

Power, Sex and the Church



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Leonard Bernstein's Mass contains a haunting aria: Sing God A Simple Song. Albert Einstein spent his life seeking the elegance of a simple equation to explain the unity of the universe. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a pilgrimage out of the complexity of the Inferno's darkness to the simplicity of light in the *Paradiso* where God dwells. The mystic journey makes all things simple and new.

I would like to say a few simple things about a long period of time. We need attempts at analysis and synthesis to give us a sense of where we fit and where we are going. Working in so large a context is daring, some might say reckless. It is easier to limit our focus so that we gain control of all the data and become experts in circumscribed areas of learning. This is useful. But knowledge can paralyze us if it comes in abundance but leaves us bewildered about where it is all going.

I see a simple understanding, not become simplistic but to avoid complexity and darkness. These reflections are my effort at a simple song, a faith equation which will help me remain Catholic in a creative way and to keep Christ central.

Jesus Christ and the New Testament

I spoke previously about Jesus Christ and the Church and summed up his life and teaching as an act of compassion. A Church without compassion has no validation from Christ. It is very simple. We all know this.

So why pretend that the issue is complex? Insisting that reality is too complicated for compassion is the mask cruelty wears to conceal its heartlessness. Reality was complex for Jesus also but he did not become cruel in managing it.

We find Christ on those levels of Church life where we encounter compassion. The other levels have nothing to teach us about Christ. It is very simple. It is counterproductive to qualify, make conditions and excuses, pile up footnotes and cross-references. What are we about as a Church anyway? Is it not compassion?

I do not believe that a large institution cannot be compassionate. Vatican II was a compassionate Council; John XXIII was a compassionate Pope. Why should they be exceptions? The complex management of the Church can be reconciled with compassion. Should it not disturb us that very few think of the word "compassion" when the word Vatican or Roman Catholic is used? Thirty-five years ago, with another Pope and an impressive Council "Compassion" fit. Some will no doubt, find flaws in John XXIII's papacy and blind spots in Vatican II. Neither was perfect. But it is the abiding image and memory which matters.

The Church is meant to be the sacrament of God's Compassion. It is called "Mother Church" is it not?

John XXIII reminded us of this as he opened the Second Vatican Council:

Conference Presentation

Mother Church rejoices that...the long-for day has finally dawned...often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun...the spouse of Christ prefers mercy to severity. She meets the needs of today by witnessing to the goodness of her teaching and not by condemnations...violence inflicted on others...does not help at all in solving the serious problems of the day...the Catholic Church...must be a loving mother to all, benign, patient, merciful, doing good to those separated from her...The Council now beginning rises in the Church like daybreak, the promise of an even more splendid light. It is now only dawn (but) already (we can) contemplate the stars...

Is all this now to become rhetoric? Is the reality of such a cast that we must abandon all hope as we meet it? Was not just such a description ("Abandon all hope") Dante's worlds written on the entrance to the Inferno? Were Christians called to be those who told the world that dreams were foolish and compassion impossible as our problems and institutions became complex? Is it now all rhetoric? It once was not. Even some thirty years ago it was not.

As I read the Gospels, I find Jesus most radical when he addresses two issues: power and sex. Power here is not moral influence over others or even coercive action against evil or even, indeed, genuine authority.

Power is oppression, allowing the defenseless and the victims no voice, silencing all those who take their part, fashioning an institution in which the views of one person or a clique determine policy and implement it even against the needs and wishes of the vast majority.

This description is not a caricature. It has happened often in world history and is a precise description of what happens in our Church from time to time. Let us not evade the issue by making endless qualifications. This power is condemned by Jesus, severely, often. Such power is linked, as I intend to show, with punishment and sexual repression.

It is instructive to observe that once we allow someone to define us primarily by a sexual definition (celibate or married, heterosexual or homosexual, serious sinner or sexually active in a marriage after divorce), once our sexual life becomes the most important way in making a judgment about us, then such a person or institution has gained control of us. It then becomes almost impossible for us to sense our freedom and worth. All totalitarian systems know this and do this.

