

SOME COMMENTS OF ARCHBISHOP DIARMUID MARTIN

Taken from a recent Public Lecture on *The teaching of the Church on Marriage and the Family*

“The fundamental question for me concerns the nature of the relationship between male and female, which I hold is not simply a social construct but which is constitutive of human relations. What does it mean to be male and female? Yes there are some social constructs around the roles of man and women which have evolved in our societies which do not reflect the true understanding of men and women and which must be changed. But the male-female relationship is not just social construct. There is something irreplaceable in that relationship between a man and a woman who commit to each other in love and who remain open to the transmission and the nurturing of human life, within an intergenerational framework which contributes to the stability of society.

It is also true that no person exists who is not the fruit of a male and a female. Even if it were possible to clone a child, that child would still bear the genetic imprint of a male and a female. Genetic parentage is not irrelevant. Some people, sadly, have to spend their entire lives seeking their genetic parents: not just out of a natural emotional desire; knowledge of one’s genetic make-up is important – and indeed it can be vital when planning to have children. We are all children of a male and a female and this must have relevance to our understanding of the way children should be nurtured and educated. Genetic make-up is a fundamental dimension of the intergenerational reality of family.

It is important however to stress that all children, whatever the circumstances of their birth, should be loved unconditionally and treated with the same rights and dignity. This applies also to their rights within the Church. Pope Francis has spoken very strongly against any priest who might refuse baptism of a child simply because of the particular conjugal relationship of their parents or guardians. “