



Newsletter – October 2009

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## Women, Be.

Recent human history had not been kind to women.

In most societies and cultures women were disadvantaged and discriminated against. In these societies women were chattel, often valued less than livestock. They got their foot bound (bones broken), their faces covered, confined indoors, used and abused, by society, by “cultural practices”, by men. These abuses continue (albeit in a milder form) in some societies to this day.

There were a few cultures, where women are treasured and revered into their old age. Sadly they are few and far in between. Recently I had the opportunity to tell some women about Minangkabau matrilineal society which exists to this day in parts of Sumatra and Malaysia.

Most societies, cultures, however were patriarchal. Men dominate, often with the attendant abuses and inter-human injustices, which come with near absolute authority.

On the other hand, one could say that these societies have found that it is less costly to the greater good of the group, to send only the men to die in wars, particularly those of aggression. Men are less critical to the continued survival of a community and therefore more expendable. They were, and still are, made to believe that they can do a better job than women, at fighting. Actually, in nature, this is not necessarily true. The female of any species is the better fighter and protector of the community. Try and touch a wolf cub and see who comes more ferociously to its defence.

In peace, traditional society had men sent out to hunt/fish and ‘bring home the bacon’. They were less able to cope with their share of responsibilities, more stressed, and were exposed to more risks, put in harm’s way more often, and generally, they die younger.

Through all these women had always been women. Often they work, ostensibly, in partnership with their males to benefit their community. Actually, they were the one making the major decisions.

About a hundred years ago things began to change.

When education became a universal right for children, girls were accorded similar rights as boys. As for suffrage (the right to vote) women in most countries also quickly won the right to vote. This empowered women with political clout, and progressively gained for women proper recognition of their value to society.

In this journey there were, and still are, many wrong turns in direction, of mission. Misunderstanding of the character of women, some women activist groups tried to rid themselves of men. Others wanted to become men.

In the 1950s, communism (particularly in Asia) pretended that women were equal to men. The male leaders lumped onto women all the duties of men, and conned them into meeting men's work load quotas. They had to take up duties that traditionally had been men's. Posters of manly looking women with short cropped hair, in men's uniforms, scowling, with raised clenched fists and rifles, exhorts women to "hold up half the sky". On the other hand, nearly all top leadership positions were held by men. Women were not officially shut out, but there were glass ceilings and many obstacles which made it increasingly difficult for women as they got nearer to the top. At the same time women were expected to do all that men are not able to do biologically, ie bear and suckle children, and that which men avoided doing, claiming cultural reasons eg. teaching young children, cooking, laundry, housework, etc.

In the 1970s in USA, there was a movement, groups of women who were tagged "Van Dykes", who thought that they, and thus society do not need men. In the attempt to remove all traces of men from their 'culture' they even called themselves "wymyn". However, in practice, they only substituted men with some manly women, who continued to dominate and exploit the more susceptible wimyn in their groups. The movement fizzled out when the majority realised that in their gullibility they were taken advantage of.

Then some women Groups started working on the belief that women must be equal to men, like men, that to be equal women must be men.

They believe that there should be no consideration given for gender differences, ever. There are some work which women does better than men, eg , nursing, teaching smaller children, etc. It would be right to demand that women be paid more than men in these kind of work. There are other professions where pay should commensurate with the revenue of the business. Therefore when the organizers of women tennis realized that the gate and TV rights of women's tennis were as lucrative as men's tennis, they offered women players the same prize money as that of men. In ballet dance, or opera performances the prima donna /lead dancer, usually a woman, was and is rightly paid more than the men simply because they can attract more revenue than men. Conversely, there is little money in women's soccer as a spectator sport. Therefore it is right that the players are paid little, as compared to that paid to their male counterparts.

There are things that only women can do. There are things that women can do better than men. These have to be recognized. It has to be accepted that men are not women. In many measures, men fare poorly in comparison. Conversely, there are many things/tasks that man can do better than women

To continue to insist that women have to be like men is an injustice, ignorantly perpetrated by some women groups, to the detriment of all women.

It was the first meeting of a committee formed to draft some new material for Small Christian Communities group meetings, for the coming year. One of the new members invited to join the old team started by insisting that we must only use language that is "gender neutral". I was an old

member of this committee and a bit alarmed that we may have to start our meeting with “In the name of the Parent and the Child and the Holy Spirit. Ah Person”. The rest of the members in the committee dismissed it as a minor point and agreed that we will not bend over backwards to do so. That “woman activist” did not turn up for subsequent meetings.

“Last year the Town Council of Fuenlabrada, in Spain, led by some misguided female councilors, voted to banish “street sign sexism” by replacing half of all pedestrian crossing signs, which depicts masculine figures walking, with feminine ones. The latter looked like the former except for a pony tail and a skirt shape. In the interest of saving costs these extras could just be painted on. Others are concerned that the feminine image looks too much like a transvestite.”

Last month, it was announced that women boxing will from now on be recognized as an Olympic Sport and will be featured in the 2012 Olympics..

Those women groups who wanted women to be men must be very pleased. They have won the right for women to punch one another senseless in public arenas, where women inflict maximum injury on one another, while spectators, mainly males, howl for the spilling of more blood.

Perhaps the ultimate goal for these women groups in Singapore will be to campaign and demand for equal rights for women to be caned for certain criminal offences - like men.

The Church holds women in high esteem and recognises their special and unique role in society, and life in the praise of God. Women are not men, Definitely not lesser men, not required to be equal to men , often perhaps better than men, but certainly different, an indispensable component of God’s creation, and, definitely complementary.

**“Man and women He created them”. Genesis 1:27. “Their partnership constitutes the primary form of communion between persons.” - Gaudium et Spes. 12: 4**

.....article....by mark

Note:

You can access up to 24 past issues of this CFMSM publication, by going to our Website: [csfm.org.sg](http://csfm.org.sg) , and go to the page of “Calendar” and find them under “Newsletters”.

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**This is to inform all Members that CFMSM will have its 2<sup>nd</sup> Formation Session (for year 2009) on 8<sup>th</sup> November, starting at 2.00pm in the Room, Novena Church, Thomson Road.**

**The subject is - “Relationship with God and family”.**

Children are welcomed and will be taken care of. Sunday Mass will be said.