

A Mother's Work is Never Done!

Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All" (*The Atlantic*, July 2012)

Elisabeth Badinter, *The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012)

Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013)

Christopher Lasch, *Women and the Common Life: Love, Marriage and Feminism* (W.W. Norton, 1997)

G.K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009)

Margaret H. McCarthy

I. What Women Want

As it goes with a mother's work, so goes it with the discussion about women and work – or the "work-family balance," as it is now called... genderlessly. Anne-Marie Slaughter, tenured professor of economics at Princeton, recently explained – to the horror of her fellow Alpha female sisters – why "women still can't have it all" in her explosive *Atlantic Monthly* article of July 2012.

Slaughter's two teenage sons were the catalysts – or culprits, as her critics might say – of this outing, causing her to step down from her prestigious role in the first term of the Obama presidency as Director of Policy Planning at the State Department. With great frankness about her desire to be with her teen-age sons, Slaughter committed the unforgiveable sin and admitted to a few *real* – not "socially constructed" – gender differences, chief among which is the fact that women *don't feel the same way as men do about being away from their children*, notwithstanding the availability of around-the-clock nannies (for women like Slaughter, obviously) or day-care, for the less privileged. "Deep down I *wanted* to go home....[It was not just that] I *needed* to go home," she says.

Citing a recent study which found that women are *less happy* now than they were in 1972, and not only that, but *relative to men*, Slaughter makes a sort of missionary appeal to women to join her on the "happiness project." "Let us rediscover the pursuit of happiness, and let us start at home," she cries, rallying her new sisters. Really it is she who is joining the millions of women who have labored tirelessly under the burden of the unspoken expectation of others to be "superwomen," and "failed," only to think themselves "slothful" and "lacking commitment" to the cause. But now with her in their ranks they have some authorized relief from all that "fatuous talk" (their words) and "airbrushing of reality" (her words) associated with "having it all." But not for long!

Slaughter makes an appeal for the “full range of women’s choices” in reverse, so to speak, where the “choices” in question are things like being home for dinner – even making it! – nursing an infant, pushing a child on a swing, watching a baseball game, or sitting down with a troubled teenager – things that involve *being with* one’s children, not just *managing* them. And she does so with a kind of argument, rather than just appealing to the need for “choice” *per se*. Women are different when it comes to their children, and so are children when it comes to their mothers.

You see this especially in the kinds of solutions Slaughter offers to her own plight and that of her younger sisters, those who are “giving up in advance”: flexible schedules, extensions on tenure clocks, recognition of family hours (dinner time, weekends), and the long-overdue challenge to the idolatry of work (for everyone, men included). This all seems reasonable. Leaving aside for the moment that *mothers are already working* when they are “just” mothers and homemakers, women are different when it comes to their relation to (outside) work and family. Why not, then, Slaughter argues, make changes in the world of work so that they can contribute to it while not having to “give up on things that define them as women” (her words).

Slaughter may just as well have even been reading the document from the former Cardinal Ratzinger’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “On the Collaboration of Men and Women” (2004):

“It cannot be forgotten that the interrelationship between these two activities – family and work – has for women characteristics different from those in the case of men. The harmonization of the organization of work and laws governing work with the demands stemming from the mission of women within the family is a challenge. The question is not only legal, economic, and organizational; it is above all a question of mentality, culture, and respect. Indeed, a just valuing of the work of women within the family is required. In this way, women who freely desire will be able to devote the totality of their time to the work of the household without being stigmatized by society or penalized financially, while those who wish also to engage in other work may be able to do with an appropriate work schedule and not have to choose between relinquishing their family life or enduring continual stress, with negative consequences for one’s own equilibrium and the harmony of the family”

Here, however, is where the relief is short-lived, as well as the “choice.” It makes no difference how many decades girls have been educated in the curriculum of the “girl project” – donning its obligatory uniform of soccer cleats and shin guards – and how much all reference to differences between the sexes has been washed out of our mouths and our minds, as we have brought them up genderlessly. If they themselves decide not even to get on the famous “ladder,” knowing full well that they could climb to the top; or if they should decide to step down from it, like Slaughter (if you call going back to a full-time position at Princeton “stepping down”), it’s simply *not allowed* to think that there is anything to this except “stereotypes” perpetuated by malevolent forces in society – by “the man,” so to speak.

