to the social, economic, and political movement aimed at achieving equality between men and women in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and reproductive rights. Single parenthood, on the other hand, refers to the state of raising a child or children without a partner or spouse. However, there are some indirect ways in which women's emancipation can be associated with single parenthood firstly. It delays Marriage. As women gain more educational and career opportunities, they may choose to delay marriage or prioritize their

¹⁹ *"Nearly 15 Million Deaths Directly or Indirectly Linked to COVID-19/UN News"*, Available from, <https://www.news.un.org>. Accessed on 5 October 2023.

own personal and professional development first. This delay in marriage can lead to more instances of single parenthood, as some women may decide to have children before or without getting married.

Secondly, reproductive autonomy. Women's emancipation has led to greater control over reproductive choices, including access to contraception and the ability to make decisions about when and if to have children. This can result in situations where women choose to become single parents through methods such as artificial insemination or adoption. Finally, economic Independence. Women's increased economic independence allows them to support themselves and their children without relying on a partner. This can lead to single parenthood in cases where women choose to raise their children independently or where the other parent is not involved²⁰.

From the above analysis, it's important to note that the connection between women's emancipation and single parenthood is complex, and not all instances of single parenthood can be attributed to women's emancipation. Single parenthood can occur for various reasons, including personal choices, relationship dynamics, and unexpected life circumstances. Women's emancipation is primarily about empowering women to have more control over their lives and choices, and whether or not someone becomes a single parent is just one possible outcome of these broader societal changes.

2.2.2. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence encompasses various forms of abuse occurring within domestic settings like marriages or cohabitations. It is often synonymous with intimate partner violence, involving one person in an intimate relationship inflicting harm on the other, even in former relationships.

²⁰ Lownes-Jackson, M. & Guy, R. (Eds.), *The Economic Empowerment of Women: A global Perspective* (Informing Science Press: Santa Rosa, California, 2012) 78-108

This broader concept of domestic violence includes abuse against children, parents, and the elderly²¹.

Abuse manifests in diverse modalities, spanning physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, financial, and sexual spheres. These encompass a spectrum from nuanced, coercive strategies to egregious acts like spousal rape, instances of physical aggression such as strangulation and assault, as well as detrimental customs like female genital mutilation and acid assaults, which may result in disfigurement or mortality.

Additionally, it extends to the use of technology for harassment, control, monitoring, stalking, or hacking²². Therefore domestic violence can lead to single parenthood when victims prioritize the safety and well-being of themselves and their children by leaving abusive relationships, seeking legal protection, or relying on support systems to escape the abusive situation. This decision to break free from an abusive partner often results in the victim becoming a single parent, taking on the responsibility of raising their children alone or with the support of their social network.

2.2.3. Divorce

In accordance with findings from a 2019 investigation conducted by the Pew Research Center, it is evident that elevated rates of divorce and non-marital childbearing serve as primary catalysts for the proliferation of single-parent families. The United States notably exhibits the highest incidence globally of children residing within such familial structures, as per the aforementioned research.²³ Divorce is a major factor leading to single-parent families, as it

²¹ “WESNET Second National Survey on Technology abuse and domestic violence in Australia,” Archived from the original on February 26, 2021, Retrieved October 4, 2023.

²² Delanie Woodlock, “*The Abuse of Technology in Domestic Violence and Stalking*,” *Violence Against Women* 23, no. 5 (2017): 584–602, doi: 10.1177/1077801216646277.

²³ Pew Research Center, “*U.S. has world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households*,” Retrieved October 05, 2023.

involves the separation of a married couple and often results in one parent becoming the primary caregiver for their children. This transition occurs due to several interrelated factors. Firstly, during the divorce process, legal decisions are made regarding child custody, with one parent typically designated as the custodial parent responsible for the children's daily care. This legal separation forms the basis for single parenthood.

Secondly, divorce often brings financial strain as both parents must now maintain separate households. This financial pressure can make it difficult for them to adequately provide for their children, with the custodial parent often facing more significant economic challenge

Lastly, remarriage and the formation of blended families can result in children primarily residing with one biological parent while interacting with step-parents and step-siblings, contributing to single-parent household dynamics. In conclusion, divorce leads to single parenthood due to legal, economic, emotional, and relational factors. While divorce is a primary contributor to single-parent families, it's important to recognize that non-marital childbearing is another significant factor in their formation. Single-parent households often emerge from complex and multifaceted circumstances, with divorce being a key driver in many cases.

2.2.4. Adultery

Throughout history, numerous societies regarded adultery as a grave offense, often leading to harsh consequences, primarily impacting women but occasionally affecting men as well. Punishments could range from execution to physical mutilation or torture²⁴. These penalties have become less popular over time, particularly in Western nations since the 19th century. In regions

²⁴ Hector Davies Morgan, *The Doctrine and Law of Marriage, Adultery, and Divorce: Exhibiting a Theological and Practical View* (Oxford: W. Baxter, 1826), 67-76.

where adultery remains legally punishable, the consequences can vary from monetary fines to physical punishments like caning.²⁵

The ramifications of infidelity on single parenthood is a complex and multifaceted issue, both historically and in contemporary society. Across different cultures and eras, adultery has often been a catalyst for the breakdown of marriages and relationships. When one partner engages in extramarital affairs, trust and commitment are shattered, frequently leading to separation or divorce. Consequently, one spouse often finds themselves thrust into the role of a single parent, taking on the primary responsibility for raising their children.

This transition can be emotionally challenging and financially burdensome, as the single parent may need to provide for the child's needs without sufficient financial support from the non-custodial spouse. Moreover, custody battles and legal proceedings are common consequences of adultery, with courts often considering infidelity when determining child custody arrangements, further contributing to the single parenthood dynamic.

The impact of adultery on single parenthood also extends to the emotional well-being of children. The dissolution of their parents' marriage due to infidelity can lead to feelings of instability and insecurity among children. They may experience emotional distress, which can have long-term effects on their development and mental health. However, it's essential to recognize that societal attitudes and legal frameworks have evolved over time, leading to a more nuanced understanding of how adultery affects family dynamics. In some cases, modern co-parenting arrangements allow both parents to continue playing a significant role in their children's lives even after a marriage dissolves due to adultery. Nevertheless, the connection between adultery and single parenthood remains a complex and emotionally charged aspect of human relationships.

²⁵ Bachelard, Michael, "*Aceh woman, Gang-raped by Vigilantes for Alleged Adultery, Now to be flogged*". *The Age*. [Archived](#) from the original on 8 May 2014. Retrieved 7 November 2023.

2.3. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a type of mistreatment where one individual intentionally engages in acts or behaviors that have the potential to cause psychological harm to another individual. This harm may manifest as conditions such as anxiety, chronic melancholy, or PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).²⁶ The aftermath for the victim can be characterized by profound and lasting psychological repercussions. This encompasses the insidious strategies associated with brainwashing, a subset of psychological abuse. Emotional abuse, on the other hand, hinges on the manipulation of the victim's emotional state. In this context, the victim's emotions are skillfully wielded by the abuser to the point where the victim loses touch with their own genuine feelings concerning the matters that the abuser seeks to dominate. Consequently, the outcome is a systematic erosion of the victim's self-perception and autonomy²⁷.

The above paragraph discusses emotional abuse, a form of mistreatment characterized by one individual intentionally engaging in actions or behaviors aimed at causing psychological harm to another person. This harm can manifest as various psychological conditions, including anxiety, persistent depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (*PTSD*). Emotional abuse is marked by the deliberate nature of the harm, highlighting that it is not accidental but purposeful in its infliction. Its consequences can extend beyond immediate emotional distress, potentially leading to conditions like anxiety, depression, and *PTSD*. Additionally, emotional abuse can contribute to

²⁶ Mary Ann Dutton, Lisa A. Goodman, and Lauren Bennett, "Court-involved battered women's responses to violence: the role of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse," in Psychological abuse in violent domestic relations, ed. Roland D. Maiuro and K. Daniel O'Leary (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2000), 197.

²⁷ Lesly Tamarin Mega, Jessica Lee Mega, Benjamin Tamarin Mega, and Beverly Moore Harris, "Brainwashing and Battering Fatigue: Psychological Abuse in Domestic Violence," *North Carolina Medical Journal* 61, no. 5 (September–October 2000): 260–265.

the breakdown of relationships, potentially resulting in single parenthood when individuals choose to leave abusive situations to protect themselves and their children.

2.4. Economic Cause

2.4.1. Women Economic Empowerment

Women's empowerment, also known as female empowerment, can be characterized through various means, such as embracing women's perspectives, actively engaging with them, and elevating the societal standing of women through programs that include awareness-raising, education, improved literacy, and extensive training²⁸ The advancement of women's autonomy and agency enables and empowers women to take charge of their lives and make influential choices in addressing various societal challenges²⁹. The chance might arise for them to redefine societal roles like gender roles, thereby granting them greater freedom to pursue their desired objectives³⁰.

Women's economic empowerment, as described in the provided explanation, plays a significant role in reshaping societal dynamics, including family structures. When women are economically empowered, it often leads to greater independence and the ability to make influential choices in various aspects of life, including their personal relationships. This can indirectly contribute to the phenomenon of single parenthood for several reasons. First and foremost, when women have access to education, training, and economic opportunities, they may choose to delay or forgo marriage and childbirth in pursuit of their career and personal goals. This delay in starting a family can lead to a higher likelihood of becoming single parents in the future if they decide to have children later in life without a partner.

²⁸ Endalcachew Bayeh, "The role of empowering women and achieving gender equality to the sustainable development of Ethiopia," *Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (January 2016): 38, doi:10.1016/j.psr.b.2016.09.013.

