

# Endorsement

George Cardinal Pell

## *An Endorsement of the new “Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms Regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions.”*

We are all called to seek and embrace the truth. In ethical matters, this demands a willingness to understand the natural law and the moral code that is derived from it. When Jesus said “I am the truth” he was affirming the fact that this truth is of vital importance to each one of us. If we are seriously to come to grips with truth, then we need to find a way of dialoguing with one another which is devoid of any ambiguity. That is why words and the meaning of words matter.

Today, many traditionally accepted understandings of terms such as *family*, *sexuality*, *maleness*, *femaleness* and *parenthood* have been proposed as ‘dominant discourses’ that have imposed injustice and intolerance. Many people today argue that it is community consensus which should be used as the arbiter of meaning in language. In such societies, however, the language that is used to communicate with one another becomes highly malleable and manipulable.

So we are told that *marriage* may mean relationships which involve two men, or two women, or in the case of so-called polyamorous relationships, a variety of other possibilities. We allow such re-definitions to go unchallenged at our peril. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life with an openness to the gift of children. The radical social experimentation of the ‘sex-on-demand’, ‘divorce-on-demand’ and ‘children-on-demand’ revolutions of the past few decades has employed a variety of ‘language linguistics’ to undermine our understanding of marriage and family. Terms such as *pro-choice*, *homophobia*, *gender preference* and *safe sex* have caused great uncertainty about the true nature of many of the issues under discussion.

It is not ‘homophobic’ to affirm the true meaning of marriage. It is not *anti-choice* to name the darkness of abortion for what it truly is. The beauty of the complementarity of male and female is a manifestation of the Creator’s design and of his plan for humanity; it is not simply the current dominant social construct of gender preference. In sharp contrast to secular ‘safe sex’ messages, the Church

offers much more, not less. By advocating abstinence prior to monogamous and lifelong marriage, the Church proposes a model for sexual intimacy which respects both the gift of human sexuality and the dignity of the human person. The bitter fruits of the deliberate obfuscation of the truth and beauty of marriage and family are now evident in an increasingly brutalized form of sexual promiscuity, violence, depression, and the disease, and the social isolation which it brings.

It is of vital importance for the New Evangelisation called for by Pope John Paul II that we seek to re-claim our culture. This can only be achieved if we embark on a path of ensuring that all those who are open to the Church's voice understand what is being proclaimed. The Church needs to express clearly what She means, particularly in the language and terms that are used in reference to life, marriage and family.

As a loving Mother and guide, the Church has the obligation to educate both the faithful and the wider community. Political leaders and legislators along with those who work in the field of the social sciences, are entitled to an authentic presentation of the depth of the Church's moral wisdom of the past two millennia. The Church cannot shirk her responsibility to assist in properly forming the consciences of all those involved in crucial public debates. In this way, she fulfills the role entrusted to her, calling all people to embrace the truth of Christ and his Church through the exercise of true freedom: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (In 8: 31-32).

This long awaited English translation of the Lexicon will be an invaluable resource to all those who genuinely seek to understand the profound truth, goodness and beauty of marriage and family. It is a gift to the faithful and to the broader community from the Church. In response, each of us is called to reflect on how we can best use it to proclaim the authenticity of Christ's message, especially in the areas of marriage and family in the third millennium. It will greatly assist all those of good will who seriously wish to learn the truth about marriage and family and to embark on the New Evangelisation.

✠ George Cardinal Pell  
Archbishop Of Sydney

# Endorsement

Cormac Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor

Those of us who live in contemporary western societies are all too familiar with what has become known as the “culture of spin”. Language has always been the tool of propaganda, but it is also, these days, the object of ordinary - sometimes even well-meaning - manipulation. There is now almost no area of public affairs which is unaffected by the sophistication of public relations and advertising.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the realm of bioethics, sexuality, and the family. Rapid technological progress is pushing constantly at the boundaries of legislation while well-organised lobbies seek social or parliamentary legitimisation for particular groups and lifestyles. Words are chosen to conceal, not reveal, hard truths, or to attempt to divert people away from an unpleasant aspect of a thing onto another thing that seems virtuous or cosy. “Public awareness” campaigns are launched to which politicians are pressured to respond. This is the ordinary currency of contemporary western democracy, to which the Church must adapt if it is to defend the values of the Gospel.

This *Lexicon* is a powerful instrument for that defence which will do much to help prevent the privatisation of truth. It takes words and concepts that are often chosen by campaign groups and lobbies in order to persuade public opinion and shows, through the light of reason and from the tradition of Catholic insights through the ages, how such words have often become detached from their true meaning.

In Britain we are very familiar with the obfuscations of terms such as “interrupting a pregnancy” or “dying with dignity”; the reality of abortion and euthanasia, both of which entail the deliberate death of human beings, is glossed over in such language. Campaigners who would like to see fewer poor babies being born promote “reproductive rights” in the developing world; those who believe that homosexual couples can be considered a form of marriage promote “civil partnerships”. There are countless examples of this deliberate obfuscation: sometimes the expressions are so self-evidently euphemistic that they make us smile; sometimes, however, they simply deaden language, leaving us bored or confused and utterly unaware of the realities to which they point.

The problem with this kind of language is not just that it used to promote causes often at odds with the Catholic moral understanding. It also inhibits proper public debate. When great ethical issues are discussed in the media or in Parlia-

ment, the objective should be to come to grips with the truths involved, and to enable societies to discern what is in the common good. The misuse of language conceals truth, and so deprives public opinion of its proper democratic role.

When language is reunited with the truth, it is like a cold shower. That is the effect of the *Lexicon*: each of these terms or phrases has been in some way hijacked; the *Lexicon* secures their release and restores them to the moral universe in which they should properly be situated. In its pages, the riches of Catholic moral insight have been thoroughly mined; magisterial insights are deftly summarised; the definitions are informed by reason and faith in equal measure. In the darkening thickets of language detached from moral realities, the *Lexicon* shines as a clear and penetrating light. I hope that opinion formers, politicians, and all those engaged in public affairs will keep it close by them, as a guide for their consciences and a gift to the societies in which they live.

✠ Cormac Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor  
Archbishop of Westminster

# *Endorsement*

William Cardinal Keeler

The Pontifical Council for the Family has given the Church a practical and inspiring text in this volume. It is practical because it helps us to strip away misleading notions about basic concepts. It is inspiring because it lifts up ideals rooted in faith, illuminating the truth about the human person.

The Declaration of Independence, a founding document for the United States, affirms that a human being enters the world endowed by our Creator with «certain inalienable rights,” including «life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.» This Lexicon spells out various ways in which the right to life, the first and most fundamental of our rights, can be subverted by the improper use of language.

To the extent that the lessons of the Lexicon are learned and taught, the true Culture of Life will flourish among us. May the Lord bless each user of this volume with a deepened reverence for God’s marvelous gift of life.

✠ William Cardinal Keeler  
Archbishop of Baltimore