This is particularly clear in a recent book written by the French feminist Elisabeth Badinter, *The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women*. The “conflict” to which Badinter refers is that between the many recent trends in mothering – especially in that new-

HUMANUM, Spring 2013, A MOTHER'S WORK

world backwater! – and the “goals of women” which for her are practical (not necessarily affective) independence from men and the “tyranny of motherhood,” marked finally by the elimination of any salary gap. The trends in question – largely promoted by women, it might be added – are of the “return to nature” kind, such as natural childbirth, use of cloth diapers, “attachment parenting,” “co-sleeping,” “baby-wearing,” and the worst of all, breast-feeding (promoted largely by the book’s chief villain, the *La Leche League*)!

Each of these new trends is taken on by the author, who cites studies to counter or, at the very least, minimize the force of the arguments (and studies) underlying the claims made by the “naturalists” (e.g., that mother’s milk is better than formula). But behind the illusion of seriousness about “what studies show,” and therefore, in some small way, with *the way things are*, what is clear is that none of that matters. If it could be imagined that there had been no study to counter the claims that “children and their mothers are better off when...,” it would make no difference. The “conflict” is not between two arguments and their reasons. It is rather between an attempt to ask a serious question on the one hand – “What is better for children and their mothers (and marriages and families)?” – and the refusal even to ask it on the other. Never mind that the answers given by the only ones asking the question may be a bit exaggerated. The point is that the infant (or teenager) is *not allowed* to be better off with his mother close at hand; and the mother is *not allowed* to feel restlessly torn between work and family. All of that is inadmissible evidence. It gets in the way of “choice,” which is clearly of one kind and one kind only.

Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg made that (one) choice perfectly clear in her book that was rushed to the presses in the wake of the Slaughter article. *Lean In* enjoins women to resist all those internal obstacles which cause women to “lean out” when they have children or start thinking about having them: the “ambition gap,” “self-doubt,” “leaving before they leave.” These obstacles really do seem to be there, as the salary gap continues to suggest – hence Sandberg’s book and the social movement it announces: the “lean in communities.” On the other hand, she “argues,” there is nothing really in them but the stubborn psychological effects of those all-pervasive stereotypes. (Haven’t you noticed them?).

There is nothing really in the care of infants, babies, and young children that places any specific responsibilities on a mother that can’t be borne by any other interchangeable adult, she asserts. (After all, she grew up free to roam all over the neighborhood with her siblings and friends without a mother always “hovering about.”) Not even breast-feeding offers her evidence to the contrary. That fact just gets tossed into the realm of the “biological imperative,” which does nothing but offer obstacles to be overcome (through all the various kinds of gadgets that can now do the job virtually, with as little skin contact as possible).

Sandberg doesn’t ask why it might be that this “was simply not something my husband was equipped to do.” Like Badinter, in the face of these kinds of “obstacles” there really aren’t any questions. Just a lot of leaning away from what is staring one right in the face. And all of this is to encourage women to lean into the (one) “choice” of the (one) “dream”: a future (for women) without limits, which for Sandberg means holding a power job, unhindered by children and any remaining un-cooperative fathers.

HUMANUM, Spring 2013, A MOTHER'S WORK

The limitations of the “choice” and the “dream” it serves are made even more clear by the kinds of policy changes that the Badinters and the Sandbergs want (and don't want) in order to address the problems of women and work. Badinter is annoyed by the younger generation of women who are nostalgic for the quantity time they missed from their own (feminist) mothers and talk too much about “work-family balance.” And she is even more annoyed by their family-friendly solutions, such as flexible schedules and extended maternity leaves – the kind that exist in Scandinavian countries and in Germany – because these solutions go in the direction of women opting (sic!) to stay at home more rather than less. She is in step with the NOW which has a history of countering such measures and, going back further, with the equity feminists who made their beds with the industrialists by helping them oppose laws against child labor and the protection of women from industrial abuse, thereby giving them a whole new pool of unencumbered, efficient workers.