Jesus knew this. Hear him when James and John ask for primacy in the Reign of God. He calls the Twelve (symbol of the whole Church) to him and says in Mark 10: (paraphrased)

Only pagans when they have no faith seek power. They seek to rule other lives. This is not my way and it is never to be yours. Do you hear? Never. No one of you must rule other lives. For even I held on to none of you with power. I give my life for you. You must do that for one another. Do you hear? No power.

Later he warns, in Mark 12, that we must be aware of those who like to walk around in long robes, who seek titles of respect others do not have and who always sit in the best seats in the synagogue and are given places of honor at all banquets. Such people, Jesus thunders, devour widows and plunder the powerless.

The teaching is so clear, aimed with deadly force at the hardness of our hearts and the heartlessness of Churches who dispense with compassion as a liability and a fantasy.

It is so clear, why do we find it so easy to dismiss it? If the teaching of Jesus is strong in this regard and ambiguous on sexual ethics, why have we made sexual ethics paramount?

The teaching of Jesus on sexual ethics in the Gospel is sparse, almost non-existent. This does not indicate there are to be no norms or that our sexual behavior can be exploitive and abusive. Jesus knew this. All sensible people do. Why then does Jesus speak so little in this regard? Could it be that enough had already been said?

Power, Sex and the Church

For Jesus, relationships are pre-eminent because love is the norm for the community. Sex is the way we seek permanent relationships. In it, we express love with unique intensity. Power is the way we destroy relationships. In it, we dismiss love as a commodity the system cannot afford.



Is it not noteworthy that people link the word “fidelity” very easily with sexual commitment. Fidelity of such a magnitude cannot be achieved in one step. The modern world, nonetheless, celebrates faithful people and uses the word “faithful” most often to describe sexual integrity. The vast majority recognize how deep and painful are the wounds inflicted by sexual betrayals. The world knows this. It does not need many reminders. It learned it on its own.

And, so, Jesus says little about sexuality and is gentle in dealing with sexual misconduct, not because he is unconcerned but precisely because he does not see this as our worst evil. Most people achieve impressive levels of sexual maturity. Why is it so difficult for the Church to admit this?

Power, however, is far more devastating.

In the greatest of all parables, the lost son, it is the elder brother, heavily into power, who reminds his father of the sexual misconduct of the son the father has just forgiven. The strategy of

the elder son is to crush the younger son with power and to shame him with his sexual behavior. It is always easy to shame people with their sexual misdeeds. All tyrants know this. We shame easily about sexual matters because we care so deeply about getting our sexuality right. Sexual responsibility is built into us as is yearning perhaps as deep as our hunger for God. We all need to be assured that our hope for God and our sexual hope for maturity are not in vain.

The forgiving father, in the parable, ignores the sexual charges, much as Jesus does with the woman in adultery. People who make sexual charges against others almost always seek to demean them and then to destroy them. The demeaning is the torture inflicted before the lethal sentence is executed.

The father wants to heal and to love the lost son. He does not deny the sexual charges or celebrate the sexual misconduct. He puts it in perspective. It happened. But the son is more than this. And so is the father. The father wants a free son, not a slave kept in parental and sexual bondage forever.

Notice how often right-wing groups and totalitarian systems insist on rigid sexual norms and blind obedience to power. It is embarrassing to hear supposedly mature Catholics state in public, with pride, that whatever the Pope tells them to do is right and whatever he prohibits is wrong. I am astonished when I dialogue in the media or on the lecture circuit with those who declare that when and if the Pope takes a contrary position to the one he has now, they will follow that also.

No more teaching of Jesus is more pivotal than his teaching on power and sex. We never truly love others until we allow them to be free of us, if they wish, and until we allow them to find their way sexually and spiritually.

