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I came across this rather humorous incident from the reader's digest: Our four year old daughter, Marian, had been a bit mischievous and I, her Dad, tried to correct her without success. When things eased off I relaxed in the easy chair reading the paper. Her mother was sitting quietly on the sofa mending some clothes. Our daughter climbed on to the sofa very close to her mother and said: 'Mammy, are you sure we married the right man'?

In the book of Genesis God said: 'it's not good for man to be alone'. You could feel alone even in marriage if partners don't get on.

When God is side-lined, there is a temptation to concentrate overly on physical pleasure and overlook the fact that physical intimacy in marriage should also be a sign and pledge of spiritual communion. It's not something purely biological.

Couples co-operate with God in bringing new life into the world. It's over fifty years since the landmark encyclical 'Humane Vitae' was promulgated by Pope Paul VI. We know it didn't go down very well. A lot of what Pope Paul foretold in the encyclical, however, has actually come true. He said for instance: 'With the advent of artificial birth regulation people should first consider how easy it will be for many to justify behaviour leading to marital infidelity or to a gradual weakening in discipline and morals'. The 'me too' movement I would say, is tied in with this encyclical's rejection.

When Jesus welcomed children in today's Gospel, I'm sure he was encouraging married couples to accept children lovingly from God and not see them as a burden or a hindrance to their freedom to do other things.

We say animals reproduce but humans procreate. It's the design of the creator that procreation should take place within

the union of marriage in an act of love. If children are the product of clinical procedures in a laboratory, there is the danger that they may be seen as commodities and not as persons. Here man is acting alone and not in tune with the will of his Creator.

Males and females are meant to complement each other and in this way they reflect the image and likeness of God. Some would reduce the role of male and female to a mere function, interchangeable at will. In this case the male and female complementary natures cease to be based on anthropology, but purely on function. In God's eternal plan for the human family, males and females are given different but complimentary roles. Blurring that distinction only leads to confusion, especially among the young.

Jesus came to redeem marriage and raise it to the dignity of a sacrament. The chaste love of husband and wife is intended to be a reflection, albeit dimly, of God's undiluted love for us. It's the primordial sacrament. It's based on the Paschal mystery and when lived out as such contributes towards the happiness of the spouses and stability of society at large. Without it we're on a hike to nowhere.