Since family-friendly measures give rise to an even greater salary gap, and since overcoming that gap is the (one and only) measure of the success of the “dream,” the only acceptable solutions are those that make it advantageous for women to make the one (good) choice, solutions such as publically – or corporately – funded day care (starting at infancy), longer-school days and years, “innovative summer camps,” and tax codes weighted in their favor. In that way all the obstacles are cleared out of the way (excepting, for the moment, those un-predictable snow days!)

We presume that this is what President Obama meant when he said at the inauguration of his *Council on Women*: “It is up to us...to ensure that our daughters and granddaughters have no limits on their dreams.” And if there were any doubt about what he meant, his recent historic visit to Planned Parenthood has made things perfectly clear.

It is important to see that for all the talk about “choice,” there is always only one real acceptable choice for these authors. By way of flipping the terms of the debate around (as well as the burden), the issue isn't really about whether it's “OK” for women to work (and not feel guilty about it) – putting aside, once again, the fact that a mother is always already working *as a mother*. It is rather whether or not she is *allowed not to work* – especially at a “power job” – and thereby contribute to those dreadfully uneven job statistics. Obviously, no one would be caught dead saying she couldn't. We each have to “chart our own course,” after all; so why shouldn't *that* be included too?

The question, however, is whether or not setting out on that course, for reasons other than pure (empty) “choice” – such as, for example, the more powerful leaning of women and children towards spending more time with each other, tied to the unique capacity of women to conceive, bear, and nurse children – can be read as motivated by anything other than that ever-suspicious “subjection of the woman,” (as Mill put it) thanks to that “inequality of biology and reproduction” to which the equally suspicious “man” can never respond quickly enough. At the very least, any social and political encouragement of homemaking and discouragement of full-time employment, such as lighter tax burdens for families, and lack of publically funded day-care, should be eliminated, just to “make sure” (as John Rawls said).

That question, however, in the end is tied to the bigger one, which is whether or not there is any real legitimate and respectable choice other than to make common cause with the dominant idea

of equality – *equality of sameness* – and serve the corresponding ideal household: a two full-time career household, in thrall to the corporate economy for most of its meals and consumer goods, and to the State and its institutions for welfare (child- and elder-care and all of its education). Noting the affinity of “equity feminism” with the industrialized work place, especially as regards the hegemony of “choice,” Christopher Lasch wrote in one of his essays included in a recent collection put together with his daughter in his last days (*Women and the Common Life*):

“The [feminist] movement recognizes only one choice – the family in which adults work full-time in the [industrialized] marketplace. Its demand for state-supported programs of day-care discriminates against parents who choose to raise their own children and forces everyone to conform to the dominant pattern as the irresistible product of social developments analogous to the development of technology, which automatically renders old ways obsolete. The two-career family represents ‘progress,’ and laggards have to fall in line. Such is the logic feminists have borrowed from the marketplace” (p. 118).

II. Nobody Home

Turning to the substance of the (one) legitimate choice, it is important to see that, notwithstanding all the talk about “having it all,” family *and* work, one has very little of the former (if not also, perhaps, of the latter). While one of the currents in early feminism tied a more active entry of women into public life to “social housekeeping,” namely the *domestication of the public arena* – plagued as it was by the abuse of power in the form of slavery, drunkenness, immorality, etc. – what seems to be more in view in the recent discussion is a workplace that will *un-domesticate the home*. As Lasch said, institutions “have a life of their own”; and women are unlikely to make the workplace as we know it more family-friendly (as some, like Slaughter, understandably want). Indeed they are more likely to make it less so. This is clear especially when women like Sandberg identify what change they want for women when exactly one-half of the board rooms are populated by women like them, and they have the power to effect it: more day-care, longer school days and school years.