Anthropologists tell us we have been human for four million years. Christianity has been on the scene for only two thousand years. Was all the previous time a time of no sexual wisdom or maturity? There are a billion Christians now in a world of five billion people. Is there sexual fidelity among all Christians and

Conference Presentation

none in the billions of others? Are the percentages of behaviors markedly different among Christian and others? Do not people, then, even without Christianity, find their way sexually and spiritually? If they do, then why are we so negative in our judgment that Christians can do this as well, without excessive harassment, punishment and intrusion from Church leaders?

From Christ to Modernism

There were many good things which happened after Christ. Our critique always assumes these and is ready to celebrate them. In one talk, one cannot say everything. We must take for granted that there were many glorious moments over two millennia. If we do not accept this, we would not be Catholic and we would not be here. Certainly, the monasteries and many church councils, clearly the papacy when it served to unify the Catholic world, undoubtedly the sacramental system, all these, none authorized by Christ, served as well. The centuries are filled with hopeful memories: Benedict and Ignatius, Francis of Assisi and Theresa of Avila, Dorothy Day, John XXIII, Vatican II.

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A disturbing refrain, however, weaves its way into the more simple song of Church history. Church authorities often seek power, brutally, and formulate rigid sexual norms as a way of maintaining it. Power is the Church's permanent temptation and harsh sexuality is the instrument of its implementation. At such moments, compassion is seen as a weakness and diversity, a crime.

One sees this barter of control and cruelty for compassion clearly in the early fourth to the mid-fifth century of our era. Notice how a number of issues and decisions, all connected, I would

argue, come together in a time frame of little more than a century.

- Constantine gives Christianity legal standing, vast political power, and a Roman sense that the law is more important than almost anything else; indeed, law in the Empire is the way power is managed and secured.

- Pope Damasus (366,384) changes the tradition of the church and decrees that priests may marry but a sexual life with their wives is absolutely forbidden.

- St. Augustine develops a just war theory, actually borrowing from Cicero, which endorses killing as an act of virtue if the motive is not the death of the person; Christians now serve readily in the Roman Army; this theory will later permit the Crusades and inquisitions.

- Pope Damasus in 382 applies Matthew 16:18 ("You are Peter") and his office, claiming power over every other Christian Community. This is less than seventy years after Constantine's 313 decision. It reverses the traditional teaching until then that Matthew 16:18 celebrated the faith of Peter as a model for all Christians, not the appointment of Peter to an office with power and jurisdiction. It is difficult to imagine Christ giving primacy to Peter in Matthew 16 when he condemned it for James, John and the Twelve in Mark 10 and 12, as we saw earlier.

- A rigid, cruel sexual ethic is now put in place. It leads Origen to castrate himself as an act of devotion to Christ; it prompts Augustine to label "sordid, filthy and horrible a woman's embraces" even in marriage; it convinces him that original sin and all evil is in our genitals; it creates what we would call today sexual in St. Jerome

There is a casual connection in all this, I maintain. The passing of a community of equals derived from baptism and one Spirit for all and the rise of primacy and power in the Church accounts for this. I do not deny that authority and oversight are legitimate

Power, Sex and the Church

developments in a community, but the purpose of such authority for the Church, as for a family, is the freedom of others from our control. Some Catholics today, even Church leaders, take for their model for the Church a corporation or a military system in which compliance and submission are imperative. When these become paramount in a family, the family is unhealthy.

I suggest that there is a connection between the Church abandonment of non-violence and its fascination with law, power, and sexual control. This demonic alliance between power and sex makes compassion less and less central. Does not the teaching of Jesus and the example of history show this?

*The only celibacy Christ
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abstinence from power.*

Issues of power and sex tell us also a great deal about the second millennium. The two major ruptures, East and West, in the eleventh century and the Reformation in the sixteenth, are fueled by the volatile mixture of dominative power and sexual control. We have not the time to deal with both of these divisions. Since most people know more about the Reformation than about the earlier period, let us discuss East and West. Suffice it to say, in passing, its economic plunder of the Churches and its oppressive sexual control of the clergy.