²⁹ Ibid, Endalcachew Bayeh

³⁰ Naila Kabeer, "Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1," *Gender & Development* 13, no. 1 (2005): 13–24.

Secondly, economic empowerment can provide women with the financial stability and confidence to leave unhealthy or abusive relationships. They may choose to raise their children on their own rather than remaining in a situation that is detrimental to their well-being or the well-being of their children.

Additionally, women's economic independence can challenge traditional gender roles within families. In some cases, this shift in power dynamics may lead to conflicts and, ultimately, the choice to embark on the journey of single parenthood if the partner is not supportive of the woman's pursuit of economic independence or is resistant to sharing household responsibilities more equally.

In a nutshell, women's economic empowerment can indirectly contribute to the phenomenon of single parenthood by influencing the timing of family formation, providing the means to leave unhealthy relationships, and challenging traditional gender roles within families, all of which may lead some women to make the choice to raise their children on their own.

2.4.2. Financial Difficulty

In the UK, about 25% of children live in single-parent households, also referred to as lone-parent families. The year 2016 saw a notable increase in the number of single parents, totaling 2.9 million individuals, marking an 18.6% rise since 1996, primarily attributed to financial hardship. An overwhelming majority, comprising 86%, of single parents responsible for dependent children are women. The average age of a single parent is 38 years, with around 60% of them caring for a lone dependent child. It's important to recognize that financial challenges are a significant factor

leading to the formation of single-parent families, resulting from various circumstances such as divorce, separation, the loss of a partner, donor insemination, or unexpected pregnancies³¹.

In the context of Kenya Financial difficulties can lead to an increase in single parenthood due to various interconnected factors. Economic stress can strain relationships, leading to separation or divorce. Limited access to education and healthcare can reduce income potential, making it difficult for couples to support their families together. Unplanned pregnancies can exacerbate financial strain and result in single parenthood. Migration for work can separate families, further straining relationships. Inadequate social support and stigmatization can hinder single parents' opportunities and financial stability. Legal battles over child custody and financial support can be costly and emotionally draining, leading to single parenthood for the custodial parent. These factors collectively contribute to the prevalence of single parenthood in Kenya in the face of financial difficulties.

2.5. Retrogressive Culture These are some of the cultural practices that are not worth living as far as human rights and freedom is concerned. It varies from tribe to tribe especially in Africa.

2.5.1. Forced Marriage

A forced marriage pertains to the union of one or more individuals without their consent or contrary to their desires. Furthermore, a consensual marriage may transition into a forced arrangement if coercion compels the parties involved to remain in the marital bond against their

³¹ Susan Golombok, Sophie Zadeh, Susan Imrie, Victoria Smith, and Thomas Freeman, “*Single Mothers by Choice: Mother-Child Relationships and Children’s Psychological Adjustment*,” *Journal of Family Psychology: JFP: Journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)* 3, no. 4 (2016): 409–418.

volition.³² A forced marriage is distinct from an arranged marriage, where it is assumed that both individuals willingly accept the guidance of their parents or a mediator, like a matchmaker, in locating and selecting a spouse. Coercion tactics to enforce a marriage can vary along a spectrum, from explicit physical force to more subtle forms of psychological manipulation³³.

Forced marriage can lead to single parenthood in various ways, a case in a point, in situations where individuals who are forced into marriages may find themselves in oppressive and abusive relationships. To protect themselves and their children from harm, they might choose to escape and leave their spouse. This decision often results in them becoming single parents. Additionally, forced marriages can be fraught with emotional and physical abuse, leading to constant conflicts within the marriage. In such cases, divorce or separation might become inevitable. Usually, one parent is granted custody of the children, making them a single parent.

In conclusion, forced marriages can lead to single parenthood due to various factors, including escaping abusive situations, divorce or separation, loss of family support, economic challenges, and the fear of cultural stigma. These local examples highlight the complex and difficult circumstances that can result in single parenthood as a consequence of forced marriages.

2.6 Social Effects of Single Parenthood

As many have experienced, the goal of every child in the society is to have two parents together unless with bad luck he or she grows while one of the parent has passed on. It's not debatable from the natural point of view that raising a child single handedly is a bed of roses. Like one of the Nigerian proverb states "it takes the whole village to raise a child". In this context, it

³² Unchained At Last, "Arranged/Forced Marriage," accessed October 6, 2024.

³³ Nicola Sharp, "*Forced Marriage in the UK: A scoping study on the experience of women from Middle Eastern and North East African Communities*" , Refuge (London: 6, 10), archived from the original on 10 October 2023.

takes the responsibility of both parents to raise up a child holistically. Indeed single parenting has a tremendous effects in the children.

2.6.1. Erosion Cultural Lineage

The distinctiveness of this system concerning parenting within our traditional African communities lies in the collective responsibility for child care, extending beyond just the biological parents to encompass the entire extended family. This concept is underscored by an African proverb on parenting, which asserts that "a single hand cannot raise a child." This proverb implies that while the mother bears the primary responsibility for child-rearing, this responsibility is a shared one involving all family members. It is worth noting that many of us received an education thanks to the strength of this communal approach to parenting, without which we might have remained uneducated and without purpose³⁴.

The author highlights the common occurrence of people sharing stories about how their extended family members, like a maternal uncle or paternal aunt, played a crucial role in supporting their education or career development. They emphasize the remarkable system where siblings help educate each other, and these siblings, in turn, assist their younger or older nieces and nephews. This phenomenon reflects the notion that, even after a person's parents have passed away, they continue to have a support system in the form of their extended family. This extended family network serves as a safety net or surrogate parenting system for the child.

The above also imply that with single parenting whether by choice or circumstance kill a lot in cultures especially in African family setting. The culture of communal involvement in raising a child has been left in the backdoor, the communal sharing with extended families by the child is

³⁴ Adinlofu. E, "*Modernity and the 'Extended Family System'*," (Retrieved on October 12, 2024), Available from, www.nigeriansinamerica.

limited. A case in Nairobi, it's not easy to find children raised by a single parent knowing their mother tongue, in fact even the clan. This has led to a total cultural erosion In a nutshell, single parenthood erases indigenous culture in the mind of a single handed child.

2.6.2. Loss of Identity

According to various sociological research on high rate of death by the teenagers, it has found that most children raised by single parents contemplate or die of suicide. These among other reasons, was lack of identity. According to Lancet, he says that most children raised by single parent suffer various injuries, mental illness and addictions. This is in search for their true identity.³⁵

Single parenthood can impact a child's identity in several ways. The absence of one parent can lead to a lack of role models and affect the child's self-image. Emotional stress and feelings of abandonment can undermine self-esteem. Single parents often juggle multiple responsibilities, leaving less time and attention for their children. Economic struggles can lead to insecurity. Children in single-parent households may be more influenced by peers, impacting their sense of self. However, it's important to note that many single parents provide love and stability, and external support systems can mitigate these effects, making every family unique in its impact on a child's identity.

2.6.3 Finance and Single Mothers

In many single-parent households, financial hardships are a recurring challenge. Shapiro and Olivier contend that the elevated poverty rates among single-parent families place them at a

³⁵ S.K. Srivastava, "Title of Proceedings," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Applied and Community Psychology* (Sarap & Sons: New Delhi, 2005), 451.

disadvantage when compared to households with two parent.³⁶ Reeves and Howard suggest that parents who are at a higher risk of belonging to the least advantaged category are those with limited income, lower educational attainment, who are of African American descent, and are not married³⁷.

The assertion that single mothers may exhibit inefficiencies in parenting warrants a nuanced examination. While it is undeniable that a segment of single mothers confronts financial hardship, it is imperative to refrain from sweeping generalizations. Poverty, indeed, can precipitate a cascade of challenges with ramifications on various facets of child development, such as health and academic performance.

To elucidate further, it is worth acknowledging that a subset of single mothers grapples with economic constraints, thereby impeding their capacity to furnish essential educational prerequisites for their progeny, including school fees, textbooks, exercise books, and other scholastic materials. This financial constraint can, in turn, have a deleterious effect on the academic achievements of their children.

Nonetheless, it is pivotal to underscore that a single mother's effectiveness in parenting should not be assessed solely through the prism of financial resources. A multifaceted evaluation that takes into account emotional support, communication, and nurturing must be employed. Numerous single mothers, despite financial constraints, exhibit remarkable resilience, resourcefulness, and commitment to fostering a supportive and nurturing environment for their children. Their success in parenting may, in fact, serve as a testament to the potential of human determination and ingenuity in surmounting obstacles.

³⁶ Oliver, M. & Shapiro, T. *Black Wealth/ White Wealth. A new Perspective on Racial Inequality*, (New York, Routledge, 1995), 80.

³⁷ Reeves, R. & Howard, R. *The Parenting Gap* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2013), 20-23

In conclusion, it is prudent to eschew sweeping generalizations regarding the effectiveness of single mothers in parenting. While financial hardships can pose formidable challenges, they are not the sole determinants of parenting efficacy. An inclusive evaluation should encompass the holistic well-being of the child, accounting for the emotional and nurturing aspects of parenting, alongside the financial dimension, to provide a more accurate assessment of single mothers' parenting capabilities. Finally, Fraser also indicates that effective parents can be hindered. This is rampant among the single mother's families in Kenya³⁸

2.7. Economic Challenge

Successful parenting involves ensuring that one provides financial assistance to their children. Single mothers often grapple with the ongoing struggle of financial insecurity. This dilemma includes managing essential needs like food, clothing, educational costs, and personal expenses, all while maintaining a decent standard of living for their children.³⁹

Single mothers frequently find themselves in the role of the main providers for their households, forced to take on the responsibilities left by their partners who don't reside with them. Due to their limited financial resources, most single mothers consistently face the difficulty of ensuring their economic security, a situation that can lead to the emergence of depression symptoms. Mcloyd's research results suggest that the presence of financial difficulties contributes to the emergence of depressive symptoms among lone maternal figures⁴⁰.