There is not, then, much *balance* when it comes to the “work-life balance” question, especially when it is treated to the (one) official answer. And it is not the workplace that gets short shrift. It does not take much to imagine what becomes of the home when there are two full-time power-job careerists sleeping in the master bedroom. To put it in a nutshell, it becomes a home with nobody home, where very little happens among those who sleep there, much less with their friends and neighbors. There is no nursing a baby (in the well-appointed nursery), no taking walks to the park, no witnessing first steps (which happen at the “wrong time”), no informal neighborhood clubs after school, no gathering of teenage friends under watchful eyes, no real cooking (in the gourmet kitchen), no dinners with friends (in the non-existent dining rooms), no neighborly charity for sick friends or new mothers. In short there is no time together. And there are definitely no un-organized and un-institutionalized children roaming around neighborhoods freely on bicycles; because there is no longer what Sandberg takes for granted when she did just that: an invisible maternal presence in the background. You really *can't* have it all. And neither, apparently, can the children who are now in “safe environments” and “enrichment programs,” cared for, for the most part, by “qualified” professionals, but rarely by the ones to whom they belong.

But this un-domestication of the home, implied in the imbalance of the “work-life” discussion, is only an expression of something deeper. It is an expression of a deep suspicion of the relations between parents and their children, one that reaches way back to the founding of modern liberal democracies and the “social solitaries” they presuppose. Given the unnatural, suspicious, and even “tyrannical” nature of family relations, these relations were to remain relaxed, tentative, conditional, and always in sight of the “exit,” even ahead of the game. De Tocqueville saw this in the newly founded America where “you easily forget those who have preceded you, and you have no idea of those who will follow you” (*Democracy in America*). Paraphrasing the French visitor two centuries later, Alan Bloom wrote: “one cannot risk interdependence. Imagination compels everyone to look forward to the day of separation in order to see how he will do” (*The Closing of the American Mind*, p. 62).

The preparation for separation, of course, goes in both directions. The full-time-away-from-the-home-all-day-long (power) career job does this for the mother of young children. And the early institutionalization of her very young children does it for the children themselves. Indeed it was the current French Minister *of the Family*, Dominique Bertinotti, who said as much when arguing for the institutionalization of children as early as two years old: “it wrests from them every possible social, philosophical, familial, and religious determinism”!

Then too there is the relaxed and tentative relation between the very two who bring children into the world. Wendell Berry described this perfectly:

“Marriage... is now on the one hand an intimate ‘relationship’ involving (ideally) two successful careerists in the same bed, and on the other hand a sort of private political system in which rights and interest must be constantly asserted and defended. Marriage, in other words, has now taken the form of divorce: a prolonged and impassioned negotiation as to how things shall be divided” (*The Art of the Commonplace*, Shoemaker and Hoard, 2002, p. 67).

The married couple is “on parallel lines,” as it were, with each of its members pursuing his or her own individual “goals” and “dreams.” They do not, in other words, view themselves as serving a *common* enterprise to which all of their work is ordered. No wonder that the very idea of children is supposed to come late in the game, after the terms of independence have been secured by two well-established and independent career paths. (Egg freezing, of course, is the necessary companion to this independence, as Sarah Elizabeth Richards has just suggested in her new book *Motherhood Rescheduled*.)

But really, is it even clear why this couple should want children in the first place? Badinter, whose real interest seems to be “ethical childlessness,” suggests that such a desire might even be *selfish*. And, given whatever reasons there might be left for having children – satisfying affective needs, even solidifying the waning affection of the already tenuous marriage – she may just be right. No wonder the home is empty. And no wonder it has been so easily absorbed by work in the contemporary work-life imbalance.

But, if the home is effectively empty, what is it that we are working for? And for whom, we might add, are we working, other than for ourselves? What is striking in Sandberg’s book is how

she thinks about her work, her career. It is tautological. The reason to have a career is to have a career, or, at the very most, to “effect change” so that other women can have a career to have a career. Nothing is said substantively about the *reason* for work – about what, or whom, it serves. There’s no mention even of just making a living for one’s own family. Work isn’t in *relation* to anything. Even within the workplace itself, it is her hope that one day women won’t have to play by the “archaic rules” of negotiating from the point of view of the common good (using “we” language), and will be able instead just to look out for themselves (“as men do”).

Now that the world of work has absorbed the home, Sandberg would take one of the initial feminist projects of domesticating the world to its polar opposite: every woman for herself.

III. Opening up the Horizon

Naturally, women have always worked and always will. The question then is not about whether or not they work, but whether or not the work specific to them counts for work, and whether or not that work has any relation to whatever work they do beyond that. This is the crucial question. It is clear enough that the Badinters, the Sandbergs, and their like answer the question in the negative. Is the discussion over, then? Perhaps the thousands of visceral reactions to *Lean In* by ex-feminist ladder climbers enjoying life with their children (finally!) suggests otherwise.

