

Children as the Common Good of Marriage

MICHAEL WALDSTEIN

Ave Maria University

Ave Maria, Florida

IN RECENT discussions of marriage, explicit attention to the common good is relatively rare. Much attention is focused on the individual person, on his or her dignity, on the mutual love between two unique persons, yet in such a way that the importance of the common good, its importance *precisely as the good of the person*, tends to fade from view.

The Primacy of the Common Good

In 1943, Charles De Koninck, then dean at the faculty of philosophy at Laval, published a book entitled *The Primacy of the Common Good: Against the Personalists*, in which he attempted to counteract what he saw as a widespread eclipse of the common good. In the preface, Jean-Marie Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec, offers an excellent summary of De Koninck's main thesis.

Here is the thesis of this work: the primacy of the common good, in society, in the family, for the soul itself, provided that the notion of a common good is well understood, as the greatest good of the singular, not by being a collection of singular goods, but best for each of the particular individuals who participate in it precisely on account of its being common. Those who defend the primacy of the singular good of the singular person suppose a false notion of the common good as if it were alien to the good of the singular; whereas it is natural and proper that the singular seek more the good of the species than his singular good. . . . Rational creatures, persons, are distinguished from irrational, by being more ordered to the common good and by being able to act expressly for its sake. It is true also that a person can perversely prefer

his own singular good to the common good, attaching himself to the singularity of his person, or as we say today to his personality, set up as a common measure of all good. Furthermore, if the reasonable creature cannot entirely limit himself to a subordinate common good, such as the family or political society, this is not because his particular good as such is greater; it is because of his proper ordination to a superior common good to which he is principally ordered. In this case, the common good is not sacrificed to the good of the individual as individual, but to the good of the individual insofar as the latter is ordered to a more universal common good, indeed to God.¹

The primacy of the common good in every order of goodness is a consistent teaching of St. Thomas. "It is clear that the good of the part is for the sake of [*propter*] the good of the whole. This is why by a natural inclination or love every particular thing loves its proper good [*bonum suum proprium*] for the sake of the common good of the whole universe, which is God."² This primacy is not a thesis peculiar to Latin as opposed to Greek theology. Clement of Alexandria, for example, writes,

This is the one "after the image and likeness," the true knower, who imitates God as far as possible, leaving aside none of the things for possible likeness, practicing self-restraint and endurance, living justly, reigning over the passions, giving a share in what he has as far as possible, and doing good both by word and deed. "He is the greatest," it is said, "in the kingdom who shall act and teach" by imitating God in conferring like benefits. For God's gifts are for the common good.³

Likewise John Chrysostom:

If in matters of daily life no man lives for himself, but artisan, and soldier, and farmer, and merchant, all of them contribute to the common good and to their neighbor's advantage, much more ought we to do this in things spiritual. For this is most properly to live, since the one who lives for himself alone and overlooks all others is certainly superfluous and not a human being, nor of our race. . . . Since we are persuaded by all these things that it is not possible for a person to be saved who has not looked to the common good . . . let us choose this way, that we may also reach eternal life. . . .⁴

Peter and John . . . were both unlearned and ignorant men; but nevertheless, since they showed zeal and did all things for the common

¹ Charles De Koninck, "On the Primacy of the Common Good: Against the Personalists," *Aquinas Review* 4 (1997): 1–71, here 5–6.

² *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 109, a. 3.

³ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 2.19.

⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 77.6 (58.710).

good, they reached heaven. For nothing is as pleasing to God as living for the common good.⁵

John Chrysostom sees this primacy of the common good as one of the core elements of the teaching of Jesus.