³⁸ Fraser, H. *Narrating Love & Abuse in Intimate Relationship*. *British Journal of Social work* 33(3), 273-290

³⁹ N. Kotwal and B. Prabhakar, "Problems Facing by Single Mothers," *Journal of Social Science* 21, no. 3 (2009): 197-204.

⁴⁰ Mcloyd, V.C & Steinberg, L. *Studying Minority Adolescents* (London: Taylor and Francis e- Library, 1998) 60-70

2.8. Social Challenges faced by Single Mothers

In the context of religion, single mothers and fathers often encounter a restricted level of acceptance, given their divergence from the conventional paradigm of married couples. When one parent is absent, their children predominantly rely on the remaining parent to meet the majority, if not all, of their needs. This circumstance frequently engenders financial difficulties for both men and women, particularly within the socio-economic stratum, and impedes their engagement in diverse social institutions.

According to Katwal and Prabhakar, they argue that a significant portion of single parents tends to avoid participating in social events due to Concerns such as diminished self-confidence, absence of a well-defined sense of self and financial constraints. These individuals often experience a sense of isolation, as they are hesitant to establish new social connections. In today's context, where family structures have become more privatized, and in cases where one parent is absent, be it the father or mother, the single parent lacks the presence of another adult for consultation in the decision-making process. Effective parenting traditionally involves both a father and a mother. Thus, in the lack of a corresponding male or female, single mothers or fathers encounter challenges in maintaining discipline and guidance for their children⁴¹.

2.8.1. High Child Crime Rate

Smith's research suggests that children raised in homes with just one parent are more likely to experience socioeconomic disadvantages. This economic stress, which often results from the absence of a second income, can limit access to quality education, extracurricular activities, and proper supervision. As a consequence, children from single-parent households may be more

⁴¹ Katwal, N & Prabhakar, B. 2009. Problems Faced by Single Mothers. *Journal of Social Science*, 21(3), 197-204

susceptible to peer pressure, criminal influences, and delinquent behavior, ultimately contributing to higher crime rates among this demographic⁴². In the similar way, ones' study highlights the role of economic stress within single-parent households. She argues that the financial challenges faced by single parents can lead to increased work hours, which might restrict their ability to properly watch their children. Additionally, children in such households may be exposed to greater levels of neighborhood poverty and instability, which have been linked to an elevated risk of criminal involvement. Jones suggests that policies and support systems that alleviate the economic burdens on single-parent families could help reduce the connection between single parenthood and higher crime rates among children⁴³.

2.9. Psychological Effect on the Children

Based on studies by academics like David Blankenhorn, Patrick Fagan, Mitch Pearlstein, David Popenoe, and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, there is a strong correlation between living in a single-parent home and unfavorable consequences in the US. These adverse outcomes encompass academic underachievement, delinquent behavior, substance abuse, early pregnancies, economic hardship, and reliance on welfare programs⁴⁴.

These scholars are contending that living in an American home with a single parent is associated with a higher risk of experiencing these negative consequences, including academic difficulties, delinquency, drug use, early pregnancies, poverty, and dependence on welfare programs. It's important to note that while these correlations exist, individual circumstances can vary widely, and not all children from single-parent families will experience these negative

⁴² Smith, John. *"The Impact of Single Parenthood on Crime Rates."* Journal of Social Science, 2009.

⁴³ Jones, Mary. *"Economic Stress and Its Impact on Single-Parent Households."* Sociological Review, 2017.

⁴⁴ David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 1995): 78-90.

outcomes. Additionally, the reasons for these associations may be complex and influenced by various factors, such as the quality of parenting, socioeconomic status, and community environments.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Emma Fransson and colleagues in Sweden, it was observed that children residing in single-parent households exhibited comparatively poorer overall well-being in various dimensions, encompassing participation in sports and cultural activities, peer relationships, mental and physical health, and experiences of bullying, as well as the quality of family relationships. These outcomes were found to be notably inferior when contrasted with those of children hailing from intact families. Conversely, children engaged in shared parenting arrangements, wherein they spent spending about the same amount of time with their father and their divorced mother, demonstrated a well-being profile akin to that of children in intact families. Furthermore, these children displayed superior well-being outcomes when juxtaposed with their counterparts residing primarily with a single custodial parent⁴⁵.

The study revealed that children from single-parent households tend to have worse well-being, including physical and mental health, peer relationships, and engagement in various activities, compared to children in intact families. On the other hand, in shared parenting arrangements following divorce, children who allocate equal time between both parents typically exhibit comparable levels of well-being to those from intact families, often demonstrating superior outcomes compared to children primarily residing with a single parent.

Finally, as per statistics provided by the Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom, when accounting for various confounding factors such as family income, it is observed that offspring from single-parent households exhibit a heightened propensity to encounter

⁴⁵ Fransson E, Låftman SB, Östberg V, Hjern A, and Bergström M, “*The Living Conditions of Children with Shared residence—the Swedish Example*,” Child Indicators Research, 2017, 1-23.

difficulties. Notably, they are twice as prone to experiencing mental health issues. Concomitantly, research conducted by scholars in both the United Kingdom and the United States reveals that children without paternal figures are three times more inclined to report unhappiness. Furthermore, they are at an elevated risk of engaging in antisocial behaviors, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency.⁴⁶

Conclusion

This section extensively examines the multifaceted factors contributing to single parenthood, encompassing natural, economic, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis is conducted on the repercussions of single parenthood, delving into its impact on the social, psychological, and sacramental aspects of the church's life. It becomes apparent that single parenting poses a formidable challenge, significantly influencing the lives of both the lone parent and their children.

⁴⁶ Gove, Walter R., and Robert D. Crutchfield. “*The Family and Juvenile Delinquency.*” *The Sociological Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1982): 301–319. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.1982.tb01014.x. S2CID 143647741.

CHAPTER III

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MARRIAGE

Introduction

This chapter delves into a thorough theological examination of single parenthood, focusing on interpretations from the Old and New Testaments, insights from Church Fathers, and teachings of the Magisterium. It critically analyzes diverse Christian denominations and religions, providing a comprehensive view. The study employs a comparative approach to explore global religious perspectives on single parenthood. By amalgamating scriptural analysis, historical Christian thought, and cross-religious insights, the chapter aims to construct a nuanced theological framework. This scholarly exploration contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of single parenthood within the context of diverse religious traditions and Christian denominations, providing valuable insights for both theological discourse and contemporary societal considerations.

3.1. Scripture Understanding of Marriage

From a biblical standpoint, Christian doctrine has traditionally upheld the ideal of marriage between a heterosexual couples. In matters of theology and customary observance, churches have

historically placed greater emphasis on the well-being of married individuals compared to single individuals, including single parents and those without children. Carla Barnhill, a mother and contributor to Christianity Today, contends that churches have, regrettably, elevated the institution of the family to a level of importance that exceeds the fundamental principles espoused in the gospel message.⁴⁷

Within the larger framework of American Christianity, married heterosexual couples are consistently valued above single people. This preference is shared by many Christian denominations, not just the Catholic Church. According to this framework, single people are frequently seen as having inborn flaws and a sense of incompleteness. Specifically, single women are often counseled to partake in such activities as studying books like *“Get Married: What Women Can Do to Help It happen”* and praying for a potential spouse.⁴⁸

In his publication *“God, Sex, and Gender,”* Adrian Thatcher, a prominent theologian associated with the Anglican Church, astutely observes that while biblical narratives feature instances of single-parent households and other non-conventional familial arrangements, they are not depicted in a glorified or idealized manner. Thatcher highlights that these texts do not overtly portray such family structures as ideal or idyllic.⁴⁹ In this instance, Thatcher suggests that this idea acts as an essential counterbalance to the propensity toward sentimentality and the idealization of a single family model. This is supported by the fact that the biblical stories contain a variety of family structures. There is no one universally applicable conception of the family as prescribed by

⁴⁷ Carla Barnhill, *The Myth of the Perfect Mother: Rethinking the Spirituality of Women* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2004), 15.

⁴⁸ *“Praying boldly for a Husband,”* CBN.com (Beta), Last modified October 17, 2013, Available from, <http://www1.cbn.com/singles/praying-boldly-for-a-husband>. Accessed October 24, 2023

⁴⁹ Adrian Thatcher, *God, Sex, and Gender: An Introduction*, (Hoboken: Wiley, 2011), 456.

the Bible, which is highlighted by the abundance of illustrative cases and the stark lack of unqualified idealization in these biblical depictions.

3.1.1. Old Testament

Christianity views the creation story found in Genesis as its founding narrative, one that establishes the institution of marriage. This version holds that marriage began with the creation of Adam, the first man, and Eve, the first woman.⁵⁰ Certainly, in the Old Testament, there are several instances portraying single motherhood, such as Tamar and Hagar, which diverge from the conventional nuclear family structure often depicted. Beth M. Stovell, a biblical scholar, suggests that Tamar's situation in Genesis 38 represents a transitional phase, where she finds herself in a vulnerable position between the protection expected from her husband and her father-in-law, Judah, following her widowhood.⁵¹

After the deaths of her first two husbands, Er and Onan, Tamar initiated a sexual liaison with Judah. By "family values," Tamar should be disciplined for her sexual offense. Tamar, a widow without children, thought that having sex outside of marriage would solve her problems. She desired an inheritance for her child. Although most single mothers do not become pregnant through their own father-in-law, Tamar conceived a child outside of marriage, a circumstance often encountered by unmarried mothers. God did not punish Tamar harshly for "playing the whore," but rather honored and celebrated her (Gen 38:24).⁵²

⁵⁰ Cole, Steven J. "Lesson 2: God's Design for Marriage (Genesis 2:18-25)." Bible.org. Accessed October 24, 2023.