One of the greatest friends of women in the last century was the Slavic pope, John Paul II, who spoke frequently of the “genius of women.” With that term he pointed to the work specific to women, that of “being entrusted with the human being in a special way.” By virtue of her concrete femininity, the woman, he said, has “a sensitivity for what is essentially human” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, n. 30). She welcomes the child, gives it room, enables it to grow, *lets it be*. She is a “humanizing force” (*Letter to Women*, n. 4); she is a “guardian,” as it were, of that most basic activity – that *work* – of recognizing what is essentially human, especially in a world which tends to see only things that are useful. This is why he urged societies not to stigmatize or penalize financially women who do have children, if they spend most of their time caring for them, and to ensure that women who do engage in other work have a work schedule that doesn’t force them to choose between “relinquishing their family life or enduring continual stress, with negative consequences for one’s own equilibrium and the harmony of the family” (*On the Collaboration of Men and Women*).

The “genius of women,” moreover, said John Paul II, was true for women whether or not they were physical mothers. It belonged to women *as such*, and gave form to all of their activity. For this reason he urged women who engaged in other work to do so *from the point of their motherhood* (physical or spiritual) and “humanize structures” (*Letter to Women*, n. 2).

We might call to mind here the many women of the “maternalist movement” – all in the Democrat party – many of whom entered public life and assumed positions of responsibility in the government of FDR. These women promoted things that had as their horizon, not androgynous individuals, but men and women as actual or potential fathers and mothers, together in a home with children. Pushing back against the industrialist tendencies to flatten these distinctions in the meat-grinder of “equality” (of sameness), they saw in the distinct needs and responsibilities of men and woman *a bond to be strengthened*, not relaxed. To *that* end they proposed changes to tax and labor law – including the family wage and “mother’s pensions” for

widows – and established countless institutions and campaigns that promoted motherhood and home life.

Indeed it was the emergence of the new kind of workplace that industrialism generated that prompted the very need to affirm the value of motherhood in the first place (though there were many antecedent reasons for this in the ideas of modernity itself). G.K. Chesterton – another friend of women – thought that industrialism not only threatened to suffocate motherhood (and childhood) with its inhuman and menial labor conditions, but that it did so first by convincing women of the triviality of the work specific to them, especially against the backdrop of the glamour of “professional” (and reimbursed) work. Chesterton thought that time spent with one’s children in their formative years was what *kept women broad not narrow*.

“To be Queen Elizabeth within a definite area, deciding sales, banquets, labors and holidays; to be Whiteley within a certain area, providing toys, boots, sheets, cakes and books; to be Aristotle within a certain area, teaching morals, manners, theology, and hygiene; I can understand how this might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people’s children about the Rule of Three, and a small career to tell one’s own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No. A woman’s function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity hers for its smallness” (*What’s Wrong with the World*, Feather Trail Press, p. 43).

Chesterton saw a century ago what many women are beginning to see now on the backs of their own experience. Now women serving in the State Department, even women in the White House – far from the factory floor or the homogenizing office cubical – can see this. Writing about her decision to step down from her job as President Bush’s assistant and Vice President Cheney’s counselor in her memoir *Midlife Crisis at 30*, Mary Matalin wrote: “I finally asked myself, ‘Who needs me more?’ And that’s when I realized, it’s somebody else’s turn to do this job. I’m indispensable to my kids, but I’m not even close to indispensable to the White House.” The rediscovery of the “feminine genius,” championed by Chesterton, the “Maternalists,” and Pope John Paul II is refreshing to many women, for many reasons, not the least of which is that it puts the finger on something deeper than mere (empty) “choice.” It names what they feel, even when – especially when – they are exerting so much energy to stifle it, by *leaning in*.