It was for this that he brought his teaching from heaven above, that he might place our thoughts there, that we might be imitators of the teacher according to our power. But how can we become imitators of Christ? By acting in everything for the common good, and not seeking our own. “For even Christ,” Paul says, “did not please himself, but as it is written, *The reproaches of those who reproach you fell on me*” (Rom 15:3). Let no one therefore seek his own. For one [truly] seeks one’s own good when one looks to that of one’s neighbor, for what is their good is ours. We are one body, and parts and limbs of one another. Let us not then be as though we were torn apart. Let no one say, “Such a one is no friend of mine, or relative, or neighbor, nor do I have anything to do with him. How shall I approach, how address him?” Even if he is neither a relative nor a friend, he still is a human being, who shares the same nature with you, has the same Lord, and is your fellow-servant and fellow-sojourner, for he is born in the same world. And if besides he shares the same faith, then, take note, he has also become a member of yours. For what friendship could work such union, as the kinship of faith? And our familiarity with one another like people who live in the same house must not merely be such nearness as friends ought to show to friends, but as exists between limb and limb. For nobody can possibly discover any familiarity greater than this sort of friendship and communion. As no limb could say, “Where does my familiarity and closeness with this limb come from?” (that would be ridiculous) so neither can you say so in the case of your brother. “We are all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13), Paul says. “Why into one body?” So that we may not be torn apart, but preserve the coherence of that one body by our coming together and friendship with one another.⁶

One of the key points made by Chrysostom in this text lies in the claim that the common good is truly “one’s own good.” It is the person’s good. The most insidious and destructive error about the common good is to conceive it as an alien good, as the good of the community as opposed to the person. It is a likely error, given the traditional topos that individuals should sacrifice their good for the sake of the community.

To clear up this error, one must take firm hold of Chrysostom’s point: the common good is “one’s own good.” It is the good of the person.

⁵ Ibid., 78.2 (58.714).

⁶ Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, 15.3 (59.101).

There is a profound difference between imperfectly and perfectly common goods and this difference bears immediately on a profound difference between different kinds of wholes and parts. When the city collects a tax, it acts as a quasi individual in its own right. It takes for itself a sum of money which was the private good of its citizens. It places that money in a bank account identified as belonging to the city, just as private citizens place their money in their own private bank accounts. When the city has taken my money, the money is an alien good for me. It is no longer in my own possession. It has become the good of another as other. It therefore fails to fulfill the most basic requirement for a true common good, namely, that it be truly common. It is a good of the totality, a good of the whole, but still not a true and full common good. In fact, money is the quintessentially private good. The only way it can be common is for its benefits to flow back to the persons who make up the city, for example, by the building of schools and roads, etc.

As a quasi individual in possession of its own private good, the city can compete against the individual persons that are part of it. One can define a totalitarian regime partly in these terms: a regime is totalitarian when it makes citizens as parts subservient to the good of the whole city considered as a quasi individual.

[T]he common good does not have the character of an alien good—*bonum alienum*—as in the case of the good of another considered as such. Is it not this which, in the social order, distinguishes our position profoundly from collectivism, which latter errs by abstraction, by demanding an alienation from the proper good as such and consequently from the common good since the latter is the greatest of proper goods? Those who defend the primacy of the singular good of the singular person are themselves supposing this false notion of the common good.⁷

In this text, “proper good” refers to a good that is truly possessed by the persons of whom the city is composed. A true common good is common only if it is a “proper good” or “personal good” in this sense. If one takes the city as a quasi individual and claims that goods belonging to it as such an individual, for example, tax money, must have primacy in the hearts of its citizens over their own private good, one has alienated the citizens from their own good and sacrificed them to the city. The result is slavery in the sense of a complete subservience to purposes that are not one’s own, but those of another as other.

⁷ De Koninck, “Primacy of the Common Good,” 18.

By contrast, when there is a genuine common good, such as the peace and justice of a city, the city appears as a whole that does not stand as a competing individual over against the persons that constitute it, but as a whole built up precisely by a truly common good genuinely participated in by each and every person.

The Primacy of the Common Good in Marriage

The primacy of the common good is evident in St. Thomas's discussion of the sacrament of marriage in the *Scriptum* on the *Sentences*, later incorporated into the Supplement of the *Summa*. When he first divides the text of Peter Lombard, he appeals to the common good of the Church as the principle of division. "After the Teacher discussed the sacraments ordered to the good of one person, he now discusses the sacraments ordered to the good of the whole Church. His discussion is divided into two parts: in the first he treats the sacrament of Holy Orders, which is ordered to the spiritual multiplication and governance of the Church; in the second Marriage, which is ordered to the material multiplication of the faithful."⁸ This division shows that St. Thomas understands Peter Lombard's—and his own—account of marriage as standing under the formality of the common good. "Marriage is principally ordered to the common good because of its principal end, which is the good of offspring."⁹ "Intercourse is ordered to the common good of the whole human race."¹⁰ The common good is also decisive in establishing the communion of husband and wife. "Offspring is the common good of husband and wife."¹¹