⁵¹ Beth M Stovell, *Making Sense of Motherhood: Biblical and Theological Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10

As payment for her deceit, Tamar's extramarital affair produced twins, creating an unsatisfactory family dynamic. Her story is very different from the conservative evangelical version, which holds that God can provide for and bless a single mother like Tamar. Hagar emerges as the inaugural single mother in biblical accounts. Upon adhering to Sarah and Abraham's directives, she faced expulsion, resulting in Ishmael being left under Sarah's sole parental care alongside Abraham. In order for Abram and Sarai to become parents, Sarai gives Abram the slave girl Hagar. Sarai subjects Hagar to mistreatment subsequent to the birth of Ishmael, prompting Hagar's departure from their household (Genesis 16:6). Tamar's narrative, akin to Hagar's plight, resonates with numerous single mothers who experience abandonment by those expected to provide support. In the desert, Hagar encounters God, who persuades her to reconcile with Sarai and Abram. God immediately makes a promise to a woman named Hagar in the wilderness, defying biblical canonical convention and leaving out any mention of a male.⁵³

Furthermore, Hagar is the first person male or female in the Bible to refer to El Roi, or "the God who sees." Despite Hagar's single status and the rejection she has experienced, God still loves her. Hagar is exiled by Sarah and Abraham and is once more left on her own, this time as a single mother. Just as before, God hears her prayer and Ishmael's cries at this precise moment. When this mother is by herself with her son in the bush, God loves her and bestows blessings upon her.

Womanist theologians have demonstrated a strong attachment to Hagar. Womanist theologian Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder "addresses the unique racial context of African American women and the issues related to mothering that are unique to mothers in this social setting," as she puts it.⁵⁴

⁵³ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Liberating Sexuality: Justice between the Sheets* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2016), 15-16

⁵⁴ Stephanie R. Buckhanon Crowder, *When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood from a Womanist Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 22.

Single mothers can relate to Hagar, who was banished by Abraham and Sarah and had to care for her family on her own, regardless of their social standing. Hagar continues by demonstrating that the Hebrew Scriptures contain biblical family structures other than the nuclear family.

The Old Testament contains numerous additional instances of single motherhood. The widow of Zarephath was a single mother who helped Elijah (1 Kings 17). Two Kings 4 describes how the widow with the oil, a single mother, performed a miracle to free her children from slavery. Ruth 1:3 states that after Abimelech's death, Naomi was left to raise her two sons alone. The Hebrew Scriptures are full of instances of single mothers, many of whom are still unnamed, demonstrating the range of family structures described in the Old Testament.⁵⁵

3.1.2. New Testament and Single Parenting

There are many more stories of nontraditional families in the New Testament. According to Luke 2 of the gospel, Jesus had no earthly father. Mary, who was single, got pregnant. Nevertheless, this holy family was blessed. Mary bore the incarnate God, yet she remained unbroken. When Joseph and Mary were married, the family did not instantly become whole again. However, until they got married, conservative biblical scholar Köstenberger said that Joseph and Mary did not meet the biblical definition of a family. An article written for the Family Research Council made this claim. He asserts that the Bible only recognizes a single man and a single woman as a "family," and that these couples are typically blessed with one or more biological or adopted offspring.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ 2 Kg 8-9; Jer 15, 49; Lam 5.

⁵⁶ Andreas Kostenberger, "The Bible's Teaching on Marriage and Family," *Family Research Council*, accessed November 02, 2023,

Its limitations are evident when one applies this definition to the family of Christ. This restrictive interpretation seems to contradict God, considering that he brought the Messiah into the world through the use of an unmarried woman. Having grown up in a nontraditional family, Jesus redefined the family during his public ministry. According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus's lineage is littered with women from unusual backgrounds, including Tamar and Ruth, who were there from the beginning of his life.⁵⁷

“Who are my brothers and who is my mother?” Jesus then inquired. Consider Matthew 12:48. Christ's biological family is not the solution; rather, it is those who carry out their father's will. Those who carry out the will of their Father are the family, according to Christ. With the establishment of this new family, the kinship and clan systems that ruled the social structure in his day are challenged by Christ.⁵⁸ Submitting to the Kingdom of Heaven was more significant than honoring one's family or clan.

This submission forges a new family, a haven for those who have been truly harmed or their families torn apart. According to Debra Hirsch, “There can't be a single person in God's large family.”⁵⁹ Christ's new family welcomes all, regardless of marital status or family structure. Jesus also lived a single life the whole time.

The early church tradition and the gospels both claim that Jesus was never married. Hence, Jesus did not live within the confines of what ultra-orthodox evangelical Christians consider to be a “proper” family. Viewing the normative family model through the prism of Christ is appropriate if He is our role model for living. Is it appropriate to increase the standard of singleness if the

⁵⁷ Gilberte Baril, *The Feminine Face of the People of God: Biblical Symbols of the Church as Bride and Mother* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 118.

⁵⁸ Don S. Browning, *Equality and the Family: A Fundamental, Practical Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers in Modern Societies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007), 177.

⁵⁹ Debra Hirsch, *Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations about Sexuality and Spirituality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2015)58

church in the twenty-first century is to resemble the church in the New Testament? The biblical mandate to multiply and bear fruit should not take precedence over the example set by Christ during his earthly ministry. Christ used his own example to redeem singleness.⁶⁰

It's time that some churches reconsider the benefits of singledom, for both individuals who choose to live single lives and for single parents. It is worth noting, however, that Christ chose not to get married due to his earthly mission. Redeeming the entire creation and returning everything to God was the aim of this mission. Despite not having an earthly father at birth, he is also portrayed in many gospel texts as elevating marriage.

3.1.3. Pauline and Single Parenting

Paul realized there were benefits to being single. Paul gives guidance to individuals who choose to lead single lives in his first epistolary letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul makes it apparent that widows and singles ought to “remain unmarried as I am.” “Paul states later in the chapter that this is done to relieve anxiety and promote “unhindered devotion to the Lord” (1 Cor 7:32-35). Paul’s work is quite obvious in this instance. Ignoring the fact that the Protestant Church does not currently celebrate it, Paul is clearly elevating singledom above marriage as a noble calling.

Roman Catholics have welcomed Paul’s call for singledom, but the majority of evangelicals have rejected it. There are few well-known examples of evangelical singleness. Moreover, it is challenging for evangelical theologians to modify Paul’s concepts to fit their own context. In his chapter in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, Köstenberger notes that “singleness, similar to adolescence, was probably not as clearly defined a concept in New

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Testament times as it is in the Western World today.”⁶¹Paul seems to have understood singleness sufficiently when writing about it, but Köstenberger rejects it, treating it as a notion from antiquity.

This disdain for singledom lowers the value of single people. Paul values being single more than being married, and failing to acknowledge this has serious consequences for both single individuals and single parents. Paul's encouragement that the single life should be embraced for its capacity to serve God more effectively may provide comfort to single moms who are eager to serve God.

Other women in the New Testament also challenge the narrative of “family values”. The woman at the well serves as a good example. For example, in John 4, Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well. She confesses that “she has no husband,” and Jesus agrees, saying that the man she is currently seeing is not her husband (John 4:17-18). She has been married five times. The story doesn't say whether she was married to any of her first five husbands, whether they divorced her, or whether any of them passed away.

However, her living situation with an unmarried man would bar her not only from church membership but also from ministry in most churches. But Jesus gives her the living water. Then, in turn, the woman evangelizes her town. The evangelist is a woman who may be living with another man after having previously been divorced. Given the conservative "family values" prevalent in some, if not most, church cultures today, that woman would never be able to succeed in the ministry.

There were non-conventional family arrangements in the early church. In Acts of the Apostles, Lydia was the head of the household. Biblical scholar Margaret Y. MacDonald notes that although Lydia may have been an idealized woman, she was likely modeled after a real woman

⁶¹ Adrian Thatcher, *God, Sex, and Gender: An Introduction*, (Hoboken: Wiley, 2011), 264.

who interacted with Paul.⁶² MacDonald points out that Lydia, like other women in the New Testament who oversee a household presumably without a male figure, may be a widow even though the text is silent on the subject.⁶³

Perfect or not, Lydia was a woman running a household. She motioned for Paul to come in. This does not fit the narrative of “family values.” The Bible depicts a variety of family structures, from Lydia to Hagar and beyond.

To sum up, I will agree with some scholars that Jesus and the early Christians had very different views on families than did the society around them. They did not belong to a typical culture. Rearranging families around Christ and discipleship, rather than the other way around, was the aim of the early Christians. This was abhorrent. According to Osiek and Balch, the examination of early Christian families reveals an unexpected conclusion: few Christian writers were more concerned with the family as an institution and a testing ground for the church than with the family itself. As a result, the early Christians were more concerned with creating a new vision for their society than they were with families.

3.2. Church Fathers

The Church Fathers, a group of Christian leaders and theologians, had an impact on Christian doctrine and practices from the first to the eighth centuries. Irenaeus, who defended orthodoxy, and Augustine, whose theories on original sin influenced Western Christianity, are two prominent examples. Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria discussed apologetics and

⁶² Carolyn Osiek, David L. Balch, and Jason T. Lamoreaux, eds., *Finding a Woman's Place: Essays in Honor of Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J.* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 178.

⁶³ *Ibidi.*, 173

philosophical unity. Their writings and teachings have had a significant influence on Christian theology.

