

ABSTRACT

Familial Right and the Ethics of Parenting

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The paper defends the proposition that families, and not only individuals, possess certain fundamental rights demanding legal respect and protection. Among these fundamental rights are: the freedom to contract a marriage covenant; the right to procreate and to determine the spacing of births; the right to educate one's children according to the religious-moral convictions of the parents; the right to special legal recognition as the fundamental cell of society; the right to social/economic assistance in the exercise of familial rights. In developing this apology of familial right, the paper draws upon resources in three interrelated disciplines: theology (Catholic social doctrine, especially the Holy see's 1981 Charter of Rights of the Family); philosophy (natural-law theory, specifically the work of Aquinas); social science (theories privileging intermediate bodies: Nisbet; Neuhaus and Berger).