Once again, in a relatively short period of time a number of disturbing issues come together:

- The Popes seek jurisdiction and control over Churches where Constantinople traditionally had been allowed pastoral authority.
- Cardinal Humbert, a close friend of Pope Gregory VII, slams a *Bull of Excommunication* on the altar in Sancta Sophia, Constantinople in July of 1054. He rails against a

married priesthood and describes in disgust the tendency of such priests to handle the immaculate body of Christ and the filthy bodies of their wives!

- Pope Gregory VII in 1075 declares that no one can judge a Pope except God, that all Christians must obey the Pope, that the church of Rome can never err and that Popes are made saints by the merits of St. Peter.
- Popes now change the tradition and declare that only Popes can call Ecumenical Councils; every council in the first millennium was called by a layperson, one of them by a laywoman, and Popes had been present at none of them; papal legates are invited not because the Pope is Pope but because he is one of the five great Patriarch.
- The Papacy endorses Crusades and the Inquisitions.
- Obligator celibacy for all Latin priests is legislated.
- Marriages after divorce are declared concubinage.
- Annual confession of sins to a priest is decreed.
- Law is used to control the sacraments and marriage so that now, the first time, all sacraments are declared invalid unless the minister has legal standing granted by the Pope; this is the final bitter fruit of the seeds sown by Constantine, the Empire, and their fascination with law.
- Innocent IV declares (*Ad Extripanda*, 1252) that torture may be an act of virtue and mercy in the conduct of the Inquisition.

We need not belabor the point. Raw dominative power, violence and rigid sexual control go hand in hand.

It is impossible to imagine Christ demanding obligatory celibacy, recommending torture, or teaching that sacraments do not work, even if need and faith are present, unless the minister has

Conference Presentation

legal standing from the Pope. Was it not Christ who assured us that whenever two or three gather in his name he would be present? Where is there mention of legal standing? And even though legal standing can serve a purpose is the need for it so great that all actions done without it are invalid, always, in every instance? Is love or legal standing the hallmark of the community?

Could Christ have called a Crusade or conducted an Inquisition? Then, why did we? Did Christ call filthy the sexual love of a husband and wife? Then why did we?

Did Christ do cruel things to people for the sake of institutional order and doctrinal orthodoxy? Then why do we? Did Christ rejoice as he excommunicated the unworthy, declaring the community would be better without them? Then why do we?

Did Christ marginalize women and forbid them to dialogue with them about their status? Then, why do we? Would Christ ever have dismissed a Christian from ministry only because the minister married and raised a Christian family? Then why do we?

Our mandate for cruelty comes from our lust for power and our need to punish sexual behavior and pleasure when it does not suit the agenda of one man.

The only celibacy Christ ever wanted was abstinence from power.

It is a dreadful distortion of the Gospel to reserve all priestly ministry in the Church and all inclusion in decision making to a group of men who promise to refrain from marriage. Such distortion may lead some to abstain from sexual pleasure and its commitments to gain dominative power over advantage, a form of prostitution. Clearly many celibates, most celibates would not do this. But the present Church system may tempt many to follow such a course, whether consciously or not.

If Christ could do none of these things, why do we? Is it not a question worth asking?

This Twentieth Century Church

There were great moments for institutional Catholicism in this century and we must not be blind to them. They were moments when powers and sex were not the issue, moments when we reached the heart of the world and the human family because we were gentle and merciful, compassionate and loving. Nothing else works. Ever. Only this.

The Crusades and Inquisitions eventually came to an end. The Enlightenment had something to do with this as did American democracy.

Nonetheless, as the century began, Pius X sought to destroy not lives as such but intelligence and learning in the Church. We became a ghetto against the world, belligerent and supposedly infallible, isolated and angry. Pius created a Catholic Gulag in which all who did not think and speak as one man did would be punished. This was the age of modernism and the penalties were severe; destruction of careers, reputations, ministries; vilification and refusal of Catholic burial. A reign of terror was created and it sought its victims systematically and relentlessly. The whole world was allegedly wrong and only the infallible Pope was reliable. Thus, power, dominative and oppressive, narrow and self-righteous, cruel and sadistic was in place. We had learned nothing, it seemed, from the Galileo trial. It is not our intent to judge the motives of Pius X but we must evaluate the system he created.