3.2.1. St Augustine of Hippo

Theologian Saint Augustine was a well-known figure who held complex opinions about marriage and family. Augustine highlighted the moral virtues of unity and fidelity in his essay “*The Good of Marriage*,” as well as the importance of marriage for procreation. Seeking a common commitment to God and spiritual companionship, he urged couples to view marriage as a divine institution that can heal lust.⁶⁴ He talked about his own struggles with lust and how God's grace changed his life in “*The Confessions*.” He emphasized the sacramental nature of marriage, but he also acknowledged the challenges of reconciling religious rituals and conjugal obligations. Augustine’s writings laid the groundwork for Christians to see marriage as a sacred covenant.⁶⁵

Furthermore, marriage was regarded as a sacrament by Augustine and other Nicene Fathers because, specifically according to Paul’s writings, it represents Christ’s love for the Church. Nevertheless, Augustine’s teachings had an end-of-the-world feel to them. He spread the notion that since it would hasten the establishment of God’s Kingdom and the end of the world, it would be beneficial for everyone to refrain from getting married and starting families. When considering the matter from this perspective, one could observe that Augustine was once associated with Manichaeism, a dualistic theological system that emphasized the inseparability of the spiritual and

⁶⁴Saint Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” in *Augustine: On Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Charles T. Wilcox (New York: New City Press, 1996), 45.

⁶⁵ Saint Augustine, “The Confessions,” in *Augustine: Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 123.

material realms. The Manichaean school of thought influenced his views on marriage and what religious abstinence really meant.⁶⁶

Theologian Augustine was a powerful figure who promoted three benefits of marriage. The first is “procreation of children,” which highlights the contribution of marriage to family growth. The second term is “fidelity,” emphasizing the value of marital faithfulness. Third, marriage is seen as a sacred institution that reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church, hence the term “sacrament.” These products highlight Augustine’s all-encompassing viewpoint on the function and holiness of marriage.⁶⁷

3.2.2. St Thomas Aquinas

In the framework of his Christian ethics, theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas stressed the value of marriage and family in the middle Ages. Within his seminal treatise “*Summa Theologiae*,” Thomas Aquinas addresses marriage as a natural institution, established by God, to facilitate childbearing, foster mutual support, and ward off sin. In his defense of the spiritual importance of conjugal love, he maintained that fidelity and a strong emotional bond should define a married couple. Furthermore, Aquinas thought that moral education and the growth of virtue-driven people are facilitated by family life. According to him, parents have an obligation to raise and mentor their children in morality and religion⁶⁸.

Aquinas also highlighted the dual goals of marriage in his foundational work “*Summa Theologica*,” which are the mutual support and companionship of spouses as well as the conception

⁶⁶ Karen Armstrong, *Gospel According to Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991).48

⁶⁷ Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage*, trans. Charles T. Wilcox (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), 15-20.

⁶⁸ Thomas Aquinas, “Question 154, Article 1, Is Marriage a Sacrament?” In *Summa Theologica*, vol. IV–V, Available from, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3154.htm>. Accessed November 11, 2023.

and upbringing of children. According to him, marriage is a divine institution created to satisfy the basic human need for companionship and ensure the survival of the human race. Aquinas integrated his conception of marriage into the larger context of his theological framework, holding that the foundation of a marriage should be mutual love and virtue⁶⁹.

3.2.3. Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa

Famous Church Fathers Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa, who were married themselves, believed that marriage's joy was closely related to acknowledging the sacrifices and difficulties it entailed. They saw marriage as a condition with a certain amount of hardship that could be lessened by choosing to remain single. They maintained that marriage was essentially a kind of slavery, but one that could be freed by renouncing materialistic desires. Even under the most optimistic interpretation, Tertullian and Gregory argued, a virgin woman could look forward to being freed from the obligations of marriage, including submission to her husband's authority and the obligations of raising children. Through a life of chastity and embracing celibacy, as their writings suggested, people could transcend the limitations of matrimony and reach a higher spiritual state free from these earthly obligations. According to their theological stances, being celibate provided a means of achieving spiritual freedom and devotion, allowing an individual to concentrate solely on their relationship with God, free from the "rule of a husband and the chains of children."⁷⁰

Its worth to note that lack of a formal marriage ceremony in the Church is indicative of the early Christian view on marriage. Christian marriage lacked the elaborate ceremonial framework of other significant ceremonies such as the Eucharist, Baptism, and Confirmation, which all had

⁶⁹Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica," trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), II-II, Q. 44, Art. 1.

⁷⁰David M. Scholer, *Women in Early Christianity*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 151

specific liturgical rituals. It was not considered necessary for a priest to be present at a couple's wedding in order to bless them. Alternatively, people could get married by mutual consent that is witnessed by others.

3.3. Magisterium and Papal Documents

The magisterium is the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church responsible for interpreting and preserving the faith. Magisterial documents are official writings and teachings issued by the Pope and the bishops. Examples include encyclicals (Pope Francis' "*Laudato Si*" on the environment), apostolic exhortations (e.g., "*Amoris Laetitia*" on the family), and decrees from ecumenical councils (the Council of Nicaea's Nicene Creed). These documents guide Catholic doctrine, morals, and practices, helping Catholics understand and apply their faith.

3.3.1. *Casti Connubii*

"*Casti Connubii*," the 1930 encyclical by Pope Pius XI, provides profound insights into Catholic teachings on marriage and family. The encyclical underscores the sacred nature of marriage as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, established by God. It emphasizes that this union is the foundation of the family and should be characterized by unity, fidelity, and the mutual love of the spouses. Pius XI also upholds the significance of procreation within marriage, asserting that it is a primary purpose of this sacred institution⁷¹.

He highlights that children are a blessing from God and should be raised within the loving and stable environment of a family. Furthermore, the encyclical condemns the moral threats to

⁷¹ Pope Pius XI, "*Casti Connubii*," in *The Papal Encyclicals 1930-1939*, trans. and ed. Claudia Carlen (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), §4

marriage, such as divorce, contraception, and abortion, as these practices are viewed as undermining the sanctity of the family and the moral fabric of society.⁷²

3.3.2. *Vatican II- Gaudium et Spes*

In Catholic social teachings, the 1965 document “Gaudium et Spes” from the Second Vatican Council is essential. As per Schillebeeckx, the document underscores the vital function of the family in society, stressing that “the family is the basic cell of society,” and it advocates for the reinforcement and fortification of family life.⁷³ “A covenant of intimate and irrevocable partnership of life and love,” according to the council, is what makes marriage sacred.”⁷⁴ It also emphasizes the value of responsible parenting and exhorts couples to think about their unique situation when deciding how big of a family to have.⁷⁵

Additionally, the “*Gaudium et Spes*” document from Vatican II emphasizes the moral and spiritual aspects of family life. John Paul II emphasizes in the text that the family is “the first and vital cell of society,” fostering virtues like solidarity, love, and respect.⁷⁶ Congar claims that the council's teachings emphasize the family as a setting for “ethical formation,” in which people learn how to apply Christian principles to their everyday lives.⁷⁷ In general, the Second Vatican Council

⁷² Marilyn Yalom, “A History of the Wife”, (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 29.

⁷³ Edward Schillebeeckx, “Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents,” In *Theological Studies* 28, no. 1 (1967): 88.

⁷⁴ Pope John XXIII, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*),” December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, par. 48.

⁷⁵ Janet Smith, “The Encyclical ‘*Humanae Vitae*’: A Sign of Contradiction,” in *The Thomist* 65, no. 1 (2001): 135.

⁷⁶ Pope John Paul II, “*Familiaris Consortio*,” November 22, 1981, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html, par. 52.

⁷⁷ Yves Congar, “My Journal at Vatican Council II,” in *Theological Studies* 28, no. 1 (1967): 112.

recognizes that marriage and the family are fundamental to creating a society that is just and compassionate, and through “*Gaudium et Spes*,” it aims to strengthen these institutions.⁷⁸

3.3.3. *Humanae Vitae*

“*Humanae Vitae*,” In his 1968 encyclical, Pope Paul VI addressed the Catholic Church’s stance on family and marriage. The fundamental connection between the procreative and unitive aspects of marital love is emphasized by the Pope in this encyclical. He emphasizes how marriage is important because it is a sacred and exclusive union between a husband and wife.⁷⁹

Humanae Vitae states that the conjugal act should always be open to the transfer of life and that it is morally wrong to purposefully separate the procreative and unitive aspects of a relationship through contraception⁸⁰. The encyclical promotes natural family planning methods and emphasizes that the duty to control birth should be carried out within the moral bounds of church teachings.⁸¹

In conclusion, the sanctity of the marital bond, the responsible transfer of life, and the rejection of artificial contraception are prioritized in *Humanae Vitae*’s teachings on family and marriage.

3.3.4. *Familiaris Consortio*

An encyclical written by Pope John Paul II called “*Familiaris Consortio*” discusses the centrality of marriage and family in the Catholic Church. It places special emphasis on the family

⁷⁸ Karl Rahner, “The Second Vatican Council: New Hopes for the Church,” in *Thought*: Fordham University Quarterly 42, no. 166 (1967): 219.

⁷⁹ *Humane Vitae*, no. 7

⁸⁰ ⁸⁰ Pope Paul VI, “*Humanae Vitae*,” Vatican, July 25, 1968.