St. Thomas's account of the sacramental grace specific to marriage brings out the role of the common good from a more comprehensive angle. "The sacrament [of Marriage] confers on the spouses a grace

⁸ *Scriptum super Sententiis* IV, d. 24, q. 1, prologue; see also *Sent.* IV, d. 26, prologue. In *ST* III, q. 65, a. 1, St. Thomas adopts this division as the fundamental division of the sacraments into those that aim at the perfection of the individual person and those that aim at the common good of the whole Church, namely, orders and marriage: "Man is perfected in order to the whole community in two ways. He is perfected in one way by accepting the power to rule the multitude and to perform public acts. In spiritual life the sacrament of Orders takes this place. . . . [He is perfected] in a second way with respect to natural propagation, which occurs through marriage both in bodily and spiritual life, since marriage is not only a sacrament, but a service of nature."

⁹ *Sent.* IV, d. 33, q. 2, a.1 ad 4.

¹⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 154, a. 2; see also *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, ch. 78, par. 2, where St. Thomas distinguishes various common goods to which marriage is ordered: the good of the human race, the good of a people or city, and the good of the Church.

¹¹ *Sent.* IV, d.33, q. 2, a. 1.

through which they belong to the union of Christ and the Church: which is most necessary for them, in order for them to attend to matters of the flesh and the earth in such a way that these are not disconnected from Christ and the Church.”¹² The sacramental grace of marriage connects the earthly concerns of married life with the larger community of the Church to which the communion of husband and wife is ordered as part to whole, and with the supreme common good of the Church, Christ himself.

An eloquent account of this ordination of marriage to the common good of the Church is given by Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888), whom Balthasar calls “the greatest German theologian to-date since the time of Romanticism.”¹³

When they bind themselves to each other [man and woman] can do so in justice only for the same purpose which Christ pursues in his bond with the Church, namely, to extend the mystical body. They can only act in the Spirit of the union of Christ and the Church and by the same token they can only act in the name of Christ and the Church, because their bodies belong to Christ and his Church, and consequently the right of disposing of them pertains in the first instance not to the earthly couple, but to the heavenly marriage (*connubium*). Therefore their union presupposes the union of Christ with his Church, and carries it further to cooperate with it for a *single* supernatural purpose. They must cooperate precisely as members of the body of Christ in his Church, and hence as organs of the whole, and therefore they must unite with each other as organs of Christ’s body, as organs of the whole that was brought into being by the union of Christ with the Church. Thus their union, their covenant, becomes *an organic member in the great and richly articulated covenant between Christ and His Church, a member which is encompassed, pervaded, and sustained by this mystical covenant*, which participates in the lofty, supernatural, and sacred character of the whole and in its innermost essence represents and reflects that whole.¹⁴

Scheeben’s argument is deeply scriptural, based mainly on the Pauline image of the body of Christ and on the “great mystery” in Ephesians 5. Scheeben understands the marriage bond as a “covenant” (*Bund*), anticipating the teaching of Vatican II about marriage as a “covenant of love” (*foedus dilectionis*).¹⁵ Marriage is a covenant that receives its inner power from the Spirit of love that animates the encompassing covenant between

¹² ScG IV, ch. 78, par. 4.

¹³ Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, 1:98; *Glory of the Lord*, 1:104.

¹⁴ Matthias Josef Scheeben, *Die Mysterien des Christentums* (Freiburg: Herder, 1865 [1941]), 496–97.

¹⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, §48.

Christ and his Church. With great emphasis Scheeben uses the word “organ(ic)” four times in the text just quoted to insist that the covenant between man and woman must be understood as a part of a great whole, the mystical body, as pervaded by the power of that whole, and as serving a common good of that whole. This purpose is not an alien good for man and woman, but their own good without ceasing to be the good of the whole body, that is, of every person in that body. As Cardinal Villeneuve puts it, that good is “best for each of the particular individuals who participate in it precisely on account of its being common.”¹⁶ John Paul II formulates the essential point with great acuteness. “The more common the good, the more properly one’s own it will also be: mine, yours, ours.”¹⁷

The great theologian of the mystical body, Émile Mersch, speaks in a similar way about the love between man and woman.