With Pius XI, about a third of the way through the century, birth control was condemned as intrinsically evil (*Casti Connubii*) and Catholic couples were expected to have as many children as nature allowed. Even rhythm, as it was called, was forbidden. Since Catholics came to believe the Pope was the Vicar of Christ and infallible, since no theological dissent was allowed, Catholics accepted this as God's teaching and complied fully or considered themselves serious sinners.

Pius XII was considered liberal when he permitted rhythm but only if confessor gave the couple permission.

Power, Sex and the Church

And, so, sex was now rigidly defined by an institution which had established dominative power over the Church. Masturbation was deemed a serious sin always. God punished each and every sexual act with eternal damnation unless it was between husband and wife whose intent did not exclude the conception of children. There were no exceptions. It was not possible to commit a venial sexual sin. All sexual sins were mortal, lethal, deadly. God responded in anger and hurled sexual sinners into hell without pity.

Vatican II was an effort to get the power and sex issues better focused. The two themes were addressed in a fresh manner by that Council.

The reign of terror conducted by Pius X did not succeed. No reign of terror ever does. Vatican II, in effect even if not by intent, was an attempt to end papal monarchy in the Church and to distribute power more broadly. One person or a curial oligarchy would no longer make all the decisions. Vatican II went about this by calling for the following:

- Collegiality and the World Synod of Bishops
- A Church defined as the People of God
- National and Regional conferences of bishops
- Presbyteral Councils and senates of priests
- councils of laity and clergy
- Parish Councils
- Lay ministries and a vernacular liturgy
- Ecumenism and the Christian authority of other Churches
- Conscience and Religious freedom
- The priority of Scripture over Magisterium

The structure to end papal absolutism was set in place and endorsed at the highest levels of ecclesial decision making.

Vatican II was a gentle Council. There were no anathemas and no infallible statements. The Church was a great Mystery and it was a community of God's People. Hierarchy was important but it was not primary. The laity could no longer be defined as they were until then, as those who participate in the apostolate of the hierarchy, having no apostolate, mission, or mandate on their own.

All well and good. There was lacking one other crucial item, however. Would the sexual ethics of the Church remain rigid and, if not, who would have a voice in its reformulation? If this was not settled, power would enter the process again and corrupt the Church.

A beginning was made in the Council at the reform of sexual ethics:

- Deacons, ordained, could be married
- Married Eastern Catholic priests were honored
- Celibacy was defined as a value but no longer as superior to married life.
- The Church was seen as a pilgrim people, a journey into Mystery with few absolutes and easy answers
- A review of teaching on birth control was called for; Cardinal Suenens reminds the Council that the church cannot afford another Galileo case, this time on a sexual issue
- Marriage was defined not as a sexual contract but as a community of marital life and love
- Responsible parenthood required the limitation of births

Conference Presentation

•Marital sexuality need not always intend conception and was fully valid and virtuous as an expression of love and bonding

For this to be implemented fully and irreversibly, two changes were essential:

-The repeal of the teaching that birth control was intrinsically immoral since birth control was primarily a papal doctrine, this would bring the papacy closer to the Church at large

-The end of obligatory celibacy for Latin Rite priests; this too was mainly papal policy; such a reform would give priests freedom and options they had not had for centuries; eventually less uniformity would result on all levels of Church life.

Has the Council been allowed to debate these issues it would, I suggest, have accepted birth control as a moral possibility for responsible marital sexuality (as the birth control commissions proved). And it would have permitted the ordination of married men in mission countries where there was a shortage of priests (as the Paul VI letter to Cardinal Villot in 1971 and the 1971 Synod of Bishop showed).