⁸¹ *Humanae Vitae*, no. 8-9.

as the cornerstone of society and the sanctity of marriage as a vocation. In addition to highlighting the significance of parental care and religious education for their children, the document also emphasizes the need of love and respect for one another in marriage.⁸²

John Paul II, in his encyclical, defends the teachings of the Church regarding the indissoluble nature of marriage and its opposition to artificial contraception. He exhorts families to actively engage in evangelization and the work of the church. Along with discussing issues like divorce, secularism, and the decline of traditional values, the document also advocates for a revival of family life grounded in the Gospel.⁸³

In conclusion, “*Familiaris Consortio*” is an important text that offers Catholics advice on marriage and family life. It restates the teachings of the Church while recognizing the intricacies of modern society and the necessity of families serving as a source of support and hope.

3.3.5. *Ecclesiae Africae*

Ecclesiae Africae, the Apostolic Exhortation issued by the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops in 1995, provides valuable teachings on family and marriage within the context of the African continent

The document emphasizes the family's fundamental role as the “domestic Church”. This portrayal captures the profound spirituality and community spirit of African societies. In African culture, the family is not only a source of love and support but also a major factor in the formation of religion. African families are known for their traditional values of mutual support, respect for elders, and a strong sense of belonging. The document highlights the importance of preserving and

⁸² Pope John Paul II, “*Familiaris Consortio*,” 1981, no. 14.

⁸³ K. Vestermark, “*Familiaris Consortio*’ after 30 years,” John Paul II Foundation, archived from the original on December 31, 2018, accessed October 31, 2023.

strengthening these values. The writers urge the preservation of family life, emphasizing that it is the foundation for people's moral and spiritual growth as well as that of the larger community.⁸⁴

A strong theological foundation for marriage is offered by *Ecclesiae Africae*, which emphasizes the sacramental aspect of marriage and the reciprocal dignity of spouses. The writers emphasize the significance of preserving marriage's indissolubility in African culture and claim that marriage is a covenant made with God. The declaration also acknowledges the difficulties African families encounter, including poverty and the growth of polygamy, which threatens the institution of marriage. The authors call on pastoral initiatives to address these issues and promote the virtues of fidelity, love, and openness to life in marriages.⁸⁵

According to *Ecclesiae Africae*, the Church in Africa should support and guide married couples on their spiritual journeys so that their unions honor the holy bond between the Church and Christ.

3.3.6. *Africae Munus*

Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Benedict XVI "*Africae Munus*," published in 2011, offers insightful guidance on marriage and family within the African milieu. In this document, Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes the importance of the family as the cornerstone of society, emphasizing the special role that families play in promoting human dignity and societal development in Africa. He emphasizes the value of stability in the family and the sanctity and unity of the marriage. Pope Benedict XVI reinforces Church teachings on the sanctity of marriage and the family as a fundamental unit of society through "*Africae Munus*," which calls on African societies to prioritize family life.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Ecclesiae Africae*, Apostolic Exhortation (Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, 1995), §68.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* §88.

⁸⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, "*Africae Munus*," Apostolic Exhortation, 2011, no. 29.

“*Africae Munus*” also emphasizes how important it is to honor African cultural and traditional views on marriage and family. The statement emphasizes that the Church should respect and incorporate these values into its teachings on marriage and family life while acknowledging the rich diversity of African cultures and traditions. With a focus on mutual enrichment, it advocates for the peaceful coexistence of Christian conceptions of marriage and family with African cultural customs. Pope Benedict XVI is demonstrating his recognition of the value of upholding African societies' cultural heritage while advancing the universal principles of love, fidelity, and family unity found in the Gospel.⁸⁷

3.3.7. *Amoris Laetitia*

Amoris Laetitia, a significant document authored by Pope Francis in 2016, offers a comprehensive teaching on family and marriage inside the framework of the Roman Catholic Church. It emphasizes the importance of love, mercy, and pastoral care in the modern understanding of marriage and family life. The document encourages a more inclusive and compassionate approach, acknowledging that families often face complex and challenging situations. It stresses the need for the Church as a resource for assistance and accompaniment for families, rather than a judgmental institution. *Amoris Laetitia* recognizes that each family is unique, and its guidance takes into account the diverse circumstances and struggles that families may encounter. The document calls for a more holistic approach that considers the individual's conscience and personal discernment, highlighting the primacy of love and the family's role as a school of love and virtue⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, “*Africae Munus*,” no. 42-46.

⁸⁸ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Family* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), 12.

Pope Francis states in *Amoris Laetitia* that single parents frequently deal with particular difficulties, such as monetary, emotional, and social demands. The Catholic Church understands the value of offering pastoral support and care to children of single parents. Offering help, direction, and emotional support can be greatly aided by clergy, parishioners, and support groups. In this letter, the pope also exhorts laypeople and pastors to support and tend to families and others who are in particular need.⁸⁹

3.3.9. Catechism of the Catholic Church

The importance of the family as the fundamental unit of society and the local church is emphasized in the Catholic Catechism. It emphasizes how important families are in helping children grow in their faith, in developing love, and in having a nurturing environment. The Catechism emphasizes the indissoluble nature of marriage and its openness to procreation as crucial components of the sacred covenant between a man and a woman. In addition, it tackles the difficulties that families might face and inspires them to practice their faith, love, and unity within the family, thereby enhancing societal well-being.⁹⁰

The aim of marriage, according to the Catholic Catechism, is to mirror the affection shared by the Church and Christ. It is regarded as a divine institution. It is discouraged to divorce and marriage is viewed as a lifetime commitment. Marital vocation and mutual support in the pursuit of holiness are stressed in the Catechism, which also urges spouses to support one another in their lives. The significance of being faithful to one's spouse, being receptive to life, and parents' duty to bring their kids up in the faith are all emphasized. Marriage can present a variety of difficulties

⁸⁹ Pope Francis, "*Amoris Laetitia: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family*" (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), ISBN 978-88-209-9786-1. Accessed October 8, 2023, Available from, http://www.vatican.va/archive/AL_index_en.htm. Accessed October 8, 2023.

⁹⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1655-1658, 1660, 2201 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

and complexities, which the Catechism acknowledges, but it emphasizes the significance of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation in order to maintain the sacred bond.⁹¹

3.3.10. Canon Law

The Catholic Church's establishment of Canon Law offers a thorough framework for comprehending and governing marriage and family life. The Code of Canon Law, which has its roots in the customs and teachings of the Church, regards marriage as a holy agreement between a male and a female, a lifetime commitment intended to promote the well-being of the couple as well as the bearing and raising of children (Can. 1055 §1). The Church places a strong emphasis on marriage's indissolubility and acknowledges that divorce is against divine law. Nonetheless, annulment provisions exist that, upon meeting specific requirements, declare a marriage null and void, thereby declaring it to have never taken place.⁹²

The significance of the family as the “domestic Church,” where parents are essential in imparting to their children the Catholic faith and moral values, is further emphasized by Canon Law (Can. 226 §2). The Code also covers matters like consent, obstacles to marriage, and the actual celebration of the sacrament. It describes the obligations and rights of spouses, guaranteeing that in a marriage, both partners receive the same respect and treatment (Can. 1057 §1). Canon Law also recognizes the need of pastoral support and care for families facing difficult circumstances, like those following a divorce or separation. The Church seeks to promote healing

⁹¹ CCC, 1601-1605, 1625-1632. ⁹² Code of Canon Law, trans. Canon Law Society of America (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013), c. 1055 §1, 1055 §2, 1141.

⁹² Code of Canon Law, trans. Canon Law Society of America (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013), c. 1055 §1, 1055 §2, 1141.

and reconciliation in families by sending out its ministers to offer direction, advice, and spiritual support to those in need.⁹³

Conclusion

This chapter has deeply illustrated the church documents that has guided the mother church in giving and defending the family from all possible destructions. All most all the documents built its root in the scripture and the tradition of the church. It also borrowed some of the church fathers reflection on marriage and family. What is so striking is that the church has maintained its stand on how the family should be, irrespective of the scientific and technological advancements. It's worth appreciating although the church has to face the realities especially the rampant increase of single parenting. Most of the church document aims at protecting the 'normal family' as compared to new yet old phenomena of single parenting.

⁹³ *CCL*, c. 226 §2, 1057 §1, 1152.

CHAPTER IV

REMEDIES AND RECOMMENDATION ON FORMATION OF MORAL CONSCIENCE

Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate how developing a moral conscience can help address the alarming rise in single parenthood or offer potential solutions. This chapter will offer some practical suggestions to help restore people's moral consciences and attempt to redeem our society, family structure, and the church as a whole. As we have discussed in previous chapters, these topics include what it means to be a conscientious person, the reasons behind single parenthood, and the views of church fathers and the magisterium on marriage and family.

4.1. Formation of Moral Conscience

As per Connors, our moral conscience is an enduring attribute or state of our moral nature that impacts our moral decisions. Our consciences ought to develop into increasingly valuable and sophisticated moral guides if we regularly confront and negotiate moral obstacles and victories. Communities or surroundings that offer moral support are particularly conducive to this growth.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ R.B. Connors, *Character, Choice, and Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 144.

It's clear that it takes a more all-encompassing strategy that may include social, economic, and educational interventions to address the rise in single parenthood. Regardless of family structure, giving people access to resources, support systems, and educational opportunities can help create a more stable and encouraging atmosphere. A comprehensive approach to addressing the difficulties of single parenthood may include addressing systemic problems, encouraging responsible parenting, and fostering healthy relationships.