We mean to say that, in marriage, the individuals are the instruments, almost the passive instruments, of a force which overpasses them, which is in them, but not for them, and which, in making use of them, does more than they do, themselves. In marriage, it is humanity which, as far as is possible to it, asserts itself, takes a definite position, completes itself, and finds its unity and its fullness, in individuals and not in itself, for in itself it cannot exist. Incarnating the unity of humanity, love is august and venerable with all the nobility of our race.¹⁸

Love, in fact, has its reason for being, its energies, and thence its requirements, not from the individual, but from the species. The individual is the carrier and the agent of it, not the master. Love is an act of the species, in this sense, that it is destined to perpetuate the species, and that, in it, the species realizes itself and acts in the measure in which it can be realized and can act.¹⁹

The final sentence of the first text is particularly important. “Incarnating the unity of humanity, love is august and venerable with all the nobility of our race.” Love itself, as a personal love, carries the august and venerable nobility of the common good of the human race. The authentic notion of the common good must be presupposed, of course: a common good is not an alien good. It is not a good of the species as

¹⁶ De Koninck, “Primacy of the Common Good,” 5.

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, §10

¹⁸ Émile Mersch, *Love, Marriage, Chastity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), 209. The chapter of “Morality and the Mystical Body,” in which this text is found, goes back to Émile Mersch, “Amour, Mariage, Chasteté,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 50 (1928).

¹⁹ Mersch, *Love, Marriage, Chastity*, 210.

opposed to the persons; it is a good of the persons; this is precisely what it means for it to be *common*. It may well be that awareness of the common good of the human species is only dimly present in many men and women. For a Christian, who is aware of “the old Adam” and “the new Adam,” that awareness should be second nature.

The Personalistic Norm and the Common Good

Some personalist philosophers and theologians with whom I shared these texts of Scheeben and Mersch have rejected them rather sharply. Marriage, they argue, should be seen in terms of the individual personal dignity of husband and wife and their personal love for one another as unique and irreplaceable persons. It should not be seen in terms of the common good of the human species and of the body of Christ, because in this latter perspective men and women are seen as mere means used for the ends of the community.²⁰ What Wojtyla calls “the personalistic norm” forbids such a use of persons.

Let us take a close look at this personalistic norm. In the form in which it is usually formulated, it goes back to Kant.

While man is unholy enough, the *humanity* in his person must be holy to him. In all of creation, everything one might want and over which one has power can be used *as a mere means*. Only man himself and with him every rational creature is an *end in itself*. For, in virtue of the autonomy of his freedom, he is the subject of the moral law, which is holy.²¹

Only that which has intrinsic value, Kant argues, can be an end in itself. “The only condition under which something can be an end in itself is when it has a value that is not merely relative, i.e., a price, but an inner value, i.e. dignity.”²² The one and only thing that has dignity is the autonomy of the person.

²⁰ The position of St. Thomas, Scheeben, and Mersch is, on this reading, essentially the same as the Puritan view of marriage, which Wojtyla summarizes as follows. “This view, in its developed form, holds that in using man and woman and their sexual intercourse to assure the existence of the species *Homo*, the Creator Himself uses persons as the means to His end. It follows that conjugal life and sexual intercourse are good only because they serve the purpose of procreation. A man therefore does well when he uses a woman as the indispensable means of obtaining posterity. The use of a person for the objective end of procreation is the very essence of marriage.” Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 58–59.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, AK 5.87, cf. AK 5.131; see also *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*, AK 4.429, and *Metaphysics of Morals*, AK 6.434.

²² Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*, AK 4.435.