The Council would have put these two troublesome and wrenching decisions behind us and the energy and charisms of the Church would have been directed elsewhere.

In an act of power, Paul VI took these two issues out of the hands of the Council, confident the Pope was a more reliable guide here than the entire Church.

Two years after the Council, in 1967, with *Sacerdotalis Celibatus* and a year later, *Humanae Vitae* Papal endorsement of the conciliar process ended. These encyclicals maintain, in effect, that the papacy could not afford sexual freedom for priests and laity. The trauma inflicted on the Church by these two decisions is difficult to exaggerate.

John Paul II became even more harsh, almost obsessed on sexual issues. Abortion, homosexuality, optional celibacy and women get his attention as little else does. John Paul is more restrictive than Paul VI on sharing authority. He has praised collegiality but not allowed it to function; he has gutted the Synod of Bishops, denigrated episcopal conferences and defined the papacy in the code of Canon Law as accountable to God alone. Human rights in the Church exist only to the extent the Pope permits; Christian unity has fared badly; women at large do not find him their advocate.

We know the story well.

There have been some marvelous moments, nonetheless, with this Pope. He leaves the Church memories which have inspired me: his visit to Auschwitz and to Hiroshima; his pilgrimage to the Jewish Synagogue in Rome and later to the Lutheran Church on the 500th Anniversary of Luther's birth (both of these were firsts for the papacy); his prayer service in Assisi with world religious leaders and his celebration of Gandhi at Gandhi's tomb. The social justice message of John Paul II is also admirable.

All of these initiatives, however, come from the Pope. There is hardly room for anyone else in such a Church.

Nonetheless, the reign of terror of Pius X cannot return. Pius X was preceded by Vatican I's definition of infallible and Pius IX's heavy-handed policies. There was no endorsement for alternative models of Church. John Paul II is preceded by John XXIII and Vatican II. We all know that there is another way to go about Church. The alternative model, furthermore, is validated by conciliar decrees, profound scholarship, pastoral sensitivity, the vast majority of Catholics and the whole movement of the world and the Spirit calling for participation in decision making. Ecumenism, conscience, and women have played roles since Vatican II which were not imaginable at the beginning of the century. There can be no turning back; Vatican II has survived an almost thirty-year assault on it.

Power, Sex and the Church

Conclusion

Allow me to conclude this reflection with a thought about Mary Magdalene and Jesus of Nazareth.

In a woman, and especially in this woman, power and sexuality are sharply focused and take a very different turn from the male reading of them.

It is more astonishing than we realize that Jesus would be presented in the Gospels as appearing first to Magdalene.

Neither she nor any other woman in the Gospel vies for power the way James and John did. No woman ever claimed primacy in the church because Magdalene first saw the Risen Christ and confessed him in an even more impressive manifestation of faith than Peter's. No woman in the Gospel betrays Christ. No woman theologian or mystic ever called filthy the embraces of a husband and wife.

Magdalene seeks Christ on Easter morning after the power of a religious institution buried him with its laws and oligarchy.

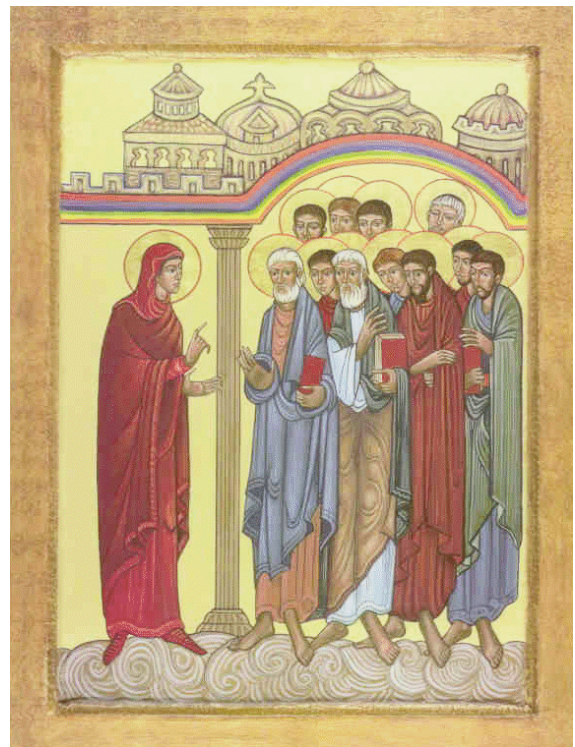
She saw Rome do its worst with him. She is the only person mentioned by all the Gospels as having been at the cross until the end. She saw the results of naked power. She saw the agony, heard the cries, watched all hope drain from the face of Christ. She heard the last words, the final gasp, the loss of life.