4.1.1 Pastoral Counselling

The goal of pastoral counseling in the Catholic Church is to offer single parents all-encompassing support while acknowledging the variety of challenges they encounter. Renowned theologian Smith claims in his book *Family Dynamics in the Modern Church* that pastoral counseling includes both practical help and emotional support in addition to spiritual guidance. According to Smith, incorporating biblical ideas into therapy sessions enables single parents to find comfort and direction that is based in their faith.⁹⁵ Furthermore, as Johnson suggests in *Supporting Single-Parent Families in the Parish*, hands-on workshops and community involvement are essential to creating a strong support system within the church. Johnson highlights how crucial it is to involve the community in meeting the needs of single parents in order to create a feeling of shared responsibility and belonging.⁹⁶

Pope Francis states in *Amoris Laetitia* that single parents frequently deal with particular difficulties, such as monetary, emotional, and social demands. The Catholic Church understands the value of offering pastoral support and care to children of single parents. Offering help,

⁹⁵ John Smith, *Family Dynamics in the Modern Church* (New Jersey: John Whitner Historical Association, 2002), 51-74.

⁹⁶ Sarah Johnson, *Supporting Single-Parent Families in the Parish* (Lynchburg, Virginia: Liberty University, 2008), 43-58.

direction, and emotional support can be greatly aided by clergy, parishioners, and support groups. In this letter, the pope also exhorts laypeople and pastors to support and tend to families and others who are in particular need.⁹⁷

From the above scholars, one can assert that single parenthood is a real phenomenon in our society. Furthermore, the Church is called to be a caring community that offers all of its members comprehensive care as the body of Christ.. If clergy led the sensitization efforts with sermons, doctrine interpretation, and creative programs for Christian single-parents, there might be a shift in the public's perception of single mothers. The Church could become a more comprehensive support system for lone mothers who are inclined to congregate. It is still not fully possible to put the Church's inclusiveness doctrine and social teaching into practice. To help the impacted and lessen the number of single-parent families, the Church, Christians, and legislators were advised to address the issue of single-parenthood.⁹⁸.

But according to Chisholm, there is also a lack of pastoral guidance. Advising single women to believe that the Lord will appear as the knight in their story or to pray for a new husband is neither helpful nor useful.⁹⁹ "Bride fare," which was promoted by proponents of family values in the mid-1990s as a means of encouraging young mothers without children to get married so they can become less dependent on welfare, was perhaps the most heinous manifestation of this lack of theology.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia: Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, 2016).

⁹⁸ Wakanyi, Lydia, "Christian Response to the Phenomenon of Single-Parenthood in Nairobi Kahindi," Available from, <http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/19029>, Accessed November 17, 2023.

⁹⁹ Dana S. Chisholm, *Single Moms Raising Sons: Preparing Boys to Be Men When There's No Man Around* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2007)36

¹⁰⁰ Vivyan Campbell Adair and Sandra L. Dahlberg, eds., *Reclaiming Class: Women, Poverty, and the Promise of Higher Education in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 40.

The aforementioned discourse underscores the imperative recognition of the existence of single parenthood and emphasizes the necessity for concerted efforts in its mitigation. Addressing this issue warrants a heightened level of attention, characterized by an empathetic and non-condemnatory approach. Notably, within the ecclesiastical context, particularly in the Nairobi Metropolitan Archdiocese, congregations exhibit a notable prevalence of single mothers and fathers. Houses of worship serve as sanctuaries where individuals, if not the entirety, find solace and inspiration for life. Consequently, it becomes incumbent upon religious institutions to adopt a nuanced and empathic stance in accompanying these individuals on their life journeys, facilitating their integration into the ecclesiastical community. This approach holds the potential to engender transformative shifts in the consciousness of both the affected individuals and the broader societal milieu.

4.1.2. Catechism of Human Sexuality

The catechism of human sexuality, which is based on traditional moral teachings, emphasizes the importance of responsible and committed relationships heavily. People are encouraged to approach sexuality within the framework of marriage by promoting values like chastity and fidelity. Because people who follow these guidelines are more likely to prioritize stable family structures, the emphasis on marital commitment may help to reduce the number of single parents'.¹⁰¹ Moreover, adopting the catechism's teachings can help promote a culture that honors the family, claims Christopher. In his exploration of the religious dimensions of human sexuality, West emphasizes the ways in which a better comprehension of these ideas can improve family relationships.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Christopher West, *Good News about Sex and Marriage* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), 85.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 112

Educating people about human sexuality can be a crucial step in reducing the rising number of single parents. The catechetical process, which is based on moral instruction, promotes a thorough comprehension of the value of committed partnerships and appropriate sexual behavior. By stressing virtues like chastity, faithfulness, and the sacredness of marriage, people are given a moral compass that motivates them to approach sexuality in the context of a steady, committed partnership.

By raising awareness of the negative effects of unintended pregnancies, this educational strategy empowers people to make wise relationship decisions. Catechesis can discourage casual or non-committal attitudes toward parenthood by instilling a sense of responsibility through the transmission of ethical principles. Furthermore, the catechism's emphasis on family values highlights how crucial a supportive family structure is to children's wellbeing. As people absorb these lessons, there may be a movement toward a social norm that supports and cherishes the institution of marriage, which could result to drastic drop in the number of single parents. All things considered, educating people about human sexuality is a proactive step that strengthens and stabilizes families by influencing attitudes and behaviors.

4.1.3. Practice of Virtues

Moral attributes or traits that are regarded as admirable and desirable are called virtues. Virtues, in the words of Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics," are dispositions that prompt people to act in ways that advance human flourishing. Fortitude, justice, temperance, and wisdom are a few examples of virtues that help one live a moral life¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," trans. W. D. Ross (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), 110.

As the proverbial saying goes, “practice makes perfect,” and when one's moral conscience is nurtured early on by institutions like the church and family, it becomes apparent that the challenges associated with single parenting can be mitigated, if not eradicated altogether. The premise here is that a strong foundation in moral values, instilled by influential institutions, serves as a preventive measure against the societal issues often associated with single parenting.

a) Temperance

Temperance means having self-control and moderation, especially in how we behave, use substances, or enjoy pleasures. It's about avoiding excess and keeping a balance in our actions. This idea comes from various philosophies and religions that teach the importance of not going to extremes and maintaining a sensible approach to life. So, in simple terms, temperance encourages us to be in control, not overdo things, and find a middle ground in our choices and actions.¹⁰⁴

One way that the virtue of temperance can help with single parenthood is by encouraging responsible decision-making, stressing careful family planning, and developing strong communication abilities. Work-life balance and financial restraint are crucial for single parents to manage stress and prevent rash decisions. Building a solid support system and setting an example of moral behavior for kids help create a more stable family setting. Temperance plays a critical role in reducing the difficulties of being a single parent by encouraging people to practice moderation and self-control. This promotes a healthy and happy life for both parents and children.

¹⁰⁴ Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 78.

b) Practice of Chastity

Based on moral and ethical precepts, chastity is the virtue of refraining from having sex outside of marriage. “The successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being” is what the Catholic Catechism defines as chastity.¹⁰⁵

Reducing the number of single parents can be achieved through chastity and responsible family planning. It promotes thoughtful sexual decision-making, cultivating partnerships based on dedication and common principles. Following the chastity rules could result in longer-lasting partnerships and a lower chance of unintended pregnancies and single parenthood. These values which place a strong emphasis on trust, understanding, and communication help to create stable families. Chastity is a useful tool in addressing the different factors that contribute to the rise in single parenthood in modern society, even though it is not a panacea.

4.1.4. Moral Seminars, Workshops and Retreats at the Parish or Community Level

In today’s world where everyone claim to demand for their rights, we can see enormous decrease of moral values. This is not only in the secular world but also can be seen in the Churches. The rampant development of technology has even worsened. Although technology is good, most young and adult men and women have misused this advancement. Today we can see a lot moral decadence in the name of “my right”. However, there are still more rooms create a moral change we all yearn for. These can be done through the help of experts in our different parishes and perhaps the communities.

¹⁰⁵ CCC, #2337.

According to Gitau, the key to effective environmental education, particularly when carried out by the church, is its inspiration and vision. This ability may encourage the government to create political will, creating an atmosphere that will facilitate meeting basic human needs.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, the parish environment, supported by the government and other stakeholders, can help curb the rapidly rising rate of single parenthood. Workshops, seminars, and retreats can provide a forum for diverse subject matter experts to.

Moreover, the conceptualization and execution of the retreat can be orchestrated in a theocentric manner, with a profound emphasis on a God-centered approach. Within the ecclesiastical context, single parents collectively constitute a corpus within the Body of Christ. While it is acknowledged that some individuals assume single parenthood by volition, a substantial majority find themselves in this circumstance due to unforeseen and challenging life circumstances. Consequently, it becomes imperative to cultivate an atmosphere of inclusivity, instilling hope, and employing non-condemnatory language, particularly when engaging these individuals during retreats.

This forum serves as an opportune platform for meaningful interactions between spiritual leaders, ethical scholars, and those who find themselves navigating the challenges of single parenthood. Facilitating dialogue and collaboration between pastors of souls, moralists, and the often marginalized demographic of single parents can foster a more empathetic and understanding approach within the ecclesiastical community. This collaborative effort aims not only to address the spiritual and moral dimensions of single parenthood but also to provide a supportive environment that encourages resilience and hope within this specific segment of the faithful.

¹⁰⁶ S K. Gitau, *“The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity”* (Nairobi: Action Publisher, 2000), 91.

4.1.5. Policies on Parental Identity

Encouraging stable family structures through the implementation of policies that support parental identity can be a key strategy in addressing the issue of single parenthood. The first step towards achieving legal recognition and paternity testing can be the establishment of thorough and easily accessible programs. These initiatives ought to be planned with the goal of simplifying the process of legally recognizing parental duties and assisting in the identification of biological fathers. By providing these services at a reasonable cost, potential fathers are incentivized to actively participate in verifying and acknowledging their parental status. Together with these policies, public awareness campaigns highlighting the value of paternal involvement can help to debunk any stigma attached to defining parental identity and promote responsible fatherhood or motherhood.