Concerning man (and thus every rational being in the world) as a moral being one cannot ask further, For what end (*quem in finem*) does he exist? His existence has the highest purpose in itself. He can, as far as possible, subject the whole of nature to this purpose. At the least, he must not submit himself to any influence of nature contrary to this purpose. Now if the beings of the world as beings that are contingent in their existence are in need of a highest cause that acts according to purpose, then man is the final purpose of creation. For, without man the chain of purposes subordinate to each other would not be explained in its entirety. It is only in man, and in man only as the subject of morality, that an unconditioned legislation concerning purposes can be found, which thus enables him alone to be a final purpose to which the whole of nature is teleologically subordinated.²³

It is interesting to observe how Wojtyla restates the Kantian teaching.

[A] person must not be *merely* the means to an end for another person. This is precluded by the very nature of personhood, by what any person is. For a person is a thinking subject, and capable of taking decisions: these, most notably, are the attributes we find in the inner self of a person. This being so, every person is by nature capable of determining his or her aims. Anyone who treats a person as the means to an end does violence to the very essence of the other, to what constitutes its natural right.²⁴

In Kant, the key point is not that the person can *understand and pursue* ends, but that the person is the ultimate end. The dignity of the person, which lies in autonomy, is itself the highest value and, therefore, the one and only true end. Everything in the entire cosmos can and must be subordinated to it. In this respect, the personalistic norm as Kant understands it is the direct opposite of the same norm as Wojtyla understands it.

Immanuel Kant . . . formulated . . . the following imperative: act always in such a way that the other person is the end and not merely the instrument of your action. In the light of the preceding argument this principle should be restated in a form rather different from that which Kant gave it, as follows: whenever a person is the object of your activity, remember that you may not treat that person as only the means to an end, as an instrument, but must allow for the fact that he or she, too, *has, or at least should have*, distinct personal ends. This principle, thus formulated, lies at the basis of all the human freedoms, properly understood, and especially freedom of conscience.²⁵

²³ Kant, *On a Recently Assumed Noble Tone in Philosophy*, AK 8.435–36.

²⁴ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 26–27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27–28.

Wojtyła's understanding of the personalistic norm is indeed "rather different" than Kant's. *Being* an end is different than *having* an end; *being* the highest good is different than being *the beneficiary* of the highest good; *being* God is different than *having* God. In Kant, the dignity of the person would be *violated* if the person were ordered to a common good.²⁶ In Wojtyła, the dignity of the person *consists* in the ordination of the person to the good.

Immediately after his discussion of the personalistic norm in *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyła raises the question of how man and woman can treat each other as persons, as having ends, rather than as mere means.

Obviously, I may want another person to desire the same good which I myself desire. Obviously, the other must know this end of mine, recognize it as good, and adopt it. If this happens, a special bond is established between me and this other person: the bond of a *common good* and of a common aim. This special bond does not mean merely that we both seek a common good, it also unites the persons involved internally, and so constitutes the essential core around which any love must grow. In any case, love between two people is quite unthinkable without some common good to bring them together.²⁷

There is a necessary and organic connection between the personalistic norm and the common good. When the end toward which a man and a woman direct themselves is one and the same end, that is, when that end is a genuinely common good, the essential core of love is formed. Without this core, one cannot avoid using the other person. "Man's capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good."²⁸

The sexual relationship between man and woman, Wojtyła argues, is particularly prone to the mere use of the person by another, partly because of the great intensity of sexual pleasure. It is particularly necessary in that relationship for love to form around the common good.

How is it possible to ensure that one person does not then become for the other—the woman for the man and the man for the woman—

²⁶ "Kantian personalism. According to Kant, man is an end unto himself. The ultimate end . . . is the persons themselves in their proper dignity. This dignity does not come from the person by himself being able to attain to the ultimate end of the universe, that is to an end other than the person; the person receives his dignity from himself because he is his own end and accomplishes in himself the liberty of autonomy." De Koninck, "Primacy of the Common Good," 68, n. 72.