Could she ever be impressed with power?

Whatever Magdalene's sexual history or marital status, it was for Christ and for her an item of no concern.

Power, however, is always busy with sexual definitions and stereotypes. It executes the adulteress and gives divorced and remarried Christians a stone when they ask for bread. It calls birth control intrinsically evil even if it leads to love. It makes celibacy a sexual issue rather than an act of love. It singles out homosexuals as the new witches to burn, the heretics against

whom discrimination is an act of virtue, the way torture once was. It is not the heart or the face of homosexuals we are asked to consider but the way they do sex. Augustine was once there with all married people; Pope Damasus was there with priests; Pius XI with all who practiced birth control or rhythm. Sex must be done the way the Pope decrees.



When it is not, compassion is withheld or given only on papal terms and people are left to wither without communion. Evil and original sin are seen to be in our genitals, as Augustine maintained. Jesus once said that what mattered was the heart and if that were pure, the whole body is pure.

But it is Easter morning in our meditation. Magdalene seeks Christ at dawn, with the stars still visible, a scene like that described by John XXIII in opening the council.

Conference Presentation

Jesus appears first to her, to the one who sought no power. She is not described by any sexual label. Easter has everything to do with the end of power, of law and oligarchy, of religious institutions which kill the prophets and of all the sexual definitions that are deemed more important than people.

The whole future of the Church, indeed the whole Church, for one shining moment rested in the heart of a woman, in her experience, in her hope. No apostolic faith brought any of the Twelve to the tomb.

Jesus tells Mary, in John's account, to find Peter, broken Peter, fallible Peter, weeping Peter, terrified Peter and to bring him a Word of life and forgiveness. In effect, Christ asks Mary to tell Peter that Jesus will still wash his feet and hold him in his arms.

If the papacy is built on Peter, it must include the memory that Peter heard the Easter message, on which all our faith depends, from a woman.

We might imagine Christ saying to Mary what the Gospel record of her allows:

Mary do not weep. Find Peter and tell him that Easter needs no power and allows no vengeance. Tell him the greatest sinners are invited to the Easter experience and that no one must ever be sent away empty.

It is fitting that a woman should assure men that love means more than power or law.

You, Mary, go now to my brothers and sisters and confirm them in faith. Feed my lambs and sheep, my shepherd Peter with the bread and the word of life. Bring him home. Bring him here to the empty tomb. Be the Church for him. Be me for him.

Mary alone of all the disciples followed Christ every step of the way. She came to Christ on Easter morning with a faith that may be unequalled in all subsequent Christian history, with a courage so great that she risked her life at the cross and risked being dismissed as a fool at the tomb. The Church is always born in such a heart, not in authority or structures or power or sexual conformity. Only such a heart brings Christ to life, back to life, time and time again.

The Easter faith of the Church begins when a woman says "yes" to Christ. The "yes" of another woman once gave us Christ for the first time.

Such a moment!

Who would want power or seek sexual control of others on such a morning, the best of all mornings, when God called a woman by name, near the empty tomb and sent her as special minister to tell all the world that she had just seen the Easter Christ and nothing else mattered.

*The very first Easter taught us this:
that life never ends and love never dies.*