Still the rediscovery of the “feminine genius” has to go hand in hand with other rediscoveries. Writing about the sexual division of labor in *Women and the Common Life*, Christopher Lasch points to the real problem that set up the contemporary devaluing of the feminine genius at home, on the one hand, and the jettisoning of it altogether in the work place, on the other. Actually, he credits Betty Friedan for putting her finger on it in her *Feminine Mystique* (which he seems to have *actually read*.) Friedan’s point, says Lasch, is not the one everyone thinks it was, namely to tell women to get out of the house and get a job. It was deeper than that. It was a critique of the situation women now found themselves in for the first time – in the new version of the “stay-at-home mother.”

When the suburbs were created, said Friedan, the “traditional family” came into being as an entity now fully cut off from the world of culture and work; and it dwelt in a home that was now the full expression of the “haven in the heartless world” it had become at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. As for that home, not only did it stand at a distance from the centers of culture and work, it was not itself centered around any other meaningful hub – churches, town halls, greens – other than the shopping mall. (This was indeed the original *appeal* of the suburbs, since in them no one had to run into and rely upon his or her relations and neighbors as before). Add to that the fact that the house itself had little land on which to grow food, and no work spaces in which to can and store it, or make anything else for that matter that was truly needful, much less to operate a cottage industry of any sort, and you had the recipe for the “comfortable concentration camp,” and the *ennui*, loneliness, and “nameless dissatisfaction” that so often filled it.

Lasch connects the problem in the home to the general problem of the new economy which had “no other object than to keep people at work and thus to sustain the national ‘capacity to consume’ . . . all without reference to the intrinsic quality of the goods and services produced or the intrinsic satisfaction of the work that went into them” (p. 110), nor, for that matter, the true satisfaction of those *for whom* one worked. The problem, according to Lasch, was that what was going on in the workplace was affecting the home even if this was thought (mistakenly, in his view) to be an island of domesticity far from the rat-race of the new consumer economy. The work that was going on in the home was as unreal as the work going on outside of it, especially now that it was the prime target of all the new ready-to-use convenience items and appliances, not to mention the disposable and programmed-for-obsolescence products. This was what Friedan was getting at, said Lasch, when she described the excessive housewifery (in the now “spotless” houses) and obsessive attention to children that had all the telltale signs of make-work for bored women.

In addition to the fact that work in the home didn't seem to be very real, it was also cut off from any larger common purpose. This became particularly clear in childrearing, surprisingly enough, thanks to the fathers of the fifties, who, as a result of their disenchantment with the “heartless world” were embracing the “new fatherhood,” as a “second but real career.” But just as the work they escaped from at the end of the day had become purposeless – devoid as it was of workmanship and real usefulness – so too would childrearing . . . eventually. What was one bringing up a child into? Says Lasch: “when adults devoted themselves exclusively to the child's world, there isn't much world for the child to grow up into in the next stage. In order for a father to guide his growing son, it was necessary for him to have a community of his own and be more of a man” (p. 112). As with work, if childrearing wasn't connected to anything else, it couldn't justify itself and be satisfying. All the more so, as Friedan had suggested, for the one whose specific “genius” was tied so directly to the child.

Conclusion

The rediscovery of the “genius of women” then, is tied to a series of rediscoveries. In the first place, it is tied to the rediscovery of what none of the self-help books about super-women “leaning in” can ever explain: *why it is worth working*. It is tied to the discovery of the meaning of work, that of making the world a more human and hospitable place for us and for our children (even if the work serves no other purpose than to put food on the table).

HUMANUM, Spring 2013, A MOTHER'S WORK

But it is also tied to the rediscovery of *why it is worth having children* in the first place. To have a special sensitivity for what is essentially human is also to have a special sensitivity for the intrinsic worth and goodness of the world – its basic positivity – notwithstanding its many “defects.”

This worldly “feminine genius” is itself tied to another “genius,” the “genius of the father.” It is thanks to the mother’s relation to the father that she can see what she is not (and what he only represents). At the origin of the life she bears – indeed at the origin of the whole world – stands a generous gift that lets the world be, and be *good*.

As it goes with motherhood, then, so it goes with the world and the work that is really useful to it. It really is true, then, that “a mother’s work is never done,” in the broadest sense.

Margaret Harper McCarthy is an Assistant Professor of Theology at the John Paul II Institute and Director of its Center for Cultural and Pastoral Research. She is married and the mother of three teenagers.