²⁷ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

nothing more than the means to an end—i.e., an object used exclusively for the attainment of a selfish end? To exclude this possibility, they must share the same end. Such an end, where marriage is concerned, is procreation, the future generation, a family, and, at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people, in all the areas of activities which conjugal life includes.²⁹

In his *Letter to Families*, John Paul II returns in more detail to the discussion of the common good of marriage. Taking his point of departure in the sacramental words of consent spoken by husband and wife,³⁰ he points to the communion of persons created by it: “love, fidelity, honor and the permanence of the union until death.”³¹ This good of the communion of persons in marriage is the good of both and at the same time the good of each. “The common good, by its very nature, both unites individual persons and ensures the true good of each.”³² It ensures the true good not by giving to the persons severally their own private advantage, but by being the good of both. Since marriage is a sacrament, the common good in question is deeper than a mere human communion of persons. It is a “great mystery” (Eph 5:32) of grace, of participating in the life of the Trinity.³³

The common good of the communion between husband and wife then becomes the common good of the family. Before the spouses give their consent, the Church asks them if they are prepared to accept children and to educate them in the faith. Procreation and education are key common goods of husband and wife that specify the very nature of their consent.

The words of consent, then, express what is essential to the common good of the spouses, and they indicate what ought to be the common good of the future family. In order to bring this out, the Church asks the spouses if they are prepared to accept the children God grants them and to raise the children as Christians.³⁴

²⁹ Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, 30. Wojtyła’s statement has a certain surface similarity with the Puritan view of sexuality (see footnote 12), according to which one is supposed to use persons as mere means for having children. The difference is that Wojtyła does not view the child in a utilitarian framework as a mere external result produced by certain acts (this is a positivistic and mechanistic understanding of the means-end relation), but in agreement with St. Thomas as the common good of husband and wife, as an “end” in the full and proper sense, namely a good to be pursued, to be reached and to be rejoiced in by both, a good of the persons, not an alien good.

³⁰ See John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, §10, par. 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, §10, par. 2.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, par. 3.

The common good of the family is particularly evident in family prayer.

Prayer strengthens this good, precisely as the common good of the family. Moreover, it creates this good ever anew. In prayer, the family discovers itself as the first “us,” in which each member is “I” and “thou”; each member is for the others either husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, grandparent or grandchild.³⁵

Each person has particular relations of membership in the family as a whole. “Every particular person is compared to the whole community as a part to the whole.”³⁶ Being part of a whole under a common good does not threaten the dignity of the persons, but on the contrary affirms, expresses, and increases it.

At the very end of his discussion of the common good, John Paul II widens the perspective by focusing on the common good of the whole universe.

Is not every child a “particle” of that common good without which human communities break down and risk extinction? Could this ever really be denied? The child becomes a gift to its brothers, sisters, parents and entire family. Its life becomes a gift for the very people who were givers of life and who cannot help but feel its presence, its sharing in their life and its contribution to their common good and to that of the community of the family. This truth is obvious in its simplicity and profundity, whatever the complexity and even the possible pathology of the psychological makeup of certain persons. The common good of the whole of society dwells in man; he is, as we recalled, “the way of the Church.” Man is first of all the “glory of God”: “Gloria Dei vivens homo,” in the celebrated words of St. Irenaeus, which might also be translated: “The glory of God is for man to be alive.” It could be said that here we encounter the loftiest definition of man: The glory of God is the common good of all that exists; the common good of the human race.³⁷

Again, to say that the glory of God is the common good of the human race is not to say that it is the good of the race as opposed to the persons, but rather the good of the race that belongs to each of the persons in it. We seem to have come full circle from the personalism of John Paul II back to St. Thomas’s teaching on the common good. “Marriage is principally ordered to the common good because of its principal end, which is the good of offspring.”³⁸ “It is clear that the good of the part is for the

³⁵ Ibid., par. 5.

³⁶ *ST* II–II, q. 64, a. 2.

³⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, §11.

³⁸ *Sent.* IV, d. 33, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4.

sake of the good of the whole. This is why by a natural inclination or love every particular thing loves its proper good for the sake of the common good of the whole universe, which is God.”³⁹ The sacramental grace of marriage, according to St. Thomas, is ordered precisely to allow man and woman to order their union and its end, children, to a more encompassing common good. “The sacrament [of Marriage] confers on the spouses a grace through which they belong to the union of Christ and the Church: which is most necessary for them, in order for them to attend to matters of the flesh and the earth in such a way that these are not disconnected from Christ and the Church.”⁴⁰ N.V

³⁹ *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 3.

⁴⁰ *ScG* IV, ch. 78, par. 4.