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**Julie Hanlon Rubio. *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family*.
New York: Paulist Press, 2003. Pp. 241. \$20.60 (Paper).**

[1] From the beginning of this text it becomes absolutely clear that Julie Hanlon Rubio teaches undergraduates, is deeply engaged in questions of academic theology, and is herself both married and a parent. The questions and discussions that begin the first chapter, "Family or Families? The Problems of Parenting in a Postmodern Age," are right on target with relation to serious contemporary issues facing marriages and families. It is refreshing to see a younger theologian engage contemporary issues in such a clear and direct manner. After brief discussions of the "family" (conservative/modernist approach) or "families" (liberal/postmodern approach) by both feminists and the Catholic magisterium, Rubio sets the scene for the rest of the book with a section on how "families" are understood and addressed by the U.S. bishops. The traditional "family" is put forth as an ideal, but it is up to the Christian family "to fill in the details," (23) through discernment using the liturgical tradition, Scripture, social science, and theology.

[2] Chapter two takes up the role and meaning of the Catholic Marriage Liturgy in contemporary society. First there is the presentation of the "popular" wedding ceremony wherein the focus is on material things, the bride is at the center of attention, and the romantic love of the couple serves as the ideal. Rubio argues that in many ways this reflects a culture that emphasizes relationships cut off from one's community and extended family. She then juxtaposes a Catholic communitarian understanding of marriage. "When a man and a woman get married, they do not do so alone, with others looking on. Instead, they celebrate with a community of people whom they love. Asking members of that community to participate in the wedding mass makes that idea concrete" (35). This theological approach thus emphasizes the participation of a parish community, not just family and friends, and has at its center the Eucharist - that which unites the ecclesial community. The easy language and clear comparisons in this chapter are much appreciated, and the level is ideal for undergraduates.

[3] The third chapter, "The New Testament Vision," is an in-depth look at something most contemporary Christians simply choose to ignore - the anti-family ethic promoted by Jesus

himself. Rubio takes the reader through a variety of sayings of Jesus that mention the family and divided loyalties to the Kingdom. What results is an understanding of those sayings in the context in which they were said. Background on Greco-Roman and Jewish family structures is helpful for realizing that family could literally become an idol - something impossible to reject if one is committed to Jesus and his ministry. This chapter concludes by articulating a new understanding of family as less child-centered, more equal, more inclusive, and less hierarchical. The challenge is to reform the family in such a way this it does not contradict one's call to discipleship.

[4] The final part of the "Foundations" section of this book takes up "Traditional Ways of Speaking About Marriage." From the New Testament to the most contemporary theologians, Rubio gives an interesting and accessible look at how views of marriage have developed over time. The suspicion and anxiety with which the early church spoke of marriage is recounted, and it becomes clear that for most early church writers on the topic, marriage was "an inferior way of life" (72). The middle ages accomplished the transition from contract to sacrament, institutionalized at the Council of Trent. Protestant Models including the social estate (Luther) and covenant approaches (Calvin) round out the medieval period of development. I thought the contemporary developments were quite well-framed. From the personalism of Lawler and Cooke to John Paul II's theology of the body, there was an honest discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each possibility. Of particular note was the extent of the development of official magisterial teaching between the early church and John Paul II. Rubio manages to present and challenge a variety of positions in a very respectful way.

[5] The fifth chapter opens the second major division within this work with the first of many "Applications" that follows the "Foundations" section of the book. Topics such as the dual vocations of parents, and mothering and fathering become subjects for reflection. Throughout these topics, Rubio does a good job of discussing societal trends, church teaching, and her own individual experience. She unabashedly presents papal teaching, especially John Paul II's theology of the body - but she equally unabashedly brings in critiques of that position from theologians and others. At times the unreconciled contradiction between the Church and its critics is frustrating, as I would have liked to see a side taken, but it is ideal for undergraduates who should work out what they think in the context of an academic setting. Rubio's incorporation of social scientific research, especially on mothering and fathering, as well as her ability to bring that research into dialogue with contemporary authors of divergent views is particularly appreciated.

[6] The final two chapters of the book deal with divorce, remarriage and the purpose of families. The discussion on divorce begins with a balanced look at the scriptures and the various arguments of biblical theologians. The only problematic area I saw was the somewhat quick discussion of the foundations of marriage in discipleship as opposed to relationship. Rubio argues that if the relationship breaks down and "*if* they continue to show compassion for each other and their children and a zeal for the good of society and the church" (171) that the marriage is still sacramental. Let me present three thoughts on this. First, relationship and discipleship cannot be so strictly separated. For many couples, the relationship is the foundation and beginning of serious discipleship, not separated completely from it. Second, compassion is a form of love, so personalists who ground the

sacramentality of the marriage in the relationship could still agree with her argument. What is problematic is that Rubio does not address the other side of that "if." If the broken relationship does not yield compassion or service or concern for others, a reality for many couples, what then? Thirdly, the final chapter argues for the social mission of the family based on the relationship of the couple. "If husbands and wives have true friendship, their relationship should be about more than themselves" (185). This is precisely the point of the connection between relationship and discipleship. The former, in a theology of marriage, becomes the condition for the possibility of the latter.

[7] The concluding chapter suggests ways for families to consider Catholic social teaching and embrace a social mission. The often cited dichotomy between family and community and the areas of work, time and money are all discussed. It is heartening to see a text that tries to concretize the mission of the laity to the world through the primary commitments that define the vast majority of Christian believers. On the whole, I highly recommend this text for classroom use. It carefully and thoroughly presents a theology of marriage and family in light of contemporary challenges in a readable, friendly manner.

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