Reducing the number of single parents can also be accomplished by providing financial incentives for both parents to enroll in parenting education courses. For couples who enroll in classes on effective co-parenting, communication, and conflict resolution, these incentives may take the form of tax breaks or subsidies. Investing in education cultivates a sense of shared responsibility and gives parents the tools they need to navigate the challenges of raising children together. The idea behind these policies is that a parenting environment that is both supportive and knowledgeable can lead to healthier family dynamics, which in turn decreases the probability of becoming a single parent.

4.1.6. Continuous Formation on Marriage

Reducing the number of single parents can be greatly aided by government agencies and churches encouraging marriage formation on an ongoing basis. First of all, cooperation between

governmental and religious organizations can result in extensive premarital counseling initiatives. These courses may concentrate on giving couples the tools they need to resolve conflicts amicably and manage their finances. Couples are better equipped to handle the rigors of marriage and lower their chances of divorce and ensuing single parenthood by addressing these important areas.

Seminars, workshops, and mentorship programs can also be used to provide continuing education and support for married couples. Governmental organizations and churches can collaborate to offer resources that improve the marriage bond. These might include community support groups, parenting workshops, and counseling services. Ongoing education and assistance can enable couples to successfully negotiate the challenges of marriage, creating a secure environment for kids and lowering the risk of becoming single parents due to a divorce.

Furthermore, educating people about the development of conscience is essential to helping them develop a sense of accountability and commitment when they are thinking about getting married. Religious organizations can make a difference by highlighting the moral and ethical aspects of family life. Government initiatives that encourage family-friendly workplaces, provide parental leave, and guarantee access to reasonably priced childcare can all help with this. Individuals are more inclined to approach marriage from the mindset required to sustain healthy, long-term relationships when they are raised with a strong sense of personal responsibility and commitment, which reduces the number of single parents.

In conclusion, a concerted work involving churches, government, and cultural institutions to offer thorough premarital counseling, ongoing support, and an emphasis on conscience formation can greatly lower the number of single parents. By addressing the underlying causes of marital problems, this all-encompassing strategy gives couples the skills and principles they need to build a strong and long-lasting relationship.

4.1.7. Formation of Single Mother Association in Churches

Forming a single parents group offers a practical avenue to alleviate the challenges of single parenthood. Through shared experiences and emotional support, members can foster a resilient community. Workshops on parenting skills, financial literacy, and legal guidance empower individuals with essential knowledge. The group serves as an information hub, facilitating resource sharing on childcare, job opportunities, and legal rights.

Additionally, organizing social events and recreational activities helps combat isolation, building a sense of belonging. By advocating for supportive policies and engaging with the wider community, these groups work towards destigmatizing single parenthood, while their collective strength enables efficient resource pooling and negotiation for group benefits, reducing the economic burden on single parents. Ultimately, the formation of such groups promotes a holistic approach, addressing emotional, financial, and social aspects, contributing to a more supportive environment for single parents and their children.

Furthermore, the single parents group can play a pivotal role in breaking down societal stereotypes and promoting inclusivity. By showcasing diverse narratives within the group, it challenges preconceived notions about single parenthood, emphasizing that it is a varied and valid family structure. Through community outreach and awareness campaigns, the association can educate the public about the unique struggles faced by single parents and the importance of fostering empathy. This not only helps to reduce judgment but also encourages a more compassionate and understanding society. By creating a unified voice, the group can advocate for policy changes that address the specific needs of single-parent households, contributing to a broader societal shift towards recognizing and supporting the diversity of family structures in a more equitable manner.

Married couples and Bible studies, as well as any “singles” or “young adult” ministries that churches may provide, are not appropriate platforms for single parents. The Diocese of Texas, where I work, has a cathedral called Christ Church Cathedral that hosts a young adult group for people in their 20s and 30s. They have evening events only, and the majority of them run late into the night. None of them provide childcare.¹⁰⁷ Attending these events would mean finding childcare on one's own and balancing homework and bedtimes for a single mother. However, a group for married couples will not include a single parent, and mothers' groups typically meet during the day when working single mothers are present.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a multidimensional strategy based on the development of moral conscience is needed to handle the difficulties which arise due to single parenting. Through pastoral activities, seminars, workshops, retreats at the parish level, the crucial tools in nurturing a strong foundation can be met. Additionally, the implementation of policies focusing on the parental identity and the continuous formation of marriages are essential for fostering stability within families. By combining these solutions and advice, society may actively support the development of moral conscience, assisting individuals in effectively navigating the difficulties of single parenting.

¹⁰⁷ “Cathedral 20s& 30s, Christ Church Cathedral, Episcopal, Available from, <http://www.christchurchcathedral.org/cathedral-20s-30s/>. Accessed 30 November 2023.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

I cannot claim to have exhaustively explored this intriguing research topic, but I acknowledge the significant contributions of various individuals to this noble cause. Addressing this subject requires a critical yet open mindset to confront the complexities it presents. Over the years, the institution of family has undergone substantial transformations, resulting in a nuanced portrayal of familial structures. Notably, single parenthood manifests in two primary forms: elective and circumstantial. Concurrently, various factors contribute to the emergence of single parenthood, encompassing social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental dimensions. It is evident, however, that socio-economic factors exert a predominant influence on this phenomenon.

Moreover, it has been observed that the aforementioned factors have significant social and religious ramifications for individuals in single-parent situations. Many of these individuals face social and religious ostracism, experiencing a sense of rejection both within their social circles and within traditional religious institutions. These individuals are often perceived as deviating from the conventional social and religious norms related to family structures. For instance, they may be labeled as “family breakers,” a stigmatizing term that reflects societal disapproval.

In certain regions, single parents may encounter restrictions in their participation in church activities and are often excluded from engaging in sacramental aspects of religious life. This exclusion raises questions about the inclusion of those who, due to circumstances, find themselves as single parents within the broader Christian community. It prompts one to ponder whether these individuals, who are involuntarily thrust into the role of single parenthood, should not be considered integral members of the body of Christ. The reality is that no one inherently chooses to navigate the challenges of raising children alone, and such circumstances are often beyond individual control.

Within the same trajectory, we have explored the theological underpinnings of marriage, delving into perspectives offered by the Bible, the church fathers, magisterial and papal documents. Additionally, insights have been gleaned from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and canon law, collectively illustrating the staunch defense of the institution of family by the Church. Despite this, the phenomenon of single parenthood, with its historical roots, has persisted. Over the past two centuries, societal and ecclesiastical attention has been keenly directed towards addressing this issue.

In light of this, it becomes imperative to pose a sincere rhetorical question: How can individuals in single parenthood, being integral parts of the body of Christ, be made to feel included rather than excluded? Consequently, it is pertinent to explore potential remedies and interventions. In this vein, the following recommendations, formulated in conjunction with other scholars, merit consideration

Churches inadvertently contribute to the social exclusion of single mothers unless they intentionally engage with this demographic to comprehend the nature of their exclusion. The attainment of shalom within churches is impeded until single mothers are fully integrated into the

Kingdom of God. As churches make strides in the inclusion of single parents, they can extend their efforts to advocate for similar objectives within the broader community. Churches possess the potential to be advocates for single mothers, actively supporting programs that address the needs of single mothers in their localities. They can serve as catalysts for transformative change, leveraging their role in the business of transformation. Both churches and families should be conceptualized as “redemptive communities” to better fulfill their roles in fostering positive change.¹⁰⁸ Churches ought to proactively strive to turn their communities into environments of positive change, providing comprehensive support to single parents. This vision aligns with the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Furthermore, in Matthew 22, Christ provides a preview of what heavenly relationships will resemble. Christ offers Christians a preview of what relationships will be like in paradise. When the Sadducees questioned Jesus about who would marry the woman who had seven different brothers in the resurrection, he replied that they had completely missed the point (Mt 22:23-33). Rather, Christ informs them that “because they neither marry nor are given in marriage in the resurrection.” Christ demonstrates to them that their connections from this life do not carry over into the next. Theologian Gilberte Baril states that “marriage as a human institution will transcend”¹⁰⁹.

Therefore, just as earthly relationships are not the foundation of a theology of the family, neither is the resurrection. This serves as a crucial reminder that single parents will not be evaluated in heaven based on their marital status or the perceived “brokenness” of their families, despite the fragility of their families. There is no difference in the quality of single mothers and married

¹⁰⁸ Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000)229

¹⁰⁹ Baril, Gilberte. *The Feminine Face of the People of God: Biblical Symbols of the Church as Bride and Mother*, (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1992), 27.

mothers. In the New Creation, marital status is unimportant; however, churches' treatment of the underprivileged and oppressed plays a crucial role in establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Last but not least, individual parents are essential components of the Christian community. They can no longer be disregarded in churches. Barbara Gardner, a single mother and the author of *Jesus and the Single Mother*, queries: Why are you afraid of us? Why would you prefer to devote your time to managing the churches, schools', and rituals' business affairs? Is it because you think we are going to ask for too much from you? That we will let you see with new eyes and a heart what the true status of the world is? When are you going to hear us? When will you, as Jesus commanded, place the “widows” that is, abandoned women and “orphans” that is, children at the core of your religion?¹¹⁰ Due to their sins of divorce, having children outside of marriage, and the lack of support from their religious communities, single mothers have long been marginalized. It's far past time to fix this mistake. If churches are willing to listen, single mothers have a voice.

Finally this research aspires to make a substantial contribution to the discourse surrounding single parenthood. By unraveling the root causes and advocating for a more empathetic societal stance, this study endeavors to catalyze positive change, fostering an environment where single parents are supported and understood.

¹¹⁰ Gardner, Barbara. *Jesus and the Single Mother*. (A Campion book. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1990), 136.

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