

REPORT FOR THE COMMISSION OF FEMININE DELEGATES

from the North American Secretary of Pax Romana = Pat Maguire

I. The Situation of Women in the U.S.

a) Fifty years ago, women were fighting to have the right to vote and to practice professions in the US - fields then open only to men. During the 1920's, these dreams were realised and a generation of dedicated career women, often very masculine in their attempts to conquer in a man's domain, grew up sacrificing their ~~feminine~~ feminine rights to families, reciprocal love and homes because they felt their careers demanded their entire attention.

The present generation of young mothers and young women, however, takes pride in her ability to make a home comfortable, cheerful, and a delight to visitors whether that home be a family-house or a one-room apartment. In addition, this young lady has a university degree (sometimes several) and practices a profession, often one that is purely creative and personal; others bring the insight of women into professions forgotten by them ^{like law} - real estate, where ~~in~~ the buying of a home is perhaps of more interest to the wife than the husband, and where a woman who can combine her feminine qualities with business sense can contribute greatly to the beauty of her community.

Of course, there are many young married women who devote their full time to their home and family, especially those with 5 or more children. But surveys show that 70% of married women in the US work at least part-time, and all unmarried women do. Why? And - is this treacherous to the attributes of a woman?

We believe not, for several reasons: *These women continue careers because:*

- a) need for more money, not for material reasons, but to provide an education for the children in the family, to take care of aged parents, etc. In general, the cost of living is such that one income (the husband's) is not sufficient for the needs of the family. Whether these needs are always essential ones may be questioned, but the society in the US seems to think so.
- b) wish to keep up contacts with world of culture, thought, and creativity which the woman knew at the university and afterwards, before her marriage. Many young women feel that constant attention only to small babies, and the gossip over the back fence (in the garden of the house with neighbours) is stultifying and unsatisfying for her personal formation. She believes she can be a better mother if she is alive, eager to keep on learning, and au courant with modern events.
- c) Need to keep up with the cultural development of one's children! With the progress in educational methods and the growth of mass media, the present group of school children are often much better informed than their parents! Many mothers take sometime to work (for salary or as a volunteer) in order to keep abreast of new developments, or to take advantage of new courses in education.
- d) For Catholic women, the Pope expressed the thought thusly when speaking to the Catholic women assembled in Rome in 1951: "For many years, the place of the woman has been in the home. Now, the interests of women remain in the home but she must go outside the home to defend them." Many women work outside their homes on civic affairs - school boards, exhorting people to vote, planning of parks, gardens, playgrounds for children, etc.

This does not mean that these women are neglecting their feminine vocation; on the contrary, we would say that are heightening by giving their services to the family and community when they are needed, but never neglecting their own loved ones.

II. The Attributes and Gifts of Women

The above analysis stems from a fundamental concept of the place of woman in a

dynamic social structure. We realise that many leaders in society (perhaps most) are men, but this does not deny that women have attributes and gifts which are badly needed, and which only woman can supply.

This may lead some to complain that women must take on a dual responsibility - to act as a woman, but in a "man's world." However, this is our privilege and great uniqueness in the human race. The woman can bring to her work and her home these gifts:

1. Sympathy for the problems of others
2. A spirit of compromise and tactfulness in easing opposites together
3. Firm adherence to principle in the face of adversity
4. Love of work for its sake, and not for the sake of gain

These qualities are not exclusively feminine, but we hesitate to call a woman "feminine" if she does not possess them. It is a waste of these qualities which the world needs if women do not try to develop them to the fullest measure.

III. Formation in Catholic Federations

It is abhorrent to most women in countries where feminine federations do not exist, to speak on "the status of women." The status is there, they think - it is equality. But equality is not enough. A woman leader in the Federation should be accepted for her capability alone, but she cannot rely on her capability and formation in a man's world to be ~~sufficient~~ sufficient formation for the special role she can, and should, play in these Federations. Therefore, whether ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ feminine or "mixed" ^{federations}, our delegates have similar ideas.

The formation of a woman delegate comprises many aspects:

1. Thorough knowledge of the Church's teaching about women and their role
2. Thorough understanding of, and perhaps training in, the "masculine" methods of Federation work (abstraction of ideas, divorce from sentimentality, ability to take slights and wrongs without making them personal, etc.)
3. Special understanding of the gifts a woman can bring to Federation work
4. Development, ^{of} and activity through, these particular attributes.

In this way, I believe a woman maintains her personal ~~integrity~~ integrity and her femininity, and yet puts herself totally at the service of her fellow men in a way that they can understand. In this, I believe she is fulfilling God's plan for laywomen ~~xx~~ in so far as we know it now.

